Don't Sit Under the Apple Tree (With Anyone Else But Me)

by TheLiveshipParagon

Summary

You and Steve are trying your best to enlist to join your best friend Bucky on the front line but life keeps kicking you back down.
You're all friends from childhood. Is the war going to tear you all apart?
Notes

I'd been toying whether to foray more into the Marvel character universe after the Punisher fic but I realised I couldn't resist starting this one :).

No warnings for this chapter other than there's heavy use of 40s and WW2 slang.

Any comments/messages/prompts my email is theliveshipparagon@gmail.com

Happy reading!

-TLP x

(I usually place a proofreading disclaimer here that says I suck at it)

(Also another side note, I am very averse to using 'Y/N' in stories so I always give nicknames)
“Hey, get the hell outta here!” you growl at the guy beating up your friend as you socked a punch so hard into his face that he fell over into the trashcans in the alleyway.

“You goddamn broad, how dare you!” the guy yells as he scrambles to his feet. “Ain't your Daddy never told you to play nice?”

“Ain't your Daddy ever told you not to start a fight?” you snap back. “Especially one you ain't got a hope and a prayer of winning?”

“So what...Stevie needs a dame to save him now?” the guy laughs.

You chance a quick look at Steve who was still on the ground. He looked mortified and he looked ashamed. You didn't have time to soothe his wounded ego.

_Geez Louise, Steve. Can you not go five minutes without finding trouble?_

“Well this dame just put an end to your grandstanding. So how about you scram before I hit you again, huh?” you snarl.

“Think I won't hit you because you're a girl?” the guy says, starting to advance on you. “You're sorely mistaken, sweetcheeks. You need to be taught some goddamn manners and to know where your place is.”

He's about to backhand you when another hand shoots out, stopping it dead in its tracks.

“That's not very polite,” comes that oh so familiar voice.

Bucky.

“The lady was only tryna help her friend,” Bucky continues. “Now, why don't you buzz off before you have me to deal with?”

There's a lot of spluttering and a few hateful glares thrown around before the guy slinks off, muttering something about getting you all later.

Immediately you help Steve to his feet.

“I had him,” Steve grumbles.

“You didn't have diddly squat,” you laugh. “But you lasted longer than the previous time you got in a fight.”

“You don't need to keep saving me all the time guys,” Steve sighs. “I can do this. I really can.”

“I know, you're pretty swell at taking punches,” Bucky grins. “But maybe practise on a littler guy first.”

Steve just flushes horribly and looks down at the trash strewn alley. Your heart goes out to him. He always tried his best and he was such a gentleman. If he was just a little bit taller you're sure he'd have girls falling over themselves.
“As for you, Missy, is this gonna be another time where I'm explaining to your Pa why you have bruises on your knuckles?” Bucky laughs.

You cringe every time they used that nickname but unfortunately it seemed to have stuck. Bucky thought it was perfect considering you were the most unladylike girl in Brooklyn and Steve just went along with whatever Bucky said.

“I ain't gonna say sorry for helping my friend,” you huff, folding your arms.

“You know it's a shame you weren't born a guy,” Bucky smiles. “You'd be a hell of a soldier, doll.”

Now it's your turn to flush horribly. You cast a quick glance at Steve who gives you a knowing smile.

The both of you had been trying to enlist for the army recently, forging your documents and going from local recruitment fair to local recruitment fair. You were a pretty wiry looking girl so you had no problem passing for a young guy. Steve had been helping you get your voice lower and showing you male mannerisms.

At first he'd protested, saying all the usual stuff like 'war ain't no place for a lady' but the more you saved him from the bullies of Brooklyn, the more he'd come round to the idea. Now he was even helping you bush your eyebrows out more with gravy granules and had put forward his meagre savings to buy you a realistic guy toupee to hide your hair. Boy did Steve get some strange looks buying that.

“She would,” Steve agrees, smiling at you warmly. “She wouldn't be no coffee cooler for sure.”

Both men laugh and you smile broadly at the two of them, putting your arms around them both.

*My boys.*

It'd always been the three of you against the world and as your fingers skipped over Bucky's uniform, you felt a pang of sadness. Soon he'd be going to the front lines and it didn't feel right him leaving without you and Steve.

You made a silent vow that you'd get into the army no matter what. You didn't care if you got arrested for trying.

“Hey, you guys wanna come to the World's Fair tomorrow?” Bucky asks. “I'm taking a dame and she has a sister, Steve.”

“Uhhh,” Steve splutters, turning an adorable shade of pink. “Sure, Buck.”

“How about you, Missy?”

“I'm not gonna have to listen to you two gettin' all doll dizzy am I?” you roll your eyes. “Because I can't think of anything worse.”

“She's got a brother too?” Bucky adds.

“I ain't going blind flying,” you say sternly. “You know better than to try and set me up with someone, Buck.”

“Yeah,” Bucky sighs long and hard. “You're way too intense for some guys, doll.”

“Well, I think she's just great,” Steve interjects fiercely. “What guy doesn't dream of a dame that
can take care of herself?"

“Most of the population, Stevie,” Bucky laughs. “Scarlett O’Hara girls are high maintenance.”

“Is that what I am?” you say, folding your arms.

“Nah,” Bucky shakes his head. “You ain't that spoilt, sugar.”

“Damn right,” you laugh. “And I'll come to the fair but only because I wanna see the new technology.”

“Atta girl,” Bucky winks. “I gotta head back to base but I'll meet you guys tomorrow.”

After a polite head nod, he whirls around, looking mighty impressive in his uniform and strides back out onto the street.

“Come on, Missy,” Steve sighs. “Put your goo-goo eyes back in your head.”

“What?” you splutter.

“You think I don't see that look on every dame's face when they look at him?” Steve says grimly. “Even you aren't immune to James Barnes' charm.”

He looks incredibly disappointed and you feel damn guilty. All you were doing was admiring the tailoring. Sure you liked Buck and he was attractive but you knew he was a ladykiller and he would never treat you right if you allowed yourself to feel more for him. Besides, who's to say he'd even like you back in the first place?

“It's never gonna happen, Stevie,” you smile. “So quit bellyaching and walk me home.”

You knew that would appeal to Steve's sense of pride and he gallantly gives you his arm to which you slide your own through it. The two of you walk along the streets, ignoring the judgemental stares of people and the pitying looks they gave you.

“She's so kind to be giving him a chance,” you hear a group of girls mutter as they pass the two of you.

You tense up incredibly and you feel Steve patting your arm gently, “Leave it, Missy. They're not worth it.”

“Goddamn rude broads,” you hiss, trying to alleviate some of the rage you felt.

“I'm used to it,” Steve shrugs sadly.

“You shouldn't hafta be,” you say firmly.

“That's just how the world is, Missy. Someday soon we'll both get into the army and then we can both prove we're not any lesser than the men around us.”

“You make that a promise, Steve Rogers,” you demand.

“I promise, Missy,” he smiles.

**
Sweet Jesus this fair was excruciating!

You had to watch as Bucky charmed the pants off of the two girls whilst Steve trailed a distance behind, obviously not impressing the sister at all. Pretty soon, Buck had a girl on each arm.

You tried your best to concentrate on the wonderful technology around you, marvelling at the ingenuity.

All of you stopped in front of the Stark Industries display to watch his amazing new creation. Ok...sure it didn't work exactly as you expected, as you watched the hovercar crash to the ground with inelegance, but nobody ever invented anything without trying a lot first, right?

“Hey Missy, there is a recruitment fair here,” Steve whispers in your ear, nodding towards a tent. “Shall we try?”

“You bet your ass we should,” you grin.

The both of you slink away from Bucky and the girls, heading to the tent. You had your guy clothing in a drawstring bag slung over your shoulder. Nobody ever questioned you about how out of place it looked as you always wore your factory clothes out, a pair of smart dungarees over a shirt. Dresses really weren't your thing at all.

Steve stops at the military display, looking into a projection of how he'd be as a soldier. He doesn't even reach the designated height on the board and you see the defeated look on his face.

Oh Stevie, you can do this. I know you can.

You pat him on the shoulder lightly and draw him away from the display so he can't keep mentally beating himself up. You're about to follow him out into the main tent when a photo catches your eye. The uniforms are British from what you can tell and in the centre stands a woman.

Wow, do they let women join up in Britain? You couldn't help but admire her. She was everything you wanted to be and heck, she even kept her femininity too. You wondered if you could ever meet her someday.

The sounds of an argument floats over to you and you walk on, just in time to see Steve and Bucky in a war of words.

“-How many times you gonna enlist, huh Steve?” Bucky says in irritation. “You know one of these days they're actually gonna take you and I'm gonna hear about my dead friend on the wire.”

“Hey, stop it,” you say, getting between them.

“And you're not much better, Missy,” Bucky says sternly. “Think I don't know you've been trying too?”

Your face pales a little. How on earth did he work that one out?!


“I should be able to serve my country, same as you guys,” you hiss.
“You do, sweetheart. You help make the planes,” Bucky says.

“It's not enough,” you shake your head. “I can fight, I know I can. I'm better than either of you.”

“Steve, will you give us a minute?” Bucky says in a low voice, one you've not heard him use before.

Steve just gives you a worried look before he skulks off to the registration desk.

“What, you gonna lecture me now?” you huff defensively.

Bucky grabs your arm, pulling you into a more secluded corner, “I need you to stay here, Missy. I need you to look after Stevie because he's not going to get into the army and it's gonna goddamn kill him. I don't want him doing something drastic, you know? You're the only person I trust who can do that.”

“It's not fair, Buck and you know it,” you spit. “I've knocked you on your ass more times than I can count. I can take on some Nazis.”

“I got no doubt,” Bucky smiles sadly. “But doll, if either of you died it'd kill me inside. I'd rather you both be safe.”

“It's not your call to make,” you say defiantly.

“Jesus, Missy,” Bucky sighs. “You're such a stubborn mule, ain't ya? Don't make me tell your Pa what you been doing.”

“You wouldn't dare, James,” you snarl.

“Don't you 'James' me, sugar pie,” Bucky growls back. “I find out you enlisted, I'll drag you home myself.”

There's nothing much more to say. You just lean back against the wall, glowering at the floor. You didn't give a rat's ass what Buck said. You were still gonna try and you were gonna help Steve try too.

“Now you gonna come dance with us?” Bucky asks, deflecting the conversation like he's certain he's won you over.

“And watch you jive with those girls whilst I sit on the side like a wallflower? Blow it outta your barracks bag, Barnes,” you grit your teeth.

“Come on, Missy, don't be like this,” Bucky sighs. “It's my last night before I get shipped out. I don't wanna end it with you being mad at me.”

You keep silent, staring at the opposite wall. He'd really annoyed you a lot tonight. How could he ask you to stay behind, to ask Steve to stay behind whilst he put himself in danger without any back up?

“Doll, please,” Bucky pleads before grasping your arm and hugging you tightly. “I can't handle you being mad at me. Stop it.”

You subconsciously relax against him as he grips you to him and he softly kisses your cheek.

“We'll always be a team, the three of us,” he whispers against you. “I'm just representing our little wayward Brooklyn gang out in Europe.”
You can't help but laugh at that and you feel Bucky smiling against your shoulder.

_Goddamnit, why is he so charming when all I want to do is punch his stupid face?!_

He pulls back, cupping your cheek, “Please look after Stevie for me? Promise me, Missy?”


“Thank you,” Bucky grins. “You're my best friend, Missy. I'll be a whole lot rosier knowing you're safe.”

“Yeah yeah,” you dismiss. “Go to your damned speakeasy with the girls.”

He gives you a quaint little kiss to the back of the hand before winking and leaving the tent.

There's that familiar tug on your heartstrings but you bury the feeling. He'd be leaving tomorrow, _actually leaving_ to cross the Atlantic. Would you ever see him again? Would he make it back? Would you ever see those mischievous twinkling eyes again....

“Oh god-fucking-damnit!” you swear in the most unladylike way and turn to the arcade game set up nearby.

_The Strength-O-Meter._

In your swirl of emotions, you pick up the hammer, giving the plate a hefty whack to try and get some of your energy out. The marker shoots to the top, dinging the bell slightly. Well that gave you a bit of satisfaction at least.

“Hey, I heard you swearing,” Steve says, peeking his head round the corner. “Guessing Buck told you off?”

“If that fuddy dudley thinks I'm gonna stay here and play homemaker, he has another thing coming,” you growl, hitting the plate again and the bell dings more forcefully.

“Maybe don't take it out on the games?” Steve laughs. “Come on, let's get you changed. I have my evaluation soon.”

You both sneak off. Steve helps you adjust your clothing, put the toupee on and make your features look more masculine. You're thanking god you never grew breasts because this would've made the whole process a lot harder.

“Scares me how much you look passable,” Steve smiles. “You're a pretty girl. It shouldn't even be possible to do this.”

“Shut it, Steve,” you blush. “Let's get going, huh?”

You walk up to the registration desk and fill out the form and both of you wait for your assessments. You can't help but notice you're being carefully watched and you try your best not to meet the man's eye in case he looked too closely at you.

“Come with me,” another man says, leading you away.

Steve flashes you a thumbs up and you give him one back.
“So...Mr...Thomas Morgan,” the assessor starts, looking at your notes whilst you sit there with your shirt off, being measured.

“Call me Tom, please,” you smirk, doing your best impression of Bucky that you could.

“Or should I say Thomasina,” the guy says wryly. “You may not be very developed but you're definitely a woman.”

*Oh rats.*

“You know I have to inform the police, right?” the guy says.

“That won't be necessary,” comes a heavily accented voice from behind the curtain. “I'll be dealing from now on, thank you.”

“Dr Erskine, of course,” the assessor nods and leaves the room.

The man called Dr Erskine walks into view and you recognise him as the man who'd been staring at you and Steve in the waiting area.

“Do you not want to put your shirt back on?” he smiles warmly.

“Doesn't bother me, sir,” you reply back. “I'm not like other girls.”

“So I've seen,” Dr Erskine laughs. “I saw your little display with the strength test and how...impassioned you were about fighting. Tell me, girl, do you want to kill Nazis?”

“I just want to be able to serve my country the same as anyone else,” you answer honestly. “Why should guys get to and women can't? Do we not have the same pride, do we not have the same patriotism, will we not die just the same if the Krauts make it to the US?”

Dr Erskine smiles so broadly that his eyes start twinkling, “And would you fight, Missy....”

“Everyone calls me Missy, sir,” you introduce yourself. “And yes, I would. I'm not afraid, I'll do whatever is asked to make sure the US remains free.”

“Quite,” Dr Erskine nods. “I notice you came here with your small friend who has also tried to enlist. Do you think he deserves a chance, Missy?”

“Of course,” you say fervently. “He should have the same opportunity. If he wants to fight, why can't you let him? Why does there need to be limits? A soldier is a soldier right?”

“How terribly modern,” Dr Erskine smiles before picking up your papers from the tray table and stamping them. “We may need modern thinking. There are dark days ahead...Mr Morgan.”

Did you just hear that right?!

Dr Erskine doesn't say another word but gives you a small bow of his head before leaving.

You scramble for your papers and see the huge stamp of approval in the check box.
He let me in. He let me join even though he knew what I was.

You want to whoop with happiness but that would just draw attention to yourself so you redress and skulk out, trying to find Steve.

You spot him outside, a wide beaming grin so deep it's practically etched onto his face.

“I did it, Miss- oh horsefeathers, I meant Tom!” Steve laughs, forgetting you were still in your male persona.

Goddamn, Steve was too polite sometimes.

“That's great!” you cry. “So did I!”

“Really?!” Steve smiles. “Oh my god, we're actually in!”

“Well shit on a shingle,” you laugh. “We'd best start packing.”
Keep Your Sights On Victory

Chapter Summary

You and Steve go to the army base to train but you quickly discover it's hard to keep your cover.

Chapter Notes

I normally don't do chapters of the same fic back to back but I enjoyed writing this one :) 

No warnings for this chapter.

If you have any comments/private messages/prompts my email is theliveshipparagon@gmail.com and I'm on Tumblr as theliveshipparagon.

Happy reading!

-TLP xx 
(I suck at proofreading disclaimer)

Fun Fact: All chapter headings are genuine WW2 slogans

“I said fall in line, privates!” Colonel Chester Philips barked and everyone scrambled into a rudimentary line.

You glanced over at Steve who was stood next to you and you both had to suppress grins. You were here. You were finally here. You’d made it, both of you.

“Good god, is this the best that Brooklyn has to offer?” the Colonel tuts as he walked up and down. He stops in front of the both of you, looking first to Steve's diminutive stature and then to your lack of broadness. You can practically feel the disappointment emanating from this man but you didn't care. You just resolutely look ahead, not giving him any sign of weakness. You'd prove him wrong, gosh darnit!

Eventually he walks away to the other end of the line and you can see him talking with Dr Erskine.

“I think we made a great impression,” Steve whispers out of the corner of his mouth with an amused grin.

“He certainly won't forget us in a hurry,” you smirk back. “Whether that's good or not, I ain't the foggiest.”

“Privates!” the Colonel yells and you all flinch, standing up just that little bit straighter. “This is Agent Carter, she'll be overseeing exercises today.”
Oh my god! It was the British woman from the photo you'd seen!

There was a ripple down the line of appreciative hums and low whistles as she strode with purpose in front of the recruits.

“Gentlemen,” she nods. “I'll be supervising all operations for this division.”

Another recruit scoffs and you feel a surge of anger that he was dismissing her like this.

“What's with the accent, Queen Victoria? I thought I was signing up for the US army?” he snickers.

There was something akin to a deadly flash in Agent Carter's eyes as she sauntered up to the guy and stood before him with dangerous grace.

“What's your name, soldier?” she says in an even voice.

“Gilmore Hodges, your majesty,” the guy chuckles.

“Step forward, Hodges. Right foot forward...good,” she orders before punching him in the face, knocking him backwards to the dirt.

Your admiration went up for this lady tenfold.

Steve nudges your arm, “She's just like you.”

“Told you ladies could fight,” you wink.

“I'm never doubting you again,” Steve sighs, a look of wonder on his face as he watches Agent Carter. In fact that was the same look most of the men were giving her.

Stevie's gone dizzy for her. That's sweet.

“Good to see you breaking in the new recruits, Agent Carter,” Colonel Philips says with the merest hint of an amused smile. “Gilmore, get your ass outta the dirt and back in the line!”

The soldier scrambles to his feet hastily, “Yes, sir! Sorry, sir!”

“Now, The Strategic Scientific Reserve is an Allied effort made up of the best minds in the free world. Our goal is to create the best army in history. But every army starts with one man. At the end of this week we will choose that man. He will be the first in a new breed of super-soldiers,” the Colonel continues. “And he will personally escort Hitler to the gates of hell himself.”

Both you and Steve give each other confused glances. Super soldiers?

“Now, hop to it!” comes the order.

You don't get a chance to talk as you're immediately forced to run cross country around the barracks.

God you wish it wasn't so hot today...

You do well at keeping pace with the men, even beating some of them but you notice Steve is trailing further and further behind. His asthma can't be doing him any good right now. You're wondering if he's actually gonna die on the track.

“Pick up the pace ladies!” the drill sergeant bellows and for one moment you think your disguise is
blown before you release he's just trying to motivate the troops. “Faster faster faster! MOVE IT!”

If you thought running away from bullies was bad, this was so much worse. The pace they set was relentless and your shirt was already soaked through at the front. You hoped to god your improvised make up was not sliding down your face or there'd be a lot of awkward questions soon.

“Halt!”

There's some appreciative groaning coming along from in front of you as the men get a breather by a flagpole. You try your best not to fall down on the dirt as the air comes back into your lungs.

Where's Steve?

He was still following behind, right at the back. Gosh did he have some heart to keep going.

You can do it, buddy.

“That flag means we're only at the halfway point. First man to bring it to me gets a ride back with Agent Carter. Move, move!” the drill sergeant shouts.

“Hey, Mis- errr Tom,” Steve pants as he finally catches up.

“You doing ok?” you ask, not bothering to join the melee of the many sweaty soldiers trying to shimmy up the pole.

“Swell,” comes the optimistic reply.

“Good 'cause I ain't telling your Daddy that you died on a run,” you snort.

“Why don't they just pull the pin at the bottom?” Steve asks, motioning to the slight brawl ahead of you.

“Well you just go on and do that when it's all cleared,” you nudge him. “Then you get to ride with Agent Carter and I'm sure you don't wanna miss that.”

Steve blushes, “You don't wanna try?”

“Go on, Stevie, get the glory for once,” you laugh, pushing him forward. “'Sides, I think she may be a little sweet on you too from the looks she keeps givin' ya.”

“Thanks, Tom,” Steve grins.

You walk to the back of the car, ready to set off again.

“Nobody's got that flag in 17 years! Now fall back into line! Come on, fall in! Let's go! Get back into formation! Rogers! I said fall in!” the sergeant yells.

You feel the ground shake as the flagpole whacks to the dirt and there's a small intake of breath as everyone watches Steve hand the flag over and climb into the car with the biggest goddamn smile on his face. You can practically feel the jealously seething around you from the other men as they drive away and you all have to start running again.

It was worth it to see him smile like that. Go, get 'em, Stevie.

When you reach the main camp, all you want to do is sit down and stare at the sky for a while, your legs burning with the exercise but you're all forced to do push-ups. You can manage them ok,
your upper body is pretty strong from hefting airplane frames round all day but it's not long before you feel your arms shaking with the effort.

You look to the side to see Steve failing to execute even one properly.

“Come on, Steve. Agent Carter's watching,” you whisper, hoping to give him some more motivation.

“Goddamnit, I know,” he hisses back in frustration as he struggles up. “Shut up!”

“You don't wanna be called a bunk lizard,” you press, trying to push him harder for his own sake.

“Swear to god,” Steve starts growling, managing another push-up. “I'm gonna eat your sugar ration if you don't stop!”

“Don't you dare,” you spit back. “I'll put ants in your pillowcase.”

There's a strained chuckle followed by a groan of exertion. He really was pushing himself to his limit.

“Grenade!” Colonel Philips yowls over the din and you see it plink down near Steve.

“Please look after Stevie for me? Promise me, Missy?” Bucky's voice floated through your head and without question you flung him out of the way, shielding him from the blast that was about to come.

He's more important than I am. I'm just a dumb girl playing soldiers after all.

“Missy!” Steve cries, tackling you away and sending you rolling in the dirt.

When you look up, Steve has his body wrapped around the grenade.

“Get back!” he yells.

“Steve!” you shout in alarm.

“It was a dummy grenade,” someone affirms after nothing happens.

“Now let me get this clear,” Colonel Philips says wandering over to the both of you. “Because I thought I just heard you call Private Morgan here 'Missy'.”

You swallow thickly.

Damn it....

“Well, Rogers?” the Colonel asks.

“Slip of the tongue, sir,” Steve says quickly. “Tom has a sister called Missy.”

“Does he now?” the Colonel chuckles, coming to stand behind you. “Because Thomas Morgan is registered as an orphan so that'd be mighty convenient to have found his sister in the two days since you joined up.”

With a quick flick of his wrist, he yanks the toupee off your head and your real hair spills out around your shoulders.
“Tom’s a dame?!” someone shouts.

“I got outrun by a broad?!” shouts someone else.

“What in god’s name are you doing here, girl?” Colonel Philips sighs, rubbing his temple.

“I let her join,” Dr Erskine smiles from his position near the truck.

“I might have known,” the Colonel groans. “So as well as letting a ninety pound asthmatic in, you let a girl in too….well just great.”

You catch the eye of Agent Carter who seems highly amused by the whole process.

“Hey, sugar, you rationed?” Gilmore calls, wolf whistling afterwards.

It's like your legs start walking before your mind catches up. You're two paces away before you uppercut Gilmore straight in the kisser. His lip splits and blood starts dribbling down his chin.

“Say that to me again!” you goad, fist still raised. “I ain't taking any of your nonsense! Now say you're goddamn sorry!”

“Get off your high horse you crazy Jane!” Gilmore says, spitting blood onto the grass.

Your hands shoot out and grip his shirt, yanking him close as you snarl directly into his face, “Say you're sorry. Manners don't cost nothing!”

“Alright alright!” Gilmore panics, seeing your fist close again. “I'm sorry!”

“And apologise to Steve for laughing at him!” you demand.

“Sorry Rogers!” Gilmore stutters.

“And apologise to Agent Carter for being rude to her this morning!”

“Sorry Ma'am!”

You release him and he staggers back a bit before hurriedly wiping at his face which was now covered in crusting blood. You whirl around to see Steve staring with a dumbfounded expression. You also see Colonel Philips hiding a smirk. You also see Agent Carter smiling wildly.

Well if you were gonna get kicked out then at least you made your mark somehow.

“Report to your bunks Rogers and Morgan,” is all Colonel Philips says before he passes Dr Erskine and you hear him mutter, “He's still skinny and she's a girl.”

“Come on, Missy, let's get you cleaned up,” Steve sighs. “They may as well see your pretty face before you leave.”

He leads you to the barracks and you wash all the make up off. It feels odd to be bare again. There's a strange sense of sadness, like all your dreams just came to an end at once.

“It's all my fault,” Steve says, putting his head in his hands. “I messed up. I'm so sorry, I ruined everything for you.”

“Hey, it's fine,” you smile, putting on a brave face and hugging your friend. “I was cooking with explosives anyhow, it was bound to go off in my face sometime. Don't be a dead battery about it.”
“We were supposed to surprise Buck together,” Steve murmurs. “This isn't fair. You outran loads of those guys and did more push-ups than them too.”

“They don't see that, Stevie,” you say sadly. “All they see is what's in my underwear and that apparently makes me less.”

“Peggy holds her own,” Steve points out.

“Oh? It's Peggy now, is it?” you grin.

The blush on Steve reaches a level you've never seen before. He was definitely stuck on her.

“You're sweet, Rogers,” you laugh. “You should ask her to dance sometime.”

“I don't think I'm her kinda guy,” Steve shakes his head. “Guess we both like people we really shouldn't.”

“What do you mean?” you splutter.

“So you don't wanna read the letter that Bucky sent, huh?” Steve says with an impish grin.

“Can it, Steve,” you glare. “I've told you before, I ain't-”

“-Stuck on Bucky, yeah yeah, Missy. You've said,” Steve laughs before moving to your bunk and pulling a letter from underneath your pillow. “Guess your factory girls miss you because they managed to get this from your house without your Daddy noticing.”

“Gimme that!” you grab for it.

“Admit it, first,” Steve says. “Admit you're sweet on him. You always have been.”

“The hell I am! Don't make me fight you for it, Stevie!” you hiss, moving around him and jumping on his arm to tear the envelope from his grasp. To his credit, he keeps a tight grip on it for a while but you're too much for him and eventually you win out.

Your hands are almost shaking as you open the letter.

*Why the heck am I so nervous?*

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Dear Missy,

I'm sure Italy would be a beautiful place if there weren't dirty great gouges in the greenery. I think you'd like it. Sun's shining here.

I hope you're taking care of Steve and tell him I'm thinking about him.

I think about you guys a lot actually. I miss you. Doesn't feel the same being here on my own.

Funny how war puts things into perspective.

Keep yourselves safe. I'll be home before you know it and you'd better have an ice cream soda waiting for me.
“What did it say?” Steve asks curiously.

“He misses us,” you smile sadly, passing the letter over so Steve can read it.

“Ah geez, Buck,” Steve laughs. “Never knew he was so sentimental.”

“What did he say in yours?” you pry.

“My what?”

“Your letter, you jingle brain,” you giggle.

“Missy, he only sent one to you,” Steve smiles slyly. “Unless mine got lost in the mail room.”

“Oh,” you breathe, unsure of how to take that piece of news.

“Am I interrupting?” the voice of Dr Erskine says from the door, breaking you out of your reverie.

“Not at all,” Steve says amiably.

“Quite a display earlier, the both of you,” Dr Erskine laughs as he sits down on a bunk opposite the two of you. “I'm here to tell you that you have been selected for the super soldier program.”

“Well done, Steve,” you smile, genuinely happy for him and ruffle his hair. God he more than deserved a victory at this point.

“You misunderstand me, girl. You as in, the both of you,” Dr Erskine corrects.

“You're not gonna kick me out?” you say in amazement.

“Not unless you want to go home, which I rather hope you do not.”

“Why us?” Steve asks. “We're nobody.”

“I suppose that is the only question that matters,” Dr Erskine sighs.

He tells you the story of his time in Ausberg and working for an organisation called Hydra. A man named Johann Schmidt had taken his formula to fulfil his ambition of becoming unstoppable.

“The serum was not ready. But more important, the man. The serum amplifies everything that is inside. So, good becomes great. Bad becomes worse. This is why you were both chosen. Because a strong man, who has known power all his life, will lose respect for that power. But a weak man knows the value of strength, knows compassion and a women will know the value of protecting all no matter the cost and know kindness,” he finishes, his eyes twinkling in the growing dusk.

“You think I'm kind?” you ask.

“You may be...what is the term...rough around the edges? Yes, but you stand up for those you love
and you want what's best for them. Remember, Missy, you recommended Mr Rogers be signed up after all and you defended your superior's honour even though no one ordered you to do so. Both of you, hold onto who you are, no matter what happens tomorrow. Continue to be the man and woman I see before me, not what they want you to be,” Dr Erskine smiles.

“I think we can do that,” Steve smiles.

“Now get some rest,” Dr Erskine says before patting both of you on the shoulder and leaving.

“Can you believe it, Missy?” Steve says in wonder.

“No I can't, Stevie,” you laugh. “I thought for sure I was gonna be a wash out.”

“Looks like we may be seeing Buck sooner than we thought,” Steve squeezes your hand.

“You nervous?” you ask.

“Am I ever,” Steve nods. “I mean, it's a big responsibility. What if I don't live up to their standards?”

“You heard Dr Erskine,” you smile. “Just keep being you. Ain't nothing wrong in the world with that after all.”

“You been taking charm lessons from Bucky?” Steve laughs. “Because that was a good line, Missy.”

“Hey, I can be charming if I want to be,” you shrug and lean back in the bunk, closing your eyes.

“Missy?” Steve says quietly.

“Hmm?” you murmur.

“Do you mind if we share? I just...oh rats, this sounds highly inappropriate-”

“Steve we used to share a bed all the time as kids,” you smile. “Get up here. It's just me.”

The two of you squeeze into the narrow bunk, backs to each other and happily feeling the warmth coming from both of your bodies. It's oddly comforting and you now know why Steve wanted to do it.

“Someone's gonna talk if they see us,” Steve whispers. “They'll think you're free and easy.”

“Shut it, Rogers,” you say, reaching behind you to lightly whack him on the side. “You think I give a damn what they think? I just punched a guy.”

“I just don't want them thinking that way about you,” Steve says softly, taking your hand and holding it so it rests on both of your bodies. “You don't deserve that. I should go.”

“Steve,” you say gently. “It's alright. You don't hafta defend my honour. I appreciate it though. You really are a swell guy, you know that? I hope Peggy realises that soon.”

“Me too, Missy,” Steve says and you can hear the smile in his voice. “Good night.”

“Good night, Stevie.”
You're riding in the car with Peggy and Steve, trying your best not to listen to the sweet conversation they were having. Gosh Steve really didn't know anything about dames....

You arrive at an antiques shop and Peggy seems to give some secret code words to the proprietor because you're soon led into the back where the door opens out into what looks like an underground laboratory. You descend some metal stairs into the main foyer and you see Dr Erskine smiling warmly at the two of you.

“Good morning,” he grins.

Flash!

You're momentarily blinded as a photographer snaps off a picture of you and Steve. You can see the blinding little spots dancing around your vision.

“Please not now,” Dr Erskine says hastily. “Alright, Steve take off your shirt, tie and hat. Missy, you will need to strip down to your small clothes. I hope you are alright with this.”

“You know me, Doc,” you laugh. “Never been shy.”

“I remember,” Dr Erskine smiles. “Now if you please.”

The both of you strip as he asks and climb into the giant pods in the centre of the room. You feel extremely nervous but you look up to what appears to be a viewing gallery and know you can't afford to look weak in front of the judgemental eyes staring down at you.

There must be a microphone in the room above because you hear scathing comments being muttered above.

“Somebody get that kid a sandwich,” you hear as well as, “He wants to play Adam and Eve huh? Missy and Steve won't go down as well at Sunday School.”

Well you can all go take a powder.

“Mr Stark, are you ready?” Dr Erskine asks and you turn to see Howard Stark fiddling with a unit.

Gosh this must be important if he's working on it too.

“We may dim half the lights in Brooklyn but we're ready as we'll ever be,” Howard laughs.

Dr Erskine gives a grand speech to the people gathered in the viewing gallery before you're injected with something. You don't even wince. You'd not give these people one iota of powerlessness. Not even when the next few injections stab down into your skin do you make so much as a cry.

The pods close with a hiss and you allow yourself to start breathing harder now they can't see your chest any more.

“Are you both alright?” Dr Erskine asks.

“Probably too late to go to the bathroom right?” you hear Steve say.

“They got a newspaper in these things?” you quip back, trying to lighten the impending terror you felt.
With the pod closed, this was suddenly a lot realer for you. What if this went wrong? What if this actually killed you and Steve?

The humming starts....

“40%!” you hear Howard Stark yell.

You don't feel so bad. There's a slight tingling but nothing you can't ignore.

“60%!”

Oh my god! Your muscles were all contracting in on themselves like the fiercest cramp you'd ever experienced. You grit your teeth desperately trying not to make a sound and you could hear Steve start screaming.

“Kill the reactor!” comes the panicked cry of Dr Erskine.

Every cell of your body was on fire, like it was undulating, moulding. You could barely stand it.

“I can do this!” Steve shouts.

Well if he could, you could too.

“So can I!” you yell. “Keep going!”

“80.....90.....”

You can't hold the screams back any more. It's like you're being torn apart from the inside.

“100!” Howard proclaims.

There's a grand hissing of electricity as it fires all around you, sparks showering into the lab. As suddenly as it starts, the whole room blacks out before the emergency generator kicks in.

Did you make it?

Certainly feels like you were still alive.

You wiggled your fingers. Definitely alive.

In the dark shroud of the pod you couldn't really see if anything was different about yourself.

“Mr Stark?” Dr Erskine calls and there's the sound of Steve's pod being opened.

The collective gasps make you terribly afraid. Was he alive? Did the procedure kill him? God you couldn't live with yourself if this had killed him and you'd pushed him into it. How could you ever face Bucky if that happened?

You want to call out for him but your throat still feels hoarse from the screaming. All you can do is stay there, silently.

“Missy!” Steve cries out for you. “ Somebody tell me she's alright! Oh god, Missy!”

Your pod is yanked open and you blink in the dim light.

Before you is Steve....only it's not the Steve you remember. He's grown about a foot and he's got bulging muscles. Jesus, even his jawline got squarer!
“Steve?!” you say in surprise.

Steve looks you up and down and his eyes go completely wide as do every other person's in the room.

“Holy cow! Missy?!”
Chip In For The Chow, Buy War Bonds Now!

Chapter Summary

Disaster in the lab leads to you and Steve being forced into something you never really wanted.

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! So I'm still following the movie timeline for now but we'll see where it goes.

Any private comments/messages etc my email is theliveshipparagon@gmail.com and now I also have Tumblr: theliveshipparagon (although be gentle, I'm a Tumblr virgin and I have no clue what I'm doing haha)

Happy reading!

- TLP xx

(Standard I suck at proof reading disclaimer)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“My god,” Steve breathes, looking you up and down repeatedly.

“What's wrong?” you say, suddenly afraid to see yourself.

“Erm, nothing,” he stutters. “You're just...you're beautiful. Like a statue in a museum.”

“Goddamn, I gotta say Erskine, your formula works wonders on the fairer sex,” somebody catcalls.

You finally look down. You seem to have grown too, just like Steve. Your body had planed out into a more athletic build and you could see the feminine muscles rippling under the skin but your frame...oh boy. You'd sprouted hips like the proudest seductive screen siren and your chest well....it wouldn't be so easy to run any more.

In fact you make one move to get out of the pod and your bindings give up, tearing in the middle and threatening to expose you to the entire room.

“Oh Jesus,” Steve says quickly, turning around and pressing his back to you, shielding you from the studying eyes. “Uh, could somebody get her some clothes, please?”

Curiously it's Howard Stark who comes to your aid, passing you some loose trousers, a brassiere and a vest. You scramble into it hastily. You'd never been particularly shy about being naked around people because you never got a second glance but now you had this body you were extremely shy.
“I figured the sizes into the calculations, Dr Erskine gave,” Howard smiles. “Thought you might appreciate it.”

“Thank you, sir,” you nod gratefully. “Would've been mighty embarrassing otherwise.”

You turn to Steve who still seems to be blocking the view of the gallery and you put a hand on his shoulder. Well goddamn, was that a lot firmer!

“Stevie, you can stop that now,” you laugh. “I'm respectable.”

“I don't like the way they're looking at you, Missy,” Steve whispers.

_Ever the gentleman._

“Mr Rogers, I will need to examine her, if you please,” Dr Erskine says kindly.

Begrudgingly Steve moves away but you suspect that's only because Peggy comes running down the stairs. You reckoned Steve must be her perfect man now he'd grown some.

_I'm real happy for you, Stevie._

“How do you feel, Missy?” Dr Erskine asks.

“Stronger,” you reply. “And it's strange having womanly assets. I certainly crumbed up, didn't I Doc?”

“That you did, my dear,” Dr Erskine laughs. “You look exquisite, if you don't mind me saying and a lot of the people in this room would agree but...Missy, don't ever let them base your worth on looks. That is not why I chose a woman for this process.”

“I guess I'll find out what I can do soon enough,” you smile.

A large explosion rocks the ground and you're pitched to the side as you cling onto the pod. What the Sam heck was going on?!  

“Stop him!” the doctor cries and you spot a man bundling a vial of the serum into a briefcase.

You make to run but before your eyes, the man shoots Dr Erskine straight in the chest. You don't even hesitate to barrel straight after the assassin with Peggy leading the way. Curiously you notice you're a lot faster on your feet and you soon overtake her.

The guy jumps into a car and Peggy shoots, taking the driver out and the car crashes.

“Stay here,” she orders you. “I might need you.”

“Yes Ma'am,” you nod, preparing yourself for a fight.

The man scrambles out of the vehicle and hijacks another one before revving at full speed towards you and Peggy. The agent doesn't even move as the car gains traction and she resolutely unloads her pistol at the oncoming storm.

“Uh, Ma'am,” you say nervously.

She still doesn't move.

“Ma'am!” you shout.
You don't get a chance to speak again as something tackles into the side of you and Peggy, dropping you onto the asphalt as the car plows through where you were just a second ago.

“I had him!” Peggy yells at the flustered face of Steve.

“Sorry!” Steve apologizes and he grabs your arm, pulling you to your feet and you both race after the car. “We gotta do this together, Missy...for Erskine.”

You'd of never thought it possible but you were actually gaining on the vehicle ahead. Both you and Steve exchange confused looks but you push on until the man makes a mistake and crashes yet another car. He falls out and immediately grabs for a young boy, pointing a gun at his head.

“You lowlife bastard!” you yell. “He's just a kid!”

You have to duck as a bullet whizzes past your face. You fall to the floor, rolling behind some trashcans.

“Missy, you son of a gun, you stay down!” Steve shouts at you, pressing himself against a corner and peeking round, only to be met with a volley of fire.

“Oh see the goddamn Chaplain, Rogers!” you hiss, sprinting out of your cover and hoping to draw the man's attention.

Well you certainly did that because you're dodging bullets left, right and centre. You would've been hit with one if Steve hadn't of thrown a trashcan lid in front of your face like a shield.

“Stop grandstanding, Missy,” Steve says seriously. “I'll be annoyed as heck if you get shot.”

“I know what I'm doing,” you say fiercely.

You knew exactly how many rounds that pistol of the assassin's held and you were trying to make him waste his ammo. It would be easy to get in close once he'd lost his weapon.

Steve seems to cotton on because his eyes go wide and he gives you a slight smile, “Smart. Alright, you carry on. I'll engage.”

“Be careful, Stevie,” you say, patting him on the arm before you both break away.

You run full pelt towards the guy who backs off in alarm down towards the docks. He fires a few more shots in your direction and you effortlessly dance around them before hiding behind a pillar.

“Get back!” the man yells.

Steve rushes past you and the man raises his gun to only the sound of a small click. Empty. Thank god. You'd officially passed the buck to Steve so you hoped he could finish the job.

A small splash catches your attention as the young boy is thrown into the river. Without a second thought you dive in after him, feeling the chill of the New York climate through the cold water.

*My god, that's freezing!*

You grab the boy under the arms and look up to see Steve, unsure of what to do.

“Get after him!” you wave. “I've got this!”

That's all the motivation Steve needs as he runs towards the end of the dock and jumps into the
water, disappearing out of view.

“I can swim, Ma'am,” the boy says.

“I'm sure you can, son, but I need to make sure you're alright,” you smile.

You manage to get the kid up to the safety of the dock area and his mother comes over, spilling praises onto you. You shrug it off, I mean, it's only the decent thing to do right?

You wait on the edge of the dock for Steve to surface. After a minute, you start getting really nervous. What if the guy had got away? What if Steve had drowned trying to catch him? You start pacing in your anxiousness.

The sound of a deep gasp draws your attention and you see Steve dragging the assassin to the side of the docks. You reach down, helping him pull the man to dry land where you pin him to the floor with surprisingly little effort.

“Who the hell are you?” Steve questions.

“The first of many. Cut off one head, two more shall take its place. Hail Hydra!” the man proclaims before his mouth moves in a strange way and foam starts spilling from his lips.

“Steve?!” you say in alarm.

“Ah Jesus,” Steve hisses in frustration. “Cyanide capsule.”

“Well that's just peachy,” you sigh. “Come on, guess that's all she wrote.”

Steve stands up, before grabbing a jacket from a nearby boat construction site and handing it to you.

“I'm fine, Steve, I'm not cold,” you say, standing up yourself.

“Your vest,” Steve says, blushing and averting his eyes. “It's transparent.”

“Oh,” you breathe, looking down to see your white vest is soaked to the skin and you can make out the brassiere underneath.

You let him put the jacket on you and you pull it around yourself, feeling slightly uncomfortable. Geez this new body was going to take some getting used to....

Steve winds a protective arm around your shoulders, “Let's go, Missy. I'm sure we have some debriefing ahead.”

**

“We are taking the fight to Hydra. Pack your bags Agent Carter. You too, Stark. You're flying to London tonight,” the Colonel says.

Both you and Steve have been in the back of the room, getting endless vials of blood drawn.
Largely you've been ignored by all the military personnel in the room. Since Dr Erskine's death, nobody seems to want to take responsibility for the two of you and it was really getting on your wick.

“Sir, if you're going after Schmidt, I'm in,” Steve speaks up, surprising you with his boldness.

“Me too,” you add.

“You're experiments. You're going to Alamogordo. I asked for an army and all I got was you two. You are not enough,” Colonel Philips scoffs.

Senator Brandt steps in, “With all due respect to the Colonel, I think we may be missing the point. I've seen you in action, Steve and Missy. More importantly, the country's seen it.”

He throws a paper in front of you both and you see the headline: **Nazis in New York - Mystery Couple Saves Child.** There's two pictures on the cover, one of you and Steve behind the trashcan lid under fire and one of Steve putting the jacket around you.

“The enlistment lines have been around the block since your picture hit the news stands and women are clamouring to get in the factories. You don't take soldiers, a symbol like that, and hide them in a lab. Son, Ma'am, do you want to serve your country on the most important battlefield of the war?” the senator continues.

“Do we ever,” you nod furiously.

“Sir, that's all we want,” Steve adds.

“Then congratulations, you've been promoted,” Senator Brandt smiles.

**

“This is not what I had in mind,” Steve murmurs as he's stuffed into a costume.

“If you think I'm wearing that, you're a flat tyre,” you hiss as someone tries to force you into a dress.

“Nothing to it. Sell off a few bonds, bonds buy bullets, bullets kills Nazi's. Bing bang boom. You're an American hero,” the assistant tells you both.

“I'm still not wearing it,” you say resolutely, although you notice Steve has given up and just let himself be dressed.

He looks ridiculous in his stars and stripes costume. You'll be damned if you're going to be the same way.

“Senator Brandt said you might be like this,” the assistant sighs. “Janey, bring that over sweetcheeks.”

She unfurls an outfit similar to Steve's but it's in the colour of the Statue of Liberty. You hate it but
anything is better than wearing that dress.

“Fine,” you sigh.

“And the crown too,” the assistant adds.

“Just...just wear it, Missy,” Steve pleads. “It'll go faster if we co-operate.”

“The senator's got a lot of pull up on the hill. You play ball with us, you'll be leading your own platoon in no time,” the assistant grins.

You reluctantly dress and you feel silly. You feel even sillier when you're shoved out onto the stage in between a bunch of dancers and have to parrot lines for a propaganda film.

*This is not what I enlisted for. I'm not a poster girl...*

**

You tour for an age, travelling the length and breadth of America putting on your play for the children and the young adults. For the most part they seem to enjoy it and even Steve seems to get into his role as 'Captain America'.

“Oh no!” one dancer cries from next to you. “Hitler is sneaking up on Lady Liberty!”

“Captain! He's behind you!” a chorus of youthful voices shout in a rehearsed pantomime.

You had to stand there, doing your best shocked face as you and Steve turn round in a perfect choreographed move and pretend punch the Hitler actor who falls to the floor.

“We all know this is about trying to win the war. We can't do that without bullets and bandages, tanks and tents. That's where you come in. Every bond you buy will help protect someone you love,” Steve says with the perfect apple pie enthusiasm.

“Keep our boys armed and ready, and the Germans will think twice about trying to get the drop on us,” you say your line, flexing your bicep. “Women of America, your country needs you!”

Steve leans in to give you a big fake kiss and catcalls sound out in the auditorium.

Gosh it was awkward....

Since your photo hit the news stands, Senator Brandt had insisted you act like a couple so you could be the perfect symbol of American life. It'd gone over extremely well with the public who seemed to idolise your fake relationship, even if the two of you disliked every minute of it.

*Captain America and Lady Liberty....what a gas. It's all just a sham.*

**
“I feel like a phoney,” you complain to Steve backstage.

You'd gone all around the United States and you'd both become quite the celebrities. You got harassed whenever you went out in the streets and Senator Brandt had informed you that many soldiers kept your picture as a pin up on their bunks. That was certainly an odd feeling.

“Come on, Missy, we're doing our part,” Steve smiles.

“We're soldiers,” you remind him. “You may have forgotten that but I haven't. This is just a joke.”

“Don't be this way,” Steve says softly, hugging you close. “If we hadn't of done this, we never would've seen the world like this.”

“And being forced to smile and laugh and kiss is worth it?” you say harshly.

“Geez, Missy, at least we're doing something and we're not locked away in a lab,” Steve murmurs and you can hear the hurt in his voice. “I didn't realise it was that horrible for you.”

You know exactly what he's referring to. He's upset that you'd feel so strongly about being publicly tied to him.

“Stevie,” you sigh. “It's not that. It really isn't. You know I think you're swell but wouldn't you think Peggy would just hate seeing you do this?”

Steve stares down into your face and you're acutely aware how close he is to you, “I barely think she notices me and I think you're just getting the heebie jeebies because we're in Italy and you know Buck is not far away.”

“Am not,” you hiss defiantly. “And besides, Peggy is really sweet on you, Steve. Any dumb John can see that. I ain't gonna ruin that for you by doing this charade any longer. You deserve a shot.”

“So you do care,” Steve teases you.

“Of course I care you idiot,” you laugh. “You're my best friend. I want you to be happy.”

Steve kisses the top of your head and you hear the dancers around you swooning.

Oh Jesus Christ...

“I want that for you too, Missy,” he smiles. “Now come on, young lady, we have a show to do.”

“Not today, Stevie,” you shake your head. “I need some air.”

“Oh, alright,” Steve says, concerned. “Are you feeling ok?”

“No, I need to lie down,” you lie.

You break out of his embrace, urgently moving to the assigned tent you'd got. Suddenly you desperately wanted to be alone, you desperately wanted to read your letters again. You'd not heard from Bucky in a while and the last page he'd written to you was well worn by now with all the times you'd read it.
Dear Missy,

We're going behind enemy lines to Azzano today. On the one hand I'm excited to be finally going into combat, one the other, I'm scared of never coming back.

Doesn't sound very manly to admit that somehow but I know you'd never judge me for it. I've always felt comfortable telling you anything.

I'm glad you're keeping Steve safe. Sounds like life is pretty normal back home.

I miss you both terribly. If there's one thing I can do at least, it's to make it a better world for you two by fighting.

I also wanted to say I'm sorry. I'm sorry for shouting at you on my last night in Brooklyn. I know you were only trying to help me in your own way. If I have one regret, it'll always be that.

Keep the home fires burning for me.

Yours,

James Buchanan Barnes.

For the millionth time you traced the ink lines on the letter, wondering about Bucky's state of mind when he wrote this. If he was opening up this much, his situation had to have been awful. He wasn't the greatest conversationalist about his feelings.

You lay there on your bunk, clutching the letter to your chest and you felt a pang of sadness wash over you. You missed him terribly too.

Steve bursts into the tent and you leap up, scrambling to shove the letter underneath your pillow before he spots you holding it.

“Missy, it's Bucky.” Steve pants, wide eyed. “That crowd, that was all that was left of his platoon from the Azzano mission.”

Your heart drops through the floor. What exactly was he saying? Was Bucky dead?

“Come on,” Steve says, grabbing your hand and pulling you outside where Peggy joins you and you all run into the Colonel's office.

“Oh it's the Star Spangled Man with a Plan and his Liberty Island sweetheart,” the Colonel says dryly, not bothering to look either of you in the face.

“I need the casualty list from Azzano,” Steve says firmly.

“You don't get to give me orders, son,” Colonel Philips sighs, finally looking up.

“We just need one name, sir,” you plead. “Sergeant James Barnes.”

“I've signed more condolence letters than I care to today, miss. Barnes does sound familiar,” the
Colonel says stoically.

*No...please no...*

Steve spots your stricken face and puts a hand on your shoulder, squeezing it gently, “Sir, what about the others? Is there a rescue mission?”

“The rescue mission is called winning the war,” Colonel Philips scoffs.

“That's not good enough, sir!” you snap. “You know where they are-”

“Young lady, they’re thirty miles behind the lines, through the most heavily fortified territory in Europe. We'd lose more men than we'd save. But I don't expect you to understand that, because you're a goddamn chorus girl.”

You're about to smack the table where he's working and break it to bits but Steve restrains you.

“We understand just fine, sir,” Steve says through gritted teeth.

“Well understand it somewhere else. The both of you have some place to be soon,” the Colonel says with a dismissive wave.

You catch Steve studying the map displayed on the wall before he nods cordially and drags you outside.

“What the heck are you doing?” you ask, twisting out of his grip.

“We're going to save that platoon and Bucky...if he's still alive,” Steve says with the most fierce expression you've ever seen on his face.

“You heard the Colonel, your friend is most likely dead,” Peggy says from behind you.

“I've gotta be sure,” Steve replies. “It's the right thing to do. Missy, are you with me?”

“Always, Rogers, you know that,” you smile.

“Peggy, you told me I was meant for more than this. Do you still believe that?” Steve asks.

Oh, so they must've had a private conversation whilst you were in your tent.

*Go get her, Stevie.*

“I meant every word,” Peggy nods, smiling.

“Then let us go,” Steve implores.

“I'll do better than that,” Peggy laughs. “I'll help you.”

So begins your preparations to go behind enemy lines. You have to admit you're nervous but more than anything, you just need to know if Bucky's still alive because if not, was any of this worth it?

Chapter End Notes
I know there's a DC Lady Liberty but the name was just too perfect to pass up, so you're now the Marvel version :).

Also Steve is immensely precious and should be protected at all costs!
The second you got on Howard Stark's plane you realised you hated heights with a passion. You were looking down at the ground thousands of feet below you and you felt ill.

Steve was chatting with Peggy about the mission around Krausberg and messing around with his Captain America shield. You don't know how he was so calm when you felt like a bowl of Jell-o.

“You ok, Missy?” Steve asks, noticing your green face.

“Swell,” you mumble. “I'll be fine when I'm on firm soil.”

“Chin up,” Peggy smiles warmly at you. “We're nearly there.”

You take a deep breath and look out of the window again. Maybe if you concentrated on the landscape you would feel less sick. The rolling greenery underneath you was extremely marred with the gouges of trench warfare. You felt quite sad at seeing how much the war had ripped apart Europe. This country must have been beautiful once upon a time.

Steve broke you out of your reverie with his awkward stammering.

“Do you fondue?” he stuttered, looking from Peggy to Howard.

Oh gosh, he thought they were trying to go steady....Stevie you couldn't be more wrong.

Peggy just gives you an exasperated look and you have to stifle your giggle. Steve was one dime short of a dollar sometimes.

“Here is your transponder. Activate it when you're ready and we'll find you,” she says, giving you a gizmo which you stash in your knapsack.
Before you know it, Steve is grabbing your arm and pulling you to the door of the plane.

“What in the Sam heck are you doing?!” you cry.

Steve ignores you and turns to Peggy, “The second we're out, turn this plane around and get out.”

“I'm sorry?” Peggy says in surprise. “You can't give me orders!”

“The hell I can't, I'm a Captain,” Steve smiles. “And Missy's a Sergeant.”

Without a word he pulled you out of the plane and you're not ashamed to say you screamed like Fay Wray in King Kong the entire way down. You were sure you were going to smash onto the mountainside and die but you were mildly surprised when Steve wound an arm around you and grabbed onto a fast approaching tree, slowing your descent as the branch bended. When you finally touched the ground, you sank onto the grass and had to take in several shaky breaths.

“Missy?” Steve says in concern.

“I'm alright,” you say, scrambling to your feet and trying to regain some of your dignity back.

You look up to see Steve flashing you the widest amused grin you'd ever seen on him.

“You got a set of lungs on you, you know that?” he laughs.

“Can it, Rogers,” you hiss, brushing off your Lady Liberty suit. “You ever tell anyone about that I swear you'll be wearing that smile on the side of your face.”

“Such terrible language from a dame,” Steve smiles. “Come on, Missy. We've got people to save.”

“Yes, Captain,” you say sarcastically before moving forward through the woods.

The both of you sneak forward until you hit the road. When an armoured vehicle arrives, you hurriedly duck down but Steve just jumps into the back of it and knocks out two guards.

Since when did he get so brave?!

You leap in after him and hide yourself under some tarpaulin whilst Steve drives into the Hydra base.

“I'll distract them, you get in and find the men,” Steve whispers to you once you're inside the confines of the compound.

“Be safe, Stevie,” you whisper back.

You sneak out from under the tarpaulin and ensconce yourself behind a truck as you wait for guards to go past. Your heart is hammering wildly as the adrenalin takes over and you sprint like the wind into the compound, diving behind a set of pipes and shimmying up to the catwalk above. Holy cow, you can move so quickly since the serum! Even climbing was little effort.

You stalk over the grated walkway until you're over a bunch of cages with soldiers in that you presume to be the missing platoon.

“Howdy guys,” you say, smiling at them.

“Sweet Jesus!” one of the men catcalls. “Hey darling, you look mighty fine. Have the Fritz decided to give us a gift?”
“It's your lucky day, boys,” you say, jumping down into the area. “I'm here to save your asses.”

“A dame?” another man scoffs. “Geez, the army must be shit outta luck if they're sending women after us.”

“You hold your goddamn tongue,” you spit before wrenching the cell door open so hard the lock splinters into pieces.

“Well holy shit,” the man breathes. “I take it all back, sweetheart.”

Steve catches up to you, noticing the stunned faces of the soldiers who haven't made a single move to get out of their prison.

“Just who the hell are you guys supposed to be?” another guy calls.

“Captain America,” Steve replies, busting another cell open. “And this is Lady Liberty. I wouldn't give her any sass now. She's got a fierce right hook.”

“Does she have a fierce kiss too?” an unfortunate soldier pipes up.

Steve grabs the guy by the scruff of his shirt and bodily throws him out of the cell. All of his fellow platoon members start snickering.

“You say anything like that again and you'll have her to deal with,” Steve growls. “And she hits harder than I do.”

“Woah, alright buddy,” the soldier says.

“Now....we're looking for James Barnes,” you interrupt before the situation gets too ugly and you draw attention to yourself.

“There's an isolation ward in the factory but no one's ever come back from it,” a guy offers.

“All right. The tree line is Northwest, 80 yards past the gate. Get out fast and give 'em hell. I'll meet you guys in the clearing with anybody else I find,” Steve orders. “Come on Missy, let's scram.”

The both of you race on and you hear the sound of explosions behind you as the ground rumbles beneath your feet. You don't find any more soldiers along the way but you knock out a few Hydra guards which makes you feel a little better.

“Missy look!” Steve hisses quietly and you see someone who's obviously high up in the chain of command racing away with a briefcase.

You're about to run after him when a voice makes you stop dead in your tracks.

“Sergeant 32557...”

“Bucky,” you breath and Steve's head whips round.

“What did you say?” he almost whispers.

“I heard Bucky,” you murmur and walk almost like you're in a trance towards the voice.

“Sergeant 32557....”
You move into an experiment room and you see him. Your heart stops completely as you take in his state. He's strapped to a gurney and muttering intensely to himself.

_Oh Buck..._

Within mere seconds you're by his side and Steve is not far behind you.

“Hi doll,” Bucky grins at you with an almost delirious expression. “Damn, have I died? I gotta be in heaven to have a gal this pretty staring at me.”

You're not great at hiding your furious blush. You rationalise it by thinking that Buck's state of mind was not grand right now. He would say anything, it didn't _mean_ anything.

“Oh my god, Bucky, what the hell did they do?!” Steve says, starting to unbuckle the straps.

“Steve?” Bucky says in surprise.

“Yeah it's me, Buck. God, I thought you were dead.”

Steve manages to unlash the last leather belt and pulls Bucky to his feet. It's now you notice exactly how tall Steve has gotten. He practically towers over your friend now.

“I thought you were smaller,” Bucky says, not really comprehending the change in Steve.

“We need to go,” Steve urges.

“What happened?”

“I joined the army,” Steve smiles. “So did Missy.”

He nods to you and you've never seen Bucky so flustered.

“That's Missy?! Steve, you gotta stop pulling my leg, you punk,” Bucky shakes his head furiously.

“It really is me, Buck,” you smile. “You look like shit.”

“Well holy hell, that is you isn't it?” Bucky's eyes widen as he catches your familiar cuss words. “Goddamn, doll...”

“Close your mouth, Sergeant Barnes,” Steve chuckles in amusement. “We've got places to be.”

“But...I mean...wow,” Bucky stammers, his ladykiller demeanour completely gone as he can't seem to believe the sight before him.

“Buck, come on,” Steve sighs, pulling him out. “Missy, you too.”

A large explosion within the factory shocks you to your senses. There's no time to revel in the fact you found your friend again. This whole place was going to go up like the Fourth of July.

All of you start rushing towards the catwalk again, haring down as your feet slam onto the metallic floor, sending harsh echoes around the compound. You feel elated, you feel vindicated even. You couldn't wait to rub this in Colonel Philips' face. Bucky was alive and he was unharmed.

The sight of two Nazi officers to the side of you makes you skid to a grinding halt.

_Oh damn, they look important. Maybe this is a good opportunity._
“It's Schmidt,” Bucky whispers in your ear.

So this was Johann Schmidt, the man Erskine had warned you about. He certainly didn't look that strong but you shouldn't judge a book by its cover. He definitely gave off an air of dangerousness mixed in with some maniacal fanaticism. You didn't have to be a psychological expert to know this man was very unhinged and that was all but confirmed for you when his face split into the most terrifying smile you'd ever seen.

“Captain America! How exciting! I'm a great fan of your films. So Dr. Erskine managed it after all. Not exactly an improvement, but still impressive. Oh and you brought your sweetheart along with you. Miss Liberty, or shall I address you as Lady?”

“You can address my fist if you want to,” you hiss.

Schmidt chuckles to himself, the sound reverberating in his chest, “And this is why Erskine was a fool. Women have no place in war. You are the weaker sex and always will be. I shall greatly enjoy showing you your place in this world, Miss Liberty.”

Your anger took over as you stepped forward so you were almost nose to nose with the madman before you delivered a punch so hard it knocked him back across the gangway.

“Allow me to show you yours first,” you say, mockingly courtesying.

“You've got no idea what we're capable of.” Steve says, coming to stand next to you and the two of you form a barrier, shielding Bucky away from the fight.

“Haven't I?” Schmidt smiles before he launches himself at Steve who brings his shield up just in time to deflect the man.

The trade of blows is vicious. You don't have a shield like Steve does so you have to duck like a boxer as Schmidt's fist comes barrelling towards you. The kick you deliver to his stomach in retaliation winds him momentarily but you're not fast enough to get away as he grips your suit, flinging you back. You go flying over the railing and wildly grab onto the walkway. You pretty much almost let go in pure fear as you looked down at the raging fire of explosions beneath you.

God I really really hate heights.

“Missy?!” Steve calls for you, ready to turn around and save you but Bucky scrambles to the edge of the gangway.

“I got her, Stevie, keep fighting!” he yells as he pulls you back up with great effort. “Holy cow, doll, you got heavy!”

“Ain't nobody teach you manners, Barnes?” you fire back. “It's rude to say that about a lady.”

“Darlin’, you ain't no lady,” Bucky grunts as he manages to get you back over the railings.

“I thought you liked that about me;” you joke as you stumble back to your feet, warily looking towards Steve who seemed to be handling Schmidt quite well.

“Sure do, kid,” Bucky laughs. “Now go help Steve. Somehow I don't think I'm gonna be useful here.”

“Just stay and look pretty,” you smirk before running towards the two grappling men and leaping with the ease of an acrobat over the brawl and landing behind Schmidt, kicking him fiercely in the
back of the head.

There's the sound of grinding gears as Schmidt's partner starts retracting the walkway and a gap forms between Steve and Schmidt. Oh holy hell, you were definitely on the wrong side right now but Schmidt seemed to be blocking your route back.

“No matter what lies Erskine told you, you see I was his greatest success! You are deluded, Captain. You pretend to be a simple soldier, but in reality you are just afraid to admit that we have left humanity behind. Unlike you, I embrace it proudly. Without fear!” Schmidt monologues before peeling his goddamn face off.

You'd never seen something as grotesque as the display before you. It was almost like Schmidt was ripping his skin off down to the muscle tissue and bone. It glistened slightly like wet leather and you really wanted to hurl about now.

“Then why don't you fight me if you're without fear?” Steve shouts back, flicking his eyes to you, trying to say something silently.

“Because I have other plans, Captain,” Schmidt smiles before you hear the click of a gun behind your head and turn to see Zola holding a revolver tightly. “Erskine may have been a fool to use the serum on a woman but it presents interesting opportunities, no? Imagine the child of a super soldier pairing! The possibilities! An army of pure strength, of pure power, the next generation and the new dawn!”

“You come near me like that and you'll regret it,” you spit, mentally trying to calculate how you could get out of this.

“You are not of Aryan blood but I will make an exception for you,” Schmidt chuckles horribly. “This is not to say you're displeasing Miss Liberty. On the contrary, you are a fine example of womanhood and I shall breed fine heirs with you.”

“The hell you will!” Bucky growls from across the gangway. “You touch her, you're dead! You hear me!”

“Gentleman, I grow weary of this talk so I will bid you farewell. I should thank you for the wonderful gift you have given me,” Schmidt says, turning on his heel before he holds his own gun to you. “Now walk.”

There's nothing you can do. You have two guns trained on you and no hope of dodging the bullet. You may be faster but you're not that fast.

“We'll find you, Missy!” Steve calls, panic evident in his face.

“And we ain't gonna stop until we do!” Bucky yells.

Schmidt just laughs to himself as he escorts you into an elevator and you take one last look at your friends before the doors close.

“Understand this is nothing personal,” Schmidt says, taking a lock of your hair and inhaling the scent in way that makes your skin crawl. “Those enhanced by the serum shall be the gods of the new world. I am giving you a grand opportunity, despite your....American heritage. Do not reject this in haste. You shall be Eve to all.”

“Never gonna happen,” you growl, stepping as far back as you can, away from the two Nazis.
Schmidt's face changes and you know you've annoyed the heck out of him, “Foolish girl! If you do not willingly give yourself, you will be taken by force. I told you I would put you in your place and I have extended more than enough courtesy to you but I have little patience for a woman's hysteria.”

“I'll rip the rest of your goddamn skin off if you try,” you snarl.

Schmidt tuts at you before turning to Zola, “And this is why the Americans need to be brought to their knees. Their women are lax in morals, swear like common soldiers and practise violence.”

“Quite,” Zola nods, almost fervently.

The lift stops and the doors open to a one man plane. You're very confused for a second before Schmidt tosses some car keys towards Zola, “Not a scratch, Doctor. Make sure our guest is adequately restrained beforehand.”

You get the impression Zola's just as perplexed as you are as you both watch Schmidt get into the plane and take off. Not a moment before Zola regained his composure, you socked him straight in the face. Unfortunately for you, his finger closed around the trigger of his revolver and the gun went off, sending a bullet punching into your shoulder.

There were not enough cuss words to adequately describe the pain you felt as the bullet tore deep into your muscles but you weren't going to waste your chance. You ran to the edge of the platform, not daring to linger for too long in case you chickened out and you just leapt into the unknown.

The ground came rushing towards you faster than you expected but luckily for you, a Hydra guard broke your fall as you crash landed on top of him, breaking his neck in the process.

*That wasn't so bad.*

You sprinted across the exploding compound, dodging pieces of shrapnel being flung from the factory innards. You wanted to be in the war, well you certainly got your wish. As you take out Hydra guards left right and centre, you scoop up their ident tags and place them in your knapsack. Your fighting is fierce as you're of one singular mind. You just want to get back to Steve and Bucky.

The blood from your own wound is beginning to be outdone by the blood spray of the men you kill. Your Lady Liberty suit is completely stained and ripped in places. You look like one of the monsters in a silent film. Maybe you are at this point. After all, these men are just like the soldiers in the US army, following orders. You're pretty sure not all of them believe Schmidt's mad ideas.

As you break past the final barrier of the compound, a last explosion rocks the factory and the structure crumples into melting metal and flames. It's almost strangely hypnotic in a way.

You grab one of the motorbikes that's sat outside and turn it on, racing off into the night.

**
It takes you a long time to return to the US camp. Your motorbike ran out of fuel a while ago so you've been walking the rest of the way since. The transponder had also ended up getting smashed to pieces when you jumped off the roof so that was a no go either.

The bullet hole in your shoulder has long since closed and you'd marvelled at how your skin pushed out of bullet and had knitted itself back together. You guessed this was an effect of the serum.

You get water from the rivers, eat fruit from wild trees and sadly have to hunt a rabbit or two but eventually the familiar tents and the sound of singing assaults your senses.

You stride into the base without a goddamn care in the world, despite the many shocked looks you get. Two lines start forming around you and the sound of clapping starts.

Immediately the Colonel comes out of his tent to see what the noise was followed by Peggy and finally your two boys.

“Missy?!” Steve almost screams as he runs towards you but stops a few feet away as he takes in the sheer amount of blood splattered all over you.

“Sergeant,” the Colonel says, striding towards you also. “I'd just sent off your death report to your daddy. You'd better start explaining yourself.”

You take off the knapsack and pour out the many many ident tags onto the dirt in front of you.

“How's that for a chorus girl?” you challenge. “Happy to report that Hydra's army is a bit low on force right now.”

“Well I'll be damned,” Colonel Philips mutters.

“So I'll take that disciplinary with pride, sir,” you say, standing up straight.

“That won't be necessary, Missy,” the Colonel smirks. “Welcome back, Lady Liberty. Keep that torch shining or I might change my mind.”

“Yes, sir,” you grin and look around you to the smiling soldiers. “Now will somebody get me a goddamn drink? I just walked all the way from Krausberg and I'm mighty thirsty.”

That set everyone off into roaring laughter and cheers erupted around you as the troops clapped you on the back and shook your hand. You swelled with pride at having been accepted as one of them. You'd made it. You were officially a soldier, not just a title in a damned spandex suit.

Steve closed the distance and hugged you tightly, “God Missy, I was worried. I was just planning your rescue mission.”

“Looks like I can take care of myself,” you snort.

Steve breaks away and ruffles your hair before realising how much blood was still matted in it and he grimaces slightly, “You need a bath.”

“I would love nothing better,” you giggle.

Steve breaks away and Bucky looks at you, almost shyly before hugging you too. He surprises you with how tightly he's holding on.

“Ain't nothing killing you, huh sweetcheeks?” he chuckles.
“Not today, Buck,” you reply, savouring the moment. “Had to stay alive just so I could kick your goddamn ass for getting yourself captured.”

“Oh come on,” Bucky huffs, pulling away. “Give a guy a break!”

“Alright, just this once but only because I'm happy to see ya,” you smile which Bucky returns wholeheartedly.

“Glad to see ya too, doll. Now Stevie's right, you need to wash up. Can barely see you under all that Fritz blood.”

“You can't order me around, Barnes,” you stick your tongue out childishly. “We're the same rank. Get used it.”

With that you walk past them both, heading towards the communal washroom.

As you leave, you can swear you hear Steve mutter to Bucky 'Well just ask her'. You wonder what that's all about but as soon as you're sinking into some hot water, you don't really care. Right now you were just glad to be back and you were glad you were back with your friends.
Chapter Summary

You and Steve put together a platoon to help the fight against Hydra

Chapter Notes

Short character insight chapter here :) sometimes it's good to have a break from action.

Thanks for the lovely kudos and comments so far! <3

Any questions/comments/prompts/one shots my email is theliveshipparagon@gmail.com and my tumblr is theliveshipparagon

Happy reading guys and dolls!

- TLP xx

(Again, I suck at proofreading)

Songs mentioned in this chapter if you want to play them whilst reading:
Naughty Sweetie Blues - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6nHvA4oCdQI
Sliphorn Jive - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VTAljurg1WI
Tuxedo Junction - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iBTYcqtaOjg

You were all shipped off to London for a secret meeting with the heads of the Allies. To say things had changed between you three friends would be an understatement. It was almost like Bucky was a little reticent to talk to you even though he'd be perfectly chatty with Steve or flirtatious with the female cabin crew on the planes.

Had you done something? Had you said something?

It was strange that's for sure but you just brush it off as Bucky not being used to you looking like this. Maybe it was just throwing him off a little?

When you finally reached HQ, you and Steve were pointing out the weapons factories on a large map. You'd gotten the briefest look at the strategic positions in the Krausberg Hydra base but that's all it was...a brief look.

“Guess nobody's perfect, eh?” Peggy jokes.

“Shucks, I kinda feel bad I didn't pay more attention now,” you say, ruffling your hair slightly in frustration.

“It's alright, Missy,” Peggy smiles. “You did an excellent job. Don't admonish yourself for it.”
“Sergeant Barnes said there was another facility not marked that they were shipping parts too as well,” Steve adds.

“Agent Carter,” Colonel Philips says from the other side of the table. “I want every available eyeball looking for that main Hydra base. You got that?”

“What about them?” Peggy nods to you two.

“We are gonna set a fire under Johann Schmidt's ass. What do you say, Rogers, Missy? It's your map, you think you can wipe Hydra off of it?”

“You're goddamn right we can,” you smirk.

“Excellent, we're putting together our best men,” the Colonel says, about to reach for some papers.

“With all due respect Sir, so are we,” Steve smiles.

**

That's how you came to be in a London pub with several of the men you'd helped jailbreak from the Hydra facility.

You'd heard from Steve how much they'd disrupted the base by stealing one of the tanks so they certainly had good strategies. In all fairness, they were also a complete hoot too. You especially liked Falsworth, the British marksman. He certainly was just as crazy as you were.

“You want us to go back into the line of fire?” he says in that overly posh voice that you found sweet. “Sounds rather fun actually!”

There's a general chorus of “I'm in” before all you're left looking at is Dum Dum Dugan who seems to be mulling it over.

“I'll fight but you gotta do one thing for me,” he says, leaning over the table dramatically.

“Oh yeah?” Steve asks.

“Get us a running tab and Missy, save me a dance,” Dugan winks.

“You couldn't handle me soldier,” you laugh.

“I'd like the opportunity to try Ma'am,” Dugan grins.

“Let's see how well you fight first,” you shake your head, smiling before you head to the ladies room.

On the way you meet Peggy who looks a knockout in her red dress and upon seeing you, she gets this wicked twinkle in her eyes. You suddenly feel like a deer in the crosshairs as she advances towards you before pulling you into the ladies room.

“I knew you wouldn't be in a dress,” she smiles at your normal attire of a shirt and overalls. “How
about for once you show those men you can be a soldier and a woman?”

Thinking about it that's what you always admired about Peggy, that she never had to sacrifice her femininity to be respected. Maybe you could learn a thing or two from her.

“What did you have in mind?” you ask.

She reaches into her large handbag and pulls out a deep green dress and hands it to you.

“Oh no, I can't,” you start babbling, a little nervous.


Before you know it, she's stripping your clothing off and putting you in this dress that clings to all your new curves. It feels strange, wrong even but as you look in the mirror, it was like seeing a different person entirely. Gone was the scrappy flat chested tomboy and in her place was this Hollywood siren.

Is that really me?!

Peggy then starts fussing with your hair and putting make up on you. You'd never felt more like a child's doll in your life! Did women really have to go through all this bullhickey? Sure you had to wear some make up for Lady Liberty but never with the intention of trying to attract anybody or make a statement.

“There we are,” Peggy announces. “Spick and span.”

“How do I do this?” you say, completely out of your depth.

“Confidence, Missy,” Peggy smirks. “You're a sergeant, act like one.”

She leads you out again and you can see from around the pillar in the pub that Bucky has joined Steve.

Oh no....he can't see me like this....

“I...I just need a minute,” you tell Peggy, hanging back.

“You look marvellous,” she tries to encourage you.

“You go on, Peggy. I'll catch up. I just need to wrap my head around this.”

“Alright, but if you linger too long I'm coming back,” she laughs before you see her stride over to Steve and Bucky.

You watch as Bucky turns on his full charm and roll your eyes. Typical Buck alright. Any pretty dame that crossed his path was an easy target. You did find it funny however when Peggy blatantly ignored him for Steve.

Gosh you two are so sweet together!

“0800 Captain,” Peggy smiles to Steve who looks at her as though his brain's taken a vacation.

“Yes Ma'am,” he mumbles, completely transfixed.

When she goes over to the bar you hear Bucky whisper to Steve, “I'm invisible. I'm...I'm turning
into you. It's like some horrible dream.”

You find the confidence you needed after hearing that to walk over. Maybe it's because Bucky wasn't fully himself and you felt like you understood that right now.

“Goddamn Missy!” Steve murmurs, catching sight of you and his eyes go wide. “I don't think I've ever seen you wear a dress. Jesus, Buck, look!”

Bucky turning round to see you was probably the most comical sight you'd ever witnessed. His mouth drops open and his drink is suddenly long forgotten. It's like he can't tear his eyes away from you and it starts making you a little self conscious.

*Say something would ya?*

“I...uh....ah rats this was a stupid idea,” you say, turning round to go back to change as you psych yourself out more and more.

“No, hey, darlin',” Dugan grins at you. “Where you going? You've not given me that dance yet!”

Before you know it, Dugan is pulling you out onto the main floor, his arm around your waist and you're moving to the rhythm of 'Naughty Sweet Blues'. You're thanking the girls at the factory for insisting you learn to dance because you're sure you might have stepped on Dugan's toes otherwise as you move with more grace than you realised.

“Goddamn you're beautiful,” Dugan mumbles. “Sure wish to heck you weren't with the Captain.”

“I'm not,” you laugh. “That's just something they put on the posters.”

“Oh? So you're saying a guy's got a chance?” Dugan smirks, twirling you round so your dress flares out at the bottom.

“Are you trying to court your superior officer?” you smile playfully.

“Sweetheart, I'd follow your orders any day,” Dugan says, bringing you close to him.

“Mind if I cut in?” Falsworth asks, standing politely to the side.

“Sure, why not,” Dugan says, regarding his newfound friend. “I'm sure it'll only confirm for the lady that I'm the clear choice here.”

“Very drôle, Dugan,” Falsworth shakes his head before cordially taking your waist and leading you in a more energetic dance which you think is the Sliphorn Jive. “You certainly know how to move, Missy.”

“I got told to practice a lot,” you answer honestly.

“It's rather refreshing having a lady in the army I must say,” Falsworth smiles at you. “Especially one such as yourself. Those Jerrys never knew what hit them. Bloody marvellous.”

“Thanks,” you laugh. “You're a riot, you know that?”

“I do try my best,” Falsworth says, picking you up and spinning you round before putting you back on the floor. “I look forward to working with you sergeant.”

It was kinda nice just dancing with someone who didn't expect a thing from you and you clearly didn't get the vibe that Falsworth wanted anything like Dugan did. This was just making you like
The song finishes and you glance ever so briefly over at Steve and Bucky. Steve is just grinning at you like an idiot and you're sure he's just happy you're doing something girly for once. Bucky on the other hand.....Bucky looks miserable and annoyed. You would've thought he was just still sour from Peggy's rejection but for the fact he was looking right at you.

*What the heck did I do now?*

“Can I buy you a drink?” Falsworth asks.

“Sure,” you answer.

Falsworth lifts your hand and kisses the back of it, “And what would Lady Liberty like?”

“Surprise me,” you wink. “I can handle a lot.”

“I'm sure you can,” Falsworth laughs before walking you back to the bar area and disappearing into the crowd by the unit.

“Never knew you could swing a wing, Missy,” Steve chuckles to himself.

“Yeah well my factory girls said I oughta learn and now I'm kinda glad,” you smile. “Woulda been mighty embarrassing otherwise just now.”

Bucky's still saying nothing and looking gloomily behind him to where Falsworth is stood by the bar.

“Anyway Steve,” you say, ignoring Bucky's little childish tantrum over whatever it was. “You not dancing with Peggy?”

“She couldn't stay long,” Steve explains. “And not like I have your moves anyway. I would probably fall over.”

“Well I'm not teaching you,” you laugh. “I like my toes unstomped.”

Falsworth returns with two drinks in hand and passes one to you, “That, my dear, is the finest English navy rum. I am ever so curious to see what you think.”

“What is it you say when you're about to drink?” you say, vaguely remembering some Brit custom.

“Chin chin, love,” Falsworth smiles, clinking the glasses together.

Goddamn this rum was strong! It was nice though, sort of a dark caramel, harsh sugar taste that warmed your throat as it ran down. Curiously you would've been knocked on your ass by such a potent drink before but it wasn't even making you tipsy. Another side effect of the serum? That was a pretty big trade off to never be able to get drunk again.

“Oh I'm definitely bringing some of that back home,” you nod. “I like that.”

“A girl after my own heart,” Falsworth laughs.

Bucky suddenly gets up and barges past the Englishman muttering something about going to the restroom.

“What in the Sam heck was that about?” you ask Steve.
“No idea,” Steve shakes his head. “He's been real angry the entire night about something. Want me to talk to him?”

“Please,” you say. “I'm a little worried.”

“Don't worry, I'll straighten him out,” Steve says reassuringly, patting you on the shoulder before following his friend.

There's a pregnant silence that follows whilst the little troop you have sips more of their drinks.

“Looks like Barnes' got a bee in his bonnet,” Dugan laughs, lacing his fingers behind his head.

“Guess the poor guy's not used to be sidelined by women,” Jim Morita pipes up knowingly.

“Buck always was a ladykiller back home,” you nod.

“Not here, he ain't,” Jim snorts.

“Now now, that's not very sporting,” Falsworth chides.

“Neither is this, pal,” Bucky says from right behind your ear and you almost jump in fright as he pulls you out onto the dancefloor.

_How did he get behind me without me knowing?!_

Suddenly you're pulled flush to Bucky and your mind doesn't know what to do so you go into automatic mode, moving where he moves to the sounds of _Tuxedo Junction_.

“You shouldn't let those assholes dance with you dollface,” Bucky hisses. “They ain't got the right intentions.”

“Is that why you're mad?” you ask him outright as he spins you around him.

“Pretty gal like you can be taken advantage of,” Bucky carries on like he didn't hear your question. “They gotta know they've got _me_ to get through if they wanna come anywhere near ya.”

“It was just a dance and a drink, Buck,” you say getting annoyed. “Not like I'm gonna go home with them or anything. Jesus....you think I'm that easy?”

Bucky's face changes into something softer as he sighs, “No, darlin'. It's them I don't trust. I know what soldiers are like.”

“So do I,” you counter. “I am one. Remember?”

“I still can't get my goddamn head around it,” Bucky murmurs, bringing you in closer for a slower part of the song. “One minute you're this wiry girl who can knock a grown man on his ass and the next....”

“I'm a _woman_ who can knock grown men on their asses?” you finish for him, raising your eyebrow.

“All those chuckleheads see is a beautiful dame. They don't see anything underneath that,” Bucky grits his jaw. “You're so much more than that, Missy.”

“I know I am and I can take care of myself,” you say firmly. “So stop being a grouch will ya? I've missed you and all you've done since we found you again is ignore me.”
“I didn't mean to,” Bucky says quietly, twirling with you. “I'm sorry, sweetheart.”

“Can I just have my James Barnes back please?” you huff. “He was much more fun.”

Bucky snorts for a second before that familiar charming smirk comes onto his face, “Be careful what you wish for Missy.”

He presses you against him for a slow dance, his arm wrapping entirely around your waist and his other hand gently holding yours as he looks into your eyes with that disarming expression. Half of you wants to melt on the spot, the other half is trying to tell you to remember that this was your friend.

“How's this, doll?” Bucky murmurs against your ear and you try your best to repress the shiver that wants to make its way up your spine.

“Hmm. getting there,” you smile. “Not enough to make Steve's guys jealous though.”

“Oh is that what we're going for?” Bucky chuckles. “In that case I ain't even getting started.”

_Oh hell. What the heck have I started now?!

_Bucky dips you backwards, his face inches from your chest and he lingers there for a moment before pulling you back up and burying his face in your hair. You literally can't think of anything at this point and you see the shocked expression of Steve as you look towards the bar and the sour faces of your little troop.

“Is it working then, Missy?” Bucky grins.

“Oh huh,” you breathe, unable to form words.

_Holy cow, you'd never been on the receiving end of Bucky's full charm before and it was making you completely dizzy. Is that what all his girls must have felt like? God it was a wonder they ever managed to stand up straight!

“As much as I hate the others saying this about you, I gotta say, you look beautiful doll,” Bucky whispers as you both pirouette around into a more secluded section of the dancefloor. “Not that you weren't a pretty gal before but goddamn...you could be an actress.”

“Tried it,” you laugh. “Hated it. Those films I made with Stevie will haunt me forever.”

“Hey I thought they were kinda sweet,” Bucky chuckles. “And I loved the outfit.”

“Oh you would,” you snort. “You're such a flirt Buck.”

“You wouldn't have me any other way, darlin',” Bucky grins before his face gets a little serious. “Can I ask you somethin', Missy?”

“Sure,” you nod.

“I....uh.....,” Bucky stammers, losing his charming demeanour for a more nervous one. “Shoot....”

“Last orders!” the landlord of the pub calls.

Before Bucky can manage to get his words out, the whole of your troop including Steve descends upon the two of you.

“Another time, doll,” Bucky smiles, his suave mannerisms returning instantly.

“All right you rag tag bunch,” Steve grins. “Rest up. Tomorrow I get our orders.”

There’s a great deal of whooping and loudness that you’re sure is going to get you barred from this establishment if you don’t corral them into line.

You break out of Buck’s arms and turn around, hands behind your back and in your best Lady Liberty voice you say, “Fall in you rowdy howling commandos! Reconvene at 1200. Is that understood?”

“Hey, Howling Commandos, I like that,” Dugan grins. “Makes us sound kind of dashing right?”

You just stare him out until he stands up straighter and salutes you.

“Yes Ma’am,” Dugan smirks. “Understood loud and clear. I ain’t about to receive the same beating you gave the Fritz.”

“Very good, dismissed,” you nod and turn to Steve, winking at him.

Your little mismatched platoon leaves a little while after and you end up walking back to your accommodation with Steve and Bucky on either arm, Steve carrying your old clothes.

“That was not the night I was expecting,” Steve says pleasantly.

“Me neither,” you laugh. “You can thank your girl for forcing me into this outfit.”

“Uh..she's not...Peggy's not...,” Steve stammers, blushing.

“Stevie, that dame only has peepers for you,” Bucky chuckles. “Any idiot can see that.”

“That's what I told him,” you say, nudging Bucky with your elbow. “But he didn't believe me.”

“Stevie, Stevie, Stevie,” Bucky sighs. “Just ask her out.”

You make it to the door and unlink from the two men before messing with your key to get it in the lock.

“You're one to talk Buck,” Steve says cryptically before he nods to you. “Good night guys.”

“What was all that about?” you ask, confused.

“Don’t worry your pretty head about it, sweetheart,” Bucky dismisses. “Now you go on and get your beauty sleep.”

“Not that I need it Barnes,” you joke, taking your coat off and placing it on the peg behind the door.

“You sure don’t,” Bucky says softly before hesitantly approaching you and kissing your cheek. “Good night, Missy. I enjoyed dancing with you.”

With that he quickly left.

What the hell just happened? Normally Buck kisses you on the cheek all the time when he says
goodbye but this felt different for some reason, almost like he was anxious about it. That definitely wasn't normal....then again, nothing about this night has been normal.

*Just what the heck were you gonna ask me, Bucky?*
You get the orders to meet with Colonel Philips early in the morning. The sun had only just started coming up over the horizon.

To be honest, you're gosh darn groggy as you try and extract yourself from the warm bed. Last night was certainly a doozy and not in the way that involves alcohol. You were still drained from all the emotions you'd experienced. Fear of being overtly feminine for the first time, having the attention of multiple men, Bucky being angry, Bucky dancing so close with you, Bucky being so vulnerable for that split second...

*Goddamnit Buck. You're messing with my head.*

You dress and meet with Steve at the London headquarters and make your way into the waiting area. It takes a long time before anyone even acknowledges you're there for some reason. A blonde woman starts flirting with Steve and you mentally clock out at that point, wandering over to where the map of Europe is on the wall.

You study the tiny flags pinned to it which denote the Hydra bases. Luxembourg, Turin, Gdańsk, Warsaw, Prague and Lamia. Of all of those, only Luxembourg was the one that bordered Allied territory, all the rest were deep behind enemy lines. The Polish bases in particular would be a problem.

“Excuse me, Madam,” a guy says from the side of you.

You look round to see a man in full military uniform with slicked back hair and an impressively groomed moustache.
“Yes?” you reply.

“You're the one they call Lady Liberty, aren't you?” he asks, coming to stand next to you and looking at the map himself.

“That I am,” you nod. “And who might you be?”

“Ah so sorry.” the guy laughs. “Forgive my manners. Arnold Carstairs, I run the intelligence branch at Bletchley Park.”

“Pleasure to meet you Mr Carstairs,” you say formally.

“Arnold, please,” he prompts you. “Frightfully spread out aren't they? The bases I mean.”

“Yeah I was just thinking the Polish ones would be mighty tricky considering how deep the Fritz borders are right now and it may be best to approach them from the Baltic. Drop off in Sweden, they're neutral right now, and then cut across and down.”

“I hope you don't think I'm speaking out of turn,” Arnold starts and you're dreading some macho nonsense coming out of his mouth. “But you're a very good strategist.”

Oh, well...that wasn't what you were expecting at all.

“Uh, thank you,” you murmur, a little bit thrown off. “Why would that be out of turn?”

“Some women do not like receiving praise,” Arnold shrugs. “Agent Carter told me to jump off the nearest battlement, for instance.”

You can't help but laugh at that. You truly could picture Peggy getting annoyed at fawning men.

“Well I kinda like it,” you smile. “A gal needs a boosted ego now and then.”

“Quite,” Arnold nods. “One should always have their praises sung wherever possible.”

The sound of something knocking over catches your attention and you see the blonde woman throwing herself on Steve. The poor guy looks completely unsure of himself as he stumbles backwards. That is....until Peggy comes round the corner.

*Oh Stevie, why didn't you push her off a second sooner?!*

You can't hear the words but you can see Peggy's angry expression alright. Steve had really blown it.

“Trouble brewing?” Arnold asks, following your gaze.

“My friend is a prize idiot,” you snort. “Never had much female attention before and now he doesn't know what in the Sam heck to do with it.”

“And yourself?” Arnold continues.

“What about me?” you say confused.

“I know you were part of the super soldier experiment as well,” Arnold says knowingly. “We hear these things in Bletchley.”

“Oh...uh....well I certainly seem to be standing out a lot more,” you flush. “I'd rather just get on
with the war though.”

Arnold laughs heartily and puts his hand on your shoulder, “Now that I can appreciate.”

“What's going on?” Steve says as he reaches you and looks between you and Arnold.

“Just liaising with local intelligence,” you smile.

“You ought to watch yourself around this one,” Arnold chuckles. “She'll be stealing your Captaincy soon.”

With that he takes your hand and kisses the back of it lightly before departing.

“Goddamn, Missy,” Steve shakes his head. “You got guys going doll dizzy for you all over, huh? Am I gonna have to pretend to be your boyfriend again to get them to stop?”

“I can handle myself Stevie, I'm just making contacts. Intelligence is useful. Besides, you don't need to give Peggy another thing to be angry about,” you point out.

“Ah rats, you saw that?” Steve bluses.

“I saw that dame's tongue in your mouth, yeah,” you laugh. “Hard not to notice when you're knocking a bunch of stuff over.”

“I've messed up,” Steve hangs his head.

“Just give her time to cool off,” you say sagely. “She needs her space.”

“I guess,” Steve mutters. “So what about you and Buck?”

“What about us?” you ask.

“Well you were getting mighty cosy last night whilst you were dancing,” Steve smirks.

“That was just to annoy our troops,” you hurriedly say.

“Sure it was,” Steve laughs. “Because Bucky would go through his best moves just for that when he could've just grandstadded about knowing you for so long. That's a lot of effort for just 'annoying the troops'.”

“I'm not above hitting my superiors, Steve,” you hiss. “Stop pushing this. Bucky's my friend and we don't see each other like that.”

“Missy, get your head out of your rations tin,” Steve sighs. “Denial isn't pretty for a dame.”

You aim a well placed thump to Steve's arm and he winces heavily.

“Conversation over, Rogers,” you say firmly, turning your head back to the map.

“Captain Rogers, Sergeant?” a messenger says to your left. “Howard Stark wants to see you.”

“And that's all she wrote,” you huff, stalking off to the labs with Steve chuckling to himself the whole way as he follows.
“So at the moment my priority is making sure you two and your men don’t get killed,” Howard Stark announces, fiddling with various weapons on the table. “Now this fabric is carbon polymer. It should help you withstand the average German bayonet although Hydra’s not gonna attack you with a pocket knife.”

“It's something,” Steve smiles.

“That it is,” Howard says, grabbing a bundle from underneath the desk. “Why is why I incorporated it along with my own textile design into a new suit for Missy. I heard yours was kinda...shredded.”

“That's putting it politely,” you laugh. “You really made that for me?”

“I sure did, sweetheart,” Howard smiles, unfurling it out on the table and you let out an audible gasp.

It was still in the colours of the Statue of Liberty, that kind of faded green but you could see the texture was raised and cross hatched. The vital areas were a little more covered and it looked more like fitted armour than anything. On the chest area you had the radial spikes of the Liberty Crown in some kind of silvery material.

“My god this is amazing!” you cry.

“Should keep you relatively safe as long as you don't stand in front of a machine gun,” Howard chuckles. “Now, Steve, as for you, I hear you're quite attached to your shield?”

“It's handier than you'd think,” Steve says.

“Well I have some newer options I think you might enjoy,” Stark says fussing around the workspace. “This one has electrical relays and-”

“What about this one?” Steve asks, picking up a large round metallic disc.

“Oh no, that's a prototype,” Howard says hurriedly. “It's made of Vibranium. It's completely shock absorbent and weighs a third of the mass of steel.”

“Why hasn't everyone got one?” Steve asks confused.

“That's the rarest metal on Earth, kid,” Howard sighs. “That's all we got of that.”

“Well now I feel left out,” you joke.

“Don't think I've forgotten you, Missy,” Howard perks back up again, pulling a covered item over to you and swiping the fabric off with a flourish. “You'll need some defence where you're going too.”

“I'd say that looks more like offence,” Steve points out, staring down at the table.

You're staring down at a savage looking circular disc with pointed spikes coming off of it like the Liberty Crown. One segment seems to be a handle.

“Now I know what you're thinking,” Howard says, catching your bemused expression. “Doesn't
look like much right? But how about when I do this?”

He takes the disc and flings it towards a mannequin whose head promptly slices clean off before the disc buries itself into the wall.

“Holy shit!” you breathe.

“Language,” Steve says sternly from behind you.

“Oh I don't mind, honestly,” Howard laughs. “I liked that reaction.”

He goes to tug the disc out of the wall and brings it back to show you. It doesn't look like it's even scuffed.

“It's made of Adamantium. Dr Myron MacLain made it by accident when he was working on Vibranium. It's just as sharp, never tarnishes or blunts and it can survive a nuke,” Howard announces proudly. “I call it Capital Punishment.”

You just give him a raised eyebrow.

“Or you could just call it whatever you want,” Howard says, slightly embarrassed.

“Thank you,” you nod, taking the blade in your hands and feeling how lightweight it is.

Peggy comes in and she still looks mighty annoyed so you suddenly become even more interested in your new weapon.

“Come along, Stark. I'm sure the Captain has some unfinished business,” she says snappily.

_Stevie you are so in trouble right now._

“What do you think?” Steve asks innocently, showing Peggy his shield.

You can see the gun being raised before Steve does and hurriedly push Howard behind you and out of the way of their lover's tiff. Steve barely brings the Vibranium up in time and there's an almighty clang as the bullet hits and bounces off towards you. Instinctively you raise your circular blade and try to deflect it, fearing the bullet was just going to continue straight through and into your head but it ricochets off and into the wall.

“Yes I think it works,” Peggy says grimly.

“Geez, Peggy!” you yell. “That almost killed me!”

“You're still alive, aren't you?” she huffs. “I believe both Steve and yourself have some subordinates to entertain.”

“Subordinates?” you question.

“You've been promoted Lieutenant. So I suggest you don't do a repeat of Steve's earlier actions with a certain Sergeant,” she says cryptically before storming out.

“Goddamn, you are on the wrong side of that dame, Rogers,” Howard mutters.

“What in the heck did she mean by that?” you say.

Steve sighs and rubs his head in frustration, “She means don't let your relationship with Bucky get
in the way of leading the platoon.”

“There is no-” you start.

“Yeah yeah, you told me,” Steve rolls his eyes. “Come on, we're going for a debrief and then we need to make plans. We ship out soon.”

**

You touched down in southern Sweden a day later, sneaking to the port where a submarine was waiting to take you across the Baltic.

Once inside, you instinctively put on your new Lady Liberty suit, marvelling at how easy it was to move despite having so many extra features to it. Stark really had done great work. It was so lightweight but tough as anything. It was definitely more appreciated than your spandex monstrosity that you'd had to deal with.

“You know, I'm never going to get used to you in that,” Bucky says from behind you and you whirl around to see him in his military shirt and pants, his jacket slung across his shoulder.

“Not much different than my factory stuff,” you shrug.

“I mean just...your whole demeanour, Missy. You just kinda exude strength,” Bucky murmurs in almost wonderment.

“You didn't think I was strong before when I kept knocking you out as a kid?” you laugh.

Bucky goddamn *blushes*. That's something you'd never ever seen.

*Geez Buck, you're acting so strange.*

“You were, I guess I'm just appreciating it for the first time,” he mumbles, embarrassed.

“Did you need something?” you ask, packing your weapon which you'd decided to call the Liberty Crown in its special holster which hung from your hip.

“Yeah, just wanted company,” Bucky admits. “I hate these damn confined spaces. Reminds me of...”

He didn't need to finish that sentence. You had no idea what had happened to him in the Hydra base but it had traumatised him for sure. You could see the underlying pain on his face still.

“Sorry, doll, I'm bothering you ain't I?” he stumbles over his words. “I'll go find Steve.”

“Wait,” you call, grabbing his arm before he can leave. “It's fine, Buck. Stay. Geez, I've never known you to be this awkward around me.”

“Did you get my letter?” he asks quietly.
“Which one?” you question. “The last one I got was before you shipped out on your mission.”


“Oh no you don't, Barnes,” you say, tugging his arm to make him look at you. “You don't get to throw something like that into the wind and expect me not to be curious.”

“I'll tell you what it said someday,” Bucky says softly. “Just not today, doll. Can we just...talk like we used to?”

“What did you want to talk about?” you ask, directing him to a chair nearby.

“I don't know,” Bucky shrugs. “I guess-”

Dugan chooses that moment to walk in and lets out a loud exclamation.

“Goddamn, Barnes, you getting a reprimand before we've even get into Poland?!” he guffaws.

“Just enjoying the good Sergeant's company,” Bucky replies.

“You didn't hear?” Dugan scoffs. “She's your superior now. She's a lieutenant.”

“You didn't tell me,” Bucky says accusatorially at you.

“Didn't come up,” you shrug. “Dugan, something you needed?”

“Just came to find Barnes. The Captain told me he might be here,” Dugan says, before fishing something out of his pocket. “I had these made for us. Welcome to the Howling Commandos, Sergeant.”

He passes Bucky a small patch with what looks like a wing motif.

“Lieutenant,” Dugan nods in a formal fashion.

“Jesus Christ, Dugan, how many times do I have to say call me Missy?” you huff. “I ain't into this airs and graces bullhickey.”

“And that's why we all love you,” Dugan winks. “Alright, Missy, the Captain wants a meeting in thirty minutes.”

“Noted, dismissed,” you nod and Dugan leaves.

You notice Bucky's hands have balled into fists slightly and he's clutching the patch almost painfully.

“Something wrong?” you ask.

“You shouldn't let them drop formalities, doll,” he says, not looking you in the eye. “They'll think they stand a chance.”

“And they don't stand a chance?” you challenge, getting a little sick of Bucky's constant overprotectiveness these days. It was beyond suffocating.

Bucky's head shoots up and he's almost glaring at you, “You wanna go fuck a soldier, be my guest Missy but don't come cryin' to me when it blows up in your goddamn face.”
He stands up abruptly after that.

“James!” you shout in horror and you can physically see the instant regret on Bucky's face.

“I...I'm sorry, I didn't mean that,” he sighs. “That was so rude of me. I don't know why I said that, doll, I really don't.”

“What the hell is going on with you?” you demand. “You're ignoring me one minute, dancing with me the next and now you're treating me like some backalley floozy.”

“I'll go,” Bucky whispers, stepping backwards but never taking his eyes off your face.

You close the distance and push him against the wall, “You're not going anywhere until you give me a straight answer, James. Why are you so angry when any guy comes near me, what were you going to ask me in the pub, what was in your letter?”

“I can't tell you, doll,” Bucky almost pleads. “Not like this.”

“Are we not friends any more or something?” you ask and you can feel the traitorous tears starting at the corners of your eyes. “You used to tell me anything. Now it's like I barely know you.”

“It's not like that, sweetheart,” Bucky says softly, slipping from your grasp and walking to the door. “It really isn't.”

“Then tell me.”

“After Gdańsk, I promise you,” he implores. “We'd best get to Steve's meeting soon.”

“Sit,” you order.

“Missy I-”

“Don't you 'Missy' me! You'll sit there, James Barnes, whilst I sew your goddamn patch on because you'll just sew it on backwards,” you say, folding your arms.

Bucky bursts in laughter and you're thankful that the conversation's become less tense but you're still incredibly hurt that he won't trust you with what he's thinking.

“Alright, just don't stab me with the needle, even though I deserve it,” he grins, that familiar smile coming to roost on his face.

“You're damn right you deserve it,” you snort before fetching your little sewing kit and pinning the small patch to his jacket as a guideline. “You deserve me to knock you into next week actually.”

“Just don't use that thing on me,” Bucky points to the Liberty Crown. “I'm too pretty to marr, sugarpie.”

“Can the charm, Barnes,” you sigh as you start pulling the needle and thread through his jacket. “Ain't gonna work. I'm still mad at you.”

“I know,” he says a little more seriously. “Like I say, I'll explain everything soon. I just need...I just need time. Can you give me that doll? Please?”

“Alright,” you concede. “But you owe me some chocolate for being such an ass about it.”

“That's a done deal,” Bucky laughs.
You finish off the jacket and he dresses in it, touching the patch and he smiles a little.

“Nice to be part of something?” you ask.

“Nice to be part of something with you and Stevie,” he says. “I know I tried to make you stay but I'm so glad you never listen to me.”

“Habit of a lifetime, Buck,” you snort. “Now your lieutenant is telling you to look sharp and get to the meeting room.”

“Not like you're gonna abuse your position or anything,” Bucky winks.

“Wouldn't dream of it, sergeant,” you say innocently.

**

The meeting goes by with dull tedium. Steve is insistent on boring the plan into your brains until you could recite it in your sleep. Half of the Howling Commandos are trying to stave off drowsiness as Steve drones on and it's only because Falsworth produces some rum that he'd managed to steal from the London HQ that you all perk up.

Finally you emerge in Poland and Morita manages to steal a couple of Jeeps to travel down to Gdańsk. You and Steve hide your obvious outfits underneath long duster coats whilst you're driving down, keen not to announce your impending arrival. You were sure your distinct appearances were being circulated amongst the German forces.

The Hydra base looms and it appears they'd set up in an old factory with a bunch of outhouses. You can see there's barbed wire all around the complex and several guards standing in between you and the main building. It's incredibly exposed to the outside fields which meant it would be very hard to find a good strategy to take it down.

“No bloody way to sneak in,” Falsworth muses as he looks through his binoculars. “Jerrys are stationed on every corner.”

“Guess we'll need to go in the front way,” Steve muses.

“Dernier,” you call to the French explosives expert. “Think you can cause a distraction? Set some bombs off in the opposite direction?”

“Mais oui,” Dernier nods. “I 'ave just the thing.”

He sneaks off to a patch of woods, leaving the rest of you to wait for his signal.

“Alright, Morita and Dugan, go for the left outhouse,” Steve whispers. “Cause as much damage as you can. Gabe, Junior, you head to the right outhouse. Buck, Pinkerton, go around the rear of the main building and keep us from being flanked. Missy and I will charge in the front. Falsworth make sure we aren't followed.”

“You gonna be ok?” Bucky asks you.
“I should be asking you that,” you laugh. “Don't make me come rescue you again. I'll never let ya live it down.”

“Being rescued by a pretty gal ain't so bad,” Bucky winks.

Goddamn Bucky was being so confusing! After the events on the submarine, he'd reverted back to his old flirtatious nature in front of the other guys.

“Careful old chap,” Falsworth chuckles. “Or we'll all get the same idea.”

You swear you see a storm brewing in Bucky's eyes at that comment but he just joins in with the general laughter of the troops.

“All right guys, keep it down,” you shush them. “Or you'll bring the Fritz on us and then I'm saving none of you.”

“You heard the good lieutenant,” Dugan whispers, making a zipping motion across his lips. “Covert tactics now.”

A large explosion rocks the ground and you can feel a rush of air hit you in the face. A plume of fire stretches into the sky and all hell breaks loose at the Hydra base with troops rushing in the direction of the sound.

“That's our cue,” Steve nods. “Good luck everyone. And....go!”

You and Steve both charge forward, sprinting ahead directly into the line of fire. You both let loose the shield and the Liberty Crown, ricocheting them off of Hydra soldiers and a long line of them drop to the ground. The building is fast approaching and you forge on, fighting your way through with urgency. The others were counting on you and Steve to clear the way and you couldn’t let them down.

Out of the corner of your eye you see Morita hit the floor as a Hydra agent punched him. One flick of your wrist and the guy didn't have a head any more. Morita looks at you and gives you a thumbs up before throwing the Liberty Crown back to you and not a moment too soon because you're jumped by a soldier and you barely have time to block his knife.

In one swift motion, you sweep his legs out from under him and he falls on his own blade.

*Oughta be more careful, Fritz guy. Hell of a way to go.*

Another loud boom sounds in the woods and you wonder if Dernier is alright. I mean he was kind of out there on his own. You hoped he could handle himself.

“Missy!” Steve calls. “Come on, we gotta keep moving.”

You shake your head and press on, almost to the door of the building. It's heavily padlocked but you just snap the chains straight off without a second thought. You open the door gingerly and see the flicker of a light in the gap.

“Get down!” Steve screams, blocking your body with his shield as a flamethrower spews out the fiery plume straight at you.

You can feel the sheer heat singing at the ends of your hair and you quickly pat it out. The worst of it is hitting the shield at least and you throw the Liberty Crown directly at your assailant's legs, cutting through the bone. A horrendous cry goes out and he falls backwards, his feet remaining
where they are. Thankfully the flamethrower turns off.

“Are you alright?” Steve asks, ignoring the screaming man.

“Yeah, I probably will need a hair cut after this,” you joke until you spot the burn mark on Steve's neck. “Holy cow, Stevie, are you alright?! Your neck!”


He doesn't let you protest over his injuries and throws open the doors to the building, charging in. You don't want to be left behind so you follow, throwing your weapon at the electrical box in the corner to disrupt all the circuits and power down Hydra's generator. You can see several experimental weapons just shut down immediately.

*Good, certainly don't need those damn things being used!* 

Steve takes down the obvious Hydra commander before the scientists start scattering, running out of the building for their dear lives. You don't chase after them.

Although they're working for the enemy, you would never be able to tell how many were under duress and how many were willingly working for Schmidt. Steve seemed to have the same idea too because he nods at you before kicking open the rear doors.

“We need to get Dernier to blow this place sky high,” he says. “I'll get him, you mop up the rest.”

“Be safe, Stevie,” you say, giving him a quick hug.

“Same to you, Missy,” he smiles before sprinting off into the treeline.

You look to your left and see Bucky and Pinkerton being pinned down by several soldiers and you don't think twice about rebounding the Liberty Crown off of the outhouse and watching it slice through about half of the guys. Bucky stares at you completely wide eyed as the rest of the Hydra soldiers start racing towards you.

“Missy, run!” he shouts but you don't need to.

Despite them trying to pile on top of you to take you down, you punch and kick your way through every last goddamn one of them until you're standing in a pool of bodies.

“I think she can take care of herself, pal,” Pinkerton laughs. “Saved our sorry hides at least.”

“Making friends, Missy?” Steve sasses, looking at the men around you as he returns with Dernier.

“You know me,” you smile sweetly. “Such a social gal.”

Steve snorts before he motions for Dernier to set up the explosives. The sound of gunfire is rapidly dwindling to be replaced by the screams of dying men. You can safely say you'd won this particular battle. You hoped everyone had made it through.

“Madame, it is ready. Just give me the signal,” Dernier nods to you, unravelling a wire as he backs out of the building.

You're about to tell him to press the plunger but the sound of a vehicle catches your attention and you turn to see a jeep with a mounted Gatling gun skidding to a halt in front of Bucky and Pinkerton. The Hydra agent points the barrel directly at the two men and Bucky pushes Pinkerton out of the way, ready to take the barrage of bullets alone.
“No!” you yell, sprinting faster than you ever have before, sliding along the dirt and the mud to be in front of him.

Howard Stark's words were ringing through your head. Your suit would not stop the bullets but it didn't matter to you. You weren't going to lose Bucky again.

You wrapped your arms around him, cocooning him in your body to protect him from the blows that were coming. He tries to struggle against you but you're too strong.

“Missy!” both Steve and Bucky simultaneously yell and you hear the whistle of something being thrown just as the handle of the Gatling gun starts cranking.

Reflexively you catch Steve's shield as it sails towards you and you hold it behind your back just as a hail of bullets batters the metal, pinging off in all directions. The strain is immense as the shield is hammered into your back by the sheer pressure but you don't let go and you don't let go of Bucky.

You grit your teeth, hoping the ammunition will run out soon or that he didn't re-angle the gun to shoot for your unprotected legs.

Silence falls and you briefly peer over your shoulder to see Steve taking out the men in the Jeep, an expression of pure anger and fear on his face. He looked frightening. You'd never seen him so aggressive before.

“Are you alright?” he calls over, jumping down from the car and pulling Pinkerton up to his feet. He looks highly concerned.

“Yeah, thanks for the shield,” you nod, throwing it back to him and he deftly catches it.

“Missy,” Bucky growls and you look back in utter shock to see him looking furious with you. “You goddamn fucking idiot! Why did you do that?! Huh?! Why?! You could have died!”

“So could you!” you counter. “A little damn gratitude would be nice!”

“Why did you do that?!” Bucky repeats, almost shaking you.

“Because I'm not letting you die, Buck!” you hiss back, his anger becoming contagious to you. “And you're one grenade short of a bandolier if you think I'd sit back and watch you get shot to shit!”

Bucky's hand grips your face fiercely and you can tell he's absolutely raging inside.

“You are the most goddamn stubborn, irritating, headstrong and reckless dame I've ever met, doll,” he says viciously.

Then he does something you don't expect at all.

He yanks you forward and kisses you passionately.

“Don't you ever do that again.”
Save His Life And Find Your Own!

Chapter Summary

What in the Sam Heck? Bucky just kissed you?!

Chapter Notes

Sorry for the wait guys! Been a bit busy with work and comic cons and such.

If you want to send any private messages/prompts/one-shots etc my email is theliveshipparagon@gmail.com or my tumblr if you prefer theliveshipparagon.

Happy reading guys and gals!

- TLP xx

(Again, I suck at proofreading!)

Neither of you said anything after that. You were just staring. His expression swirling through several emotions and yours being complete shock. Both of you were panting hard. Suddenly he pulls back and stands up, brushing himself off.

What the heck had just happened?!

Bucky had kissed you. This wasn’t just a friendly kiss on the cheek this was a full on passionate make out.

“Uh...” you stumble for something to say and Pinkerton howls with laughter, slapping his thighs.

“I’m so happy I stayed alive just to see that,” he guffaws.

“Enough,” Steve chides but you can see he's fighting his own smile. “Just what do you think you're doing to your superior, Sergeant Barnes?”

“Can it, punk,” Bucky hisses and he's visibly embarrassed. “I nearly got Swiss cheesed.”

Steve now can't help the huge smirk that's spreading across his face before he looks down at you, still crouched on the floor in a complete daze, “Lieutenant, on your feet.”

You shake yourself before standing up, not meeting Bucky's eye. So many conflicting emotions were running through you. What if it was just a heat of the moment thing? What if he didn't mean it at all?

“I'll round up the troops,” you mumble, keen to get away from Buck so you can just...think.
It takes you less time than you would have liked to find Morita, Falsworth, Dugan, Gabe and Junior. There's a couple of minor scratches but for the most part you've all come through unscathed. That's a relief at least.

"Hot damn, seeing you in action is something else, Missy!" Dugan laughs as you all make your way back to the others. "You know you've changed my perspective completely on gals getting into the army."

"Glad to hear it," you grin. "Not so bad yourself, although leave me less to clear up next time, huh?"

That sends the rest of them into roaring laughter and by the time you reach Steve, Bucky and Pinkerton, your head is a little more sorted.

"Good work guys," Steve nods. "Happy to see you all in one piece. We're gonna find a rest stop before we head down to Warsaw. Agent Carter's given me a list of safehouses."

There's a murmur of a nod and you cast a look towards Bucky. He's not even looking anywhere near you. Pinkerton on the other hand....you can tell Pinkerton desperately wants to tell the others what happened.

Just as you're about to take the Hydra jeeps, you grab Pinkerton by the scruff of his neckerchief and pull him close to you.

"One goddamn word and you'll be sleeping with one eye open, you hear?" you hiss quietly.

"Yes Lieutenant," Pinkerton grins in a way that says he'll definitely be spilling what just happened. "Wouldn't dream of it."

"I'm serious," you growl.

"What?" Pinkerton shrugs. "All I saw was you saving Barnes' life. Was there something more?"

Smartass lil' jerk....

"Fall in!" Steve shouts before motioning to Dernier. "Blow it sky high."

Dernier gets this wicked glint in his eye before depressing the plunger like he was supposed to do before you got blindsided. The building explodes into debris and rubble, flames billowing out of the top and the ground rumbles beneath your feet.

"Magnifique!" Dernier cackles before he rejoins the rest of you already seated in the jeeps. "You 'ave not lived until you see demolition first 'and."

"You're a scary guy, you know that?" Morita says with a raised eyebrow.

"Start the drive Junior," Steve orders. "We have to get to Bydgoszcz by nightfall."

"Bid-what now?" Junior questions. "I'm never gonna get used these town names."

"Just follow the damn river," Steve sighs.

You ended up getting lost on more than one occasion.
By the time you hit a small farm to the east of Bydgoszcz, the sun had nearly set.

This was the safehouse Peggy had directed you to. It was far enough away from the regular Nazi troops that your presence would be unnoticed and at least you’d have a roof over your head.

“Not exactly the Ritz,” Falsworth muses. “Although I have spent my school days sleeping in worse places when bunking off.”

“You have?” you ask in surprise.

“Woke up in a bloody field once. My chums had tied me to a scarecrow post and left me there all night,” he chuckles.

“I bet that was mighty confusing for you in the morning,” you laugh.

“Rather,” he nods. “Kept finding straw on my person for days after.”

“Well get used to it fancypants,” Dugan snorts. “You'll have more straw in your hair after sleeping in the barn.”

There's a silent look exchanged between your platoon before they race off ahead shouting and bawling about getting the best spot to sleep in.

“And here I felt like a kid,” Steve smiles.

“Now I just feel like a parent of overgrown boys,” you snort and you hear a small chuckle from Bucky although he stifles it quickly.

*Still playing games, huh Buck?*

You still had no idea what to think about the morning's event and frankly if you dwelled on it too long you'd send yourself dizzy. You decide you need to do something calming so you approach the barn, leaving Steve and Bucky behind.

Once you reach the barn, you scale the outside panels, jumping up with a height you'd never gained before until you were sat cross legged on the roof, staring at the stars above. From here you could see the whirling constellations in all their glory.

It was something you used to do in Brooklyn on those long winter nights. You'd climb up the fire escapes of the nearest building and just sit watching the night sky.

“Are we interrupting?” Steve says, making you jump. “Sorry, Missy. Didn't mean to frighten you.”

“It's fine,” you nod. “Kinda like the old days right?”

You notice Bucky's having trouble kicking his leg up over to get purchase on the roof and Steve bends down, easily pulling him upright with one hand.

“I had that,” Bucky grumbles.

“Quit being proud,” Steve chides. “Nothing wrong with teamwork.”
“Sure thing...Cap,” Bucky shoots back.

Steve just rolls his eyes and sits down next to you, Bucky joining on his left. You're not gonna lie, it feels kinda hurtful that Buck wouldn't sit next to you like you used to do. Your Brooklyn boys sandwich you used to call it. In reality, you just got cold easily and appreciated the warmth.

“What the hell am I gonna do with you two?” Steve sighs after a few minutes of silence, lying back on the roof and gazing up.

“What do you mean?” you ask.

“Don't start this again, Stevie,” Bucky says. “Ain't nothing wrong.”

“Really?” Steve scoffs. “Do I have to spell it out for you?”

“Steve,” Bucky practically growls.

“I'm confused,” you say, holding your hands up in admission. “What's with the coded messages boys?”

“Before we left for London, I picked up our mail, Missy,” Steve starts and you watch as Bucky goes as white as a sheet. “Wanna read your letters? I'm sure they'll explain what's going on right now.”

“Did you read my mail you jerk?!” you cry out. “That's private!”

Steve pulls a small bundle out from his inside jacket pocket and you dive for it but he stands up and holds it out of your reach.

“Steve, don't!” Bucky shouts, getting up and trying to drag you back from leaping on Steve again.

“How badly do you wanna see?” Steve grins, like this is the funniest game in the world.

From the vice grip Bucky has you in, you assume his letter is in there. The one he gave you a funny look whilst mentioning. To say you were curious was a goddamn understatement.

“Give them to me, you fucking asshole,” you spit. “This ain't a joke!”

“Such language!” Steve mocks. “Call me Captain and say you're sorry and I'll give them to you.”

God, Steve could be such an ass sometimes! You'd swear he'd gotten worse since the serum because now he could actually fight back and stand a decent chance of winning.

“Fine,” you grit. “I'm sorry, Captain.”

“Missy...please,” Bucky all but whispers into your ear. “Don't read them.”

You ignore him, breaking out of his arms and snatching the bundle away from Steve, running to the opposite corner of the roof and dropping down to the ground. You wanted to be far away when you read this.

You find a tree that's exposed to the moonlight and sit in the branch before you open the envelope containing Bucky's letter first, your hands trembling.

*Why am I so goddamn nervous?*
Dear Missy,

I made myself a promise that if I lived through this first skirmish that I'd tell you something. Well I lived and now I have to stop being a coward about it.

I miss you. I miss you with everything I've got.

Surviving one battle made me look to what I already have. You and Stevie are the best things in my life and I'm so goddamn frightened of losing you.

I'm procrastinating even writing this right now so I should just go on and say it.

Missy, I know you think you're nothing special but you are to me.

It came out of nowhere. One day I just looked at you when we all went to the theatre and I knew right then, I knew I was getting sweet on you. I know I went with other gals but none of them were what I wanted.

What I wanted was you.

You probably don't even think of me this way, in fact, I know you don't. You just ain't that interested in guys right now.

Maybe someday you will be and I'll be waiting for you, if you'll have me.

I hope I make it home to see your pretty face one more time.

All my love,

James Buchanan Barnes.

P.S. Please don't show this to Stevie.

“Doll?” a soft voice calls up from the ground and you look down to see Bucky standing there, nervously fidgeting with his hands. “You read it then, huh?”

“Too late not to show it to Steve,” you joke, still not entirely sure how to feel.

“He's a jerkwad,” Bucky sighs. “He's been teasing me all the goddamn time about it.”

“I didn't even know you felt this way,” you murmur, still not connecting that the womaniser stood below you had written such a heartfelt letter.
“I get it,” he says quickly, ruffling his hair. “I should just shut up and pretend I never wrote that.”

“All this time Buck....” you trail off.

“Please doll, forget about it,” he pleads. “I don't wanna lose my friend.”

“You're such a goddamn idiot,” you laugh and Bucky looks completely thrown.

“Huh?” he eloquently says in response.

“The infamous ladykiller of Brooklyn couldn't tell when a gal was interested in him,” you continue laughing.

“Now hang on, sweetheart,” Bucky folds his arms. “Just what are you saying?”

“She's saying she's always been interested!” Steve shouts from the roof. “Now will you two stop pussyfooting around each other? You're driving me crazy with this!”

You see Steve's shadow disappear from the roof and go into the barn.

“He ain't lying now, is he?” Bucky asks, wide eyed.

“Get up here,” you smile, patting the tree branch, It takes Bucky a little while. After all, he doesn't have the benefit of super strength and agility. Eventually he pulls himself up on the sturdy branch and sits next to you.

“Do you...do you like me doll?” he asks quietly. “Is that what Stevie means?”

“Yeah I do,” you nod. “But I didn't think you'd treat me right so I kept it to myself. You ain't got the best reputation for keeping gals happy.”

“I suppose not,” Bucky sighs. “Goddamn....did I really miss that for so long?”

“Probably a good thing,” you smile. “I'm much more...ah...presentable now.”

“I don't care about that,” Bucky says seriously. “You were beautiful before doll. Now you're just a different kind of pretty.”

You're glad there's only the moonlight illuminating you or you're sure Bucky would have seen your deep blush.

“All those other guys, Dugan and Falsworth,” Bucky says, dismissively waving his hand. “They didn't know the Missy from Brooklyn. All they see is Lady Liberty. Well...you'll always be Missy to me.”

“If this is one of your lines, Buck, I swear-” you start but he cuts you off by leaning in and kissing you, carding his hand through your hair.

Well your brain takes a vacation right then and there.

“Not a line doll,” he murmurs, breaking away. “You'll always be my best gal.”

He kisses you again, a little more fiercely this time and you have to steady yourself on the branch, afraid of falling off if you completely lose yourself in this.
“James,” you hum, trying to catch his attention.

“God I love when you use my real name,” he smiles. “What is it sweetheart?”

“You keep kissing me like that I'm gonna fall,” you laugh.

“Can't have that now, can I?” Bucky grins. “Put your arms around me, I'll keep you safe.”

You slide under his waiting arm and wrap yours around his waist. He presses his forehead to yours and sighs in what you think is contentment.

“I never expected you to feel the same way, doll,” he says quietly. “It's been tearing me up for months. I'm so goddamn happy right now. Can I ask you something?”

“Sure,” you say, appreciating how comfortable you feel wrapped in his embrace.

“This really ain't the right time or place, we're in a warzone for heck's sake, but....Missy, go steady with me? Say you'll be my gal?”

You can't remember a time when Bucky had ever asked a girl to go steady. He was usually too busy playing two or three girls at the same time.

“I know what you're thinking,” he says softly. “My reputation 'n all. I promise you, Missy, I will never mess you around. Besides, you could probably kill me easily if I tried to...not that I would ever want to...I mean...”

Bucky was gosh darn adorable when he was nervous. You burrow your body further into his touch and gently kiss his lips.

“Can it, Barnes. Yes.”

“God am I so happy you joined the army,” Bucky laughs, kissing your forehead. “Now let's watch the stars, doll. I mighty sorry for spoiling it earlier.”

“Keep me warm and I'll forgive you,” you smirk.

“Can do, sweetheart,” he smiles, squeezing you slightly.

You sit there in silence, just content to be in each other's company.

Holy hell....you never thought this would happen. You're Bucky's girlfriend now. All of the times you kept your crush hidden and he was doing the exact same thing.

*Life is goddamn stupid sometimes.*

All it took was a war and being made into a super soldier for this to happen.

The sound of raucous laughter sounds out from the barn and you look up to see the faces of the Howling Commandos illuminated in the moonlight, staring at you both from the windows.

“Missy and Bucky, sitting in a tree, K-I-S-S-I-N-G!” they sing mockingly.

“Fucking Pinkerton,” you growl. “I bet he told them.”

Bucky chuckles, “Ignore them, doll. They're just jealous. How about we give them a show, huh?”
Before you can protest, he's kissing you in a way that's very obvious to anyone who's watching. Cheers and whoops erupt from the barn until you hear the voice of Steve admonishing them.

“Quiet down! You'll give our position away!” Steve shouts.

“Who knew Stevie would be so bossy when he got some muscle?” you laugh.

“Oh that little punk was just waiting for the right time,” Bucky snorts. “Come on, sweetheart, let's get inside before Steve flips his wig about the noise.”

Bucky jumps down and lands softly on the grass before he holds out his hands expectantly. You could just as easily make the leap but you play along with Bucky's romance attempt so you fall into his waiting arms where he sets you gently on your feet.

“Shall we?” he asks, holding out the crook of his arm.

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When you get back in the barn, all eyes turn to you and Bucky and chaos erupts around you as jokes, noises and all sorts get bandied around.

“Calm down, old chaps!” Falsworth shushes, trying to set a fire in a dug out he's made. “Not like none of you saw this coming.”

“When you get bored of him, come see me, sugar pie,” Dugan grins.

“She won't,” Bucky answers for you, putting an arm around your waist. “Nice try though.”

The rest of the night is pretty uneventful after that. Steve goes through a few tactics for tomorrow's raid and you mix up some soup from the vegetables still on the farm in a pot Morita's brought along which goes down immensely well.

With full bellies, you all settle down for the night. Bucky's pulled you up to the top floor of the barn, setting some blankets down on some hay bales where you can still see the moon out of the window.

“This ok?” he asks.

“Perfect,” you ask. “As perfect as you can get with a barn that smells of horseshit.”

“You never hold back on that mouth, do you?” Bucky chuckles.

“Something wrong with that?” you challenge.

“Nah, doll. I like you, swearing n’ all,” he smiles, laying down and motioning for you to lie next to him.

You get down and Bucky throws a blanket over you both before he digs out something from his jacket and puts his finger over his mouth in a shushing motion.
“I stole this from Pinkerton,” he whispers and produces a ration bar of chocolate.

“Have I ever told you that you're my favourite person?” you beam before hastily breaking off a few chunks and stuffing them in your mouth.

Goddamn it had been weeks since you last had some chocolate and it was so good!

“Easy sweetheart,” Bucky laughs. “Go slow. That's the last bar anyone had.”

You break off another chunk and hold it out to him, “In that case, share with me?”

“You sure?”

“I mean if you want me to eat it then fine,” you shrug playfully before Bucky leans over and takes the chocolate from your fingers with his mouth before winking at you.

Your inexperience was showing greatly right now because you were dumbfounded by his blatantness. This is what couples did right?

“Hey hey,” Bucky says softly, slightly concerned at your expression. “I'm sorry, doll. Am I being too forward?”

“I'm just...I'm not used to this,” you admit, flushing horribly.

“I'll be real slow, alright?” Bucky murmurs. “I don't wanna upset you, Missy. You're too precious to me to do that.”

“James? Can you just...I don't know...can you hold me whilst we fall asleep? I used to enjoy that when we were kids.”

“Sure can,” Bucky nods, pulling you to lie on his chest whilst he strokes your hair. “Gotta say I enjoy this a lot more now I'm grown up though.”

“Me too,” you smile, feeling his chest rise and fall.

It was incredibly soothing and you felt yourself drift away very easily, all the tension and all the worry just melting into nothingness. There was just you and Bucky.

**

In the haze of the evening, nobody stayed awake long enough to keep guard.

Nobody saw the Hydra agents approaching from all sides, touchpaper in hand as they lit a fire in all corners of the outside of the barn, all corners so there would be no escape.

Nobody smelled the acrid tang of smoke starting to billow up the walls.

Nobody felt the temperature start rising as the flames crackled ever high.

Nobody except Steve, who snapped wide awake at the sound of voices outside.
“Everybody get out!” he screamed. “Fire!”

Chapter End Notes

Steve is such a little punk haha

Also whilst researching, I found out the K-I-S-S-I-N-G song was recorded as being used in the 1930s! Didn't know it was that old!
The flames were high before you even came to your senses.

“Get out!” you heard Steve yelling in your haze.

“Doll!” Bucky hisses urgently. “Missy, wake up! We gotta get outta here!”

You snap your eyes open, seeing his panicked face above you and your head snaps to the lower floor of the barn where you see smoke billowing under the doorways, a low carpet of dense fog obscuring the ground.

Your comrades are running this way and that trying to force open the entrances but they appear to be blocked.

“Out of the windows!” you shout, attracting their attention as you spring upwards and motion for them to climb up.

You've never seen grown men scramble as fast as this and they're shooting up the ladder quicker than rats up a drainpipe. Steve is the last to come up and he hushes everyone, drawing you all into a circle.

“There's soldiers outside,” he warns in a low voice. “Probably pointing guns at these windows. Be careful everyone. I'll go out first and try to draw their fire away.”

“Keep yourself alive, punk,” Bucky nods. “Make sure ya use that fancy shield or I'm gonna be mighty goddamn annoyed Stevie.”

“Duly noted, jerk,” Steve smiles wryly before hopping out of the window and not ten seconds later you hear a volley of gunfire and voices shrieking.
“Alright guys, time to go,” you say. “Buck, you go out next. Help Steve. The rest of you, I'll count you out on the way. I ain't losin' one of ya.”

There's a general murmur amongst your platoon and you mentally check off each man as they go. Bucky, Dugan, Junior, Gabe, Morita, Pinkerton, Dernier.....

Where in the goddamn heck was Falsworth?!

“Falsworth?” you hiss, trying not to attract attention.

There was no answer and your heart was sinking. Had he gone outside already, before Steve had jumped out?

You look outside and see most of the enemy soldiers are dead on the ground and you leap outside, landing in the grass and rolling to your feet, catching Steve's eye.

“Falsworth out here?” you ask.

“No Missy, I was the first one out,” Steve says, panic starting in his eyes.

You don't hesitate to grab Pinkerton's neckerchief on the way past, tying it around your face and jumping with cat like ease back up to the barn ledge.

“Missy!” Bucky cries out in alarm. “Don't you dare go back in there!”

“I'm not leaving him if he's in there!” you fire back before disappearing back into the gloom of the barn.

The smoke was covering the entire ground floor, your eyes stinging with the effort of seeing through it. For the most part the neckerchief kept you from spluttering but you felt like you were in literal hell as you dropped down, searching this way and that.

The heat was unbearable as the flames were starting to lick under the entranceways, setting fire to the dry as bone hay stacks. You knew you only had moments before this entire place was a raging inferno, one you had no chance of escaping from.

*Move fast, Missy.*

You search quickly but efficiently, looking behind barrels, farming equipment and wooden benches.

“Missy?!” you hear from outside. “Get out! It's not worth it!”

“Shut your goddamn mouth!” you yell back. “Gimme one more minute!”

Falsworth was worth it. You were not gonna leave him to burn to death in a field in Poland. You were responsible for these men and you would do everything you could to keep them safe so they could return to their mothers.

You spot a pair of boots sticking out from under a bale and hurriedly throw the hay off like it weighed nothing. Falsworth was sprawled underneath with blood pooling on his temple. It didn't take a genius to work out that in the furore of Steve's warning, Falsworth had rushed headlong into a support beam by accident, knocking himself out.

“Come on, old boy,” you grunt, mimicking the Englishman as you pick him up and throw him over your shoulder.
He's lighter than you expect but then again, so is everything these days.

You begin climbing up the ladder and make it to the window where you see the worried faces of your Howling Commandos peering up at you.

“Holy cow, she found him!” Gabe points.

“Somebody better get ready to catch him!” you announce, readying Falsworth's unconscious form and Steve rushes forward, his arms braced.

You drop the Englishman down and Steve catches him easily, settling him on the grass away from the barn. You're about to follow when there's an almighty splintering sound and the upper level gives way beneath you, throwing you down onto the ground again.

You're sure you hear Bucky screaming outside but the roar of the flames is almost deafening. You look around yourself and everything inside you clenches.

You're trapped.

All of the tendrils of fire are licking up the walls, blocking any escape route back up to the top level window and all the doors are wreathed in the blaze, mocking you with their shimmering glow.

God-fucking-damn Missy, you get yourself killed on the first official mission...at least my Daddy gets a shiny medal of valour...

Part of you wants to give up there and then. You know it's useless trying to get out at this point and you're nearly choking on the smoke you're breathing in. Part of you wants to keep looking, to keep fighting. You'd only just started a budding romance with one of your best friends for god's sake and it seemed cruel to have that taken away so suddenly.

Whilst you're musing about what to do, you hear a beeping horn and you whirl around as an engine revs outside. You instantly know what's happening. They're going to ram the doors open.

You run to the back, far away from the main barn doors and just in time because the wood bursts into shrapnel as the stolen Jeep careens into the building with a wild eyed Bucky shielding his face from the debris.

“Missy?!” he bellows as he jumps out of the car, running towards you and you meet him halfway.

You're completely shocked when he picks you up and starts sprinting back to the Jeep, dumping you on the passenger seat and reversing out with speed. Not a moment later, the entire barn collapses in on itself, embers racing towards the night sky.

Bucky stops the car and just sits there, panting heavily. It's not until Steve jogs over to the two of you that he seems to regain his thoughts.

“Jesus fucking Christ, doll, is it your personal goddamn mission to give me a heart attack?!” Bucky says, clutching the steering wheel with an iron grip.

“I didn't expect that,” you admit. “I thought I had more time.”

“Missy!” Steve calls as he reaches you. “Are you alright?!”

“Peachy,” you cough, pulling the neckerchief down and breathing in the sweet crisp air. “How's
Falsworth?”

“Awake,” Steve answers. “And grateful. You should have let me go after him.”

“If you want something doing right, do it yourself,” you parrot, laughing slightly as the adrenalin subsides.

“You're never doing that again,” Steve practically growls at you. “You've got a death wish, Missy and I'm not fuelling it.”

“I think you'll find it's called, saving my comrades,” you spit back. “I ain't apologising for doing that so you can go take a powder if you think I'll just sit on my damn hands.”

“It should have been me,” Steve tries to make you understand.

“Can you just let it go?” you sigh. “We're all alive, aren't we?”

Steve lets out a very undignified huff before his face softens, “You are the bravest person I know, Missy. I think we're just both frightened of losing you. Aren't we, Buck?”

Bucky manages to pry his hands off the steering wheel and smooths his errant hair back, “Frightened is a damn understatement, Stevie. Can I have a private minute?”

“Sure,” Steve nods, patting you on the shoulder before returning to the platoon.

“Please don't lecture me James,” you say, anticipating an ear bashing.

“I'm not going to,” Bucky says quietly. “I understand why you did it and you were a goddamn hero about it. I'm just....doll, if you'd left me alone with just the memory of that kiss I would've been mighty annoyed at you.”

You can't help but laugh, “So give me another one then.”

“Gladly,” Bucky smiles, leaning over and cupping your face before planting on earnest kiss right on your lips. “I never want to stop doing this.”

“I think the others might have something to say on that,” you grin. “Think we'd probably better round everyone up.”

“Do we have to?” Bucky whines playfully before pulling you in for another heated kiss.

“Please for the love of god, stop,” Morita rolls his eyes as he appears from around the ruins of the barn with the rest of the guys. “She's not going to disappear Barnes.”

“Our lieutenant is made of strong stuff,” Dugan laughs, seeing the bewildered expression on Bucky's face. “Gatling guns, raging infernos...maybe she'll stop a bomb next.”

“Wouldn't that be explosive?” you joke and your Howling Commandos burst into raucous laughter.

“Quiet!” Steve hisses as he shoos the men forward from the back like a mother goose. “We don't know if there's more Hydra agents out there!”

There's a lot of immature tongue poking and gestures flicked Steve's way but he just shakes his head, ushering everyone into the Jeeps. He climbs into the seat behind you, squeezing your shoulder and Falsworth clambers in behind Bucky.
He still looks mildly dazed but when his eyes meet yours, you see that warm smile that he always wears.

“Think I owe you a thanks, Missy,” he says. “Would've been a rather awful way to die.”

“No thanks needed,” you smile back. “I don't leave my men behind.”

The grin on Falsworth's face grows wider, “Always knew you were a good egg, old girl. Between yourself and the Captain, I feel like I'm truly part of something.”

“You are,” Steve chuckles. “We're making history here.”

“Just less burning barns, yeah?” Bucky says from over his shoulder. “I was having a good sleep.”

Steve shoots you a sly look to which you roll your eyes but he doesn't say anything.

“Where to Captain?” you ask, nudging Steve's shoulder with your hand.

“May as well head to the next checkpoint,” Steve says, pulling a map out from the confines of his suit. “Another safehouse just outside of Warsaw. If we go now, we can probably get another few hours of sleep before moving onto Schmidt's next base.”

“Count me in,” Bucky grins, winking at you before starting the engine.

As you watch the barn smoulder against the pitch black of the night, you count your lucky stars you managed to get out alive.

Thank god Bucky's just as reckless as I am.

**

You were on the outskirts of Warsaw in a tiny village. The locals hadn't taken kindly to German occupation so they were more than happy to house your little platoon, even though most barely spoke a word of English.

An elderly couple took you and Bucky in, immediately sensing the connection between the two of you. You were shown to a room and Bucky was about to walk in after you but there was a string of protests in Polish from the woman and it took you a while to work out what was going on.

After she pointed to your hand, you got it, “Bucky, we're not married so she's not letting us share a room.”

Bucky's eyes widened and he was fighting back a laugh but he nodded a lot and stepped away which seemed to appease the woman and she led him away from you to a door opposite. Bucky gave you a small wave before disappearing inside and you closed your own door, highly amused at how traditional this household was.

You flopped yourself down on the basic bed which felt like a goddamn bed at the Ritz right now after your stay on the hay strewn floor. It barely took you minutes before the exhaustion of the evening took over and you were asleep.

When you next stirred, you were surprised to feel something warm on your back and you shifted
slightly which meant you felt the arm draped over you.

Normally you would have screamed blue murder and hit the person behind you but you could just sense who it was without having to turn around.

“You're such a rebel,” you murmur and you feel the air move behind you as Bucky snorts.

“No old lady is keeping me from hugging my gal, not after today,” he says simply, leaning up and kissing your cheek. “You keep throwing yourself into suicidal situations, doll. I gotta take my affection where I can get it.”

You laugh softly, turning around to face him. In the dim glow of moonlight streaming through the windows, you can just about make out the curve of his cheekbone and the jut of his jaw, along with the sparkling gleam of his eyes.

It surely ain't fair for a guy to be this handsome, right?

“God you're beautiful,” Bucky breathes and you have to take a minute to realise he's addressing you. “I bet you're blushing right now, ain't ya?”

“Shut up, Barnes,” you say, shoving him playfully.

“Keep quiet,” he whispers. “Don't wanna wake up the old lady. She might beat me with a rolling pin.”

You do your best to muffle your laughter and Bucky leans forward, kissing you softly.

“That's one way to shut me up,” you smile and you can see the adoration twinkling in his eyes.

“Well I guess I gotta continue then,” he grins wickedly, propping himself up on one elbow and letting his other hand fall to your waist, pulling your body to him.

Within seconds he's kissing you like it's going out of style. You're breathless as he shows you the full extent of his passion for you. You had no idea it was this fierce until now.

He pulls away quickly, almost apologetically, “I'm sorry, doll. I forgot I need to take it slow. I just...god, I lose my head around you when I'm this close.”

“Did you hear me telling you to stop?” you say, your confidence cresting as you grab his shirt, pulling him back to you.

“Goddamn you're one surprising dame,” Bucky murmurs before obeying your silent command.

You can tell he's restraining himself greatly. You're not stupid and you know he's been with many girls in his lifetime but the fact he's holding off this much, keeping the pace where you set it, warms your heart quite a lot.

You decide you're feeling kinda brave and your hands start wandering. Sure you've felt Buck's skin before but not in this context. When your fingers dip under the hem of his shirt and start tracing up his stomach, you feel the involuntary shiver, that unmistakable sign of a person who's being tested.

“Doll,” Bucky says in warning. “You don't hafta. Don't push yourself for me.”

“James, I want to,” you say earnestly.

He searches your eyes for a few seconds more before nodding and you resume your mapping of his
abdomen, fingers tracking up to his chest and Bucky slightly growls into your mouth.

Sudden heat blossoms between your legs but it doesn't catch you off guard. You've been around enough women from all walks of life to know you were getting aroused by this. It should probably scare you a little but it doesn't, in fact, it just spurs you on even more.

Bucky wasn't some stranger to you or a man who'd been courting you for a couple of weeks. You'd know him most of your life and you trusted him implicitly. If there was one thing you could be sure of, it's that Bucky would show you the best time he could.

You get even braver, snaking your hands fully around his waist and clutching him tightly to you, your fingers dancing patterns on his back.

“Missy,” Bucky says, the word low and hoarse. “You're gonna make me lose control.”

With a flick of your body, you roll Bucky on top of you and he goes completely rigid, unsure of what to do with himself.

“Just fucking kiss me, James,” you prompt and he just can't help himself.

You feel his hands grasping your sides, his thumbs caressing your ribcage and your body naturally arches to his touch. A small moan makes it way out of your mouth which Bucky matches with one of his own.

All of sudden he stops abruptly, his hands millimetres away from touching the underside of your breasts.

“No doll,” he says with great effort. “Not like this.”

“What do you mean?” you ask confused.

“Only the best for my best gal,” he says, softly kissing your forehead. “And my gal's first time ain't gonna be in a bed like this, in a place like this.”

“It's a war, Bucky,” you laugh gently. “You wait too long and we may be blown to hell by the time you think it's right.”

“Don't matter,” Bucky says, shaking his head slightly.

“So what does the great ladykiller think would be a perfect first time?” you smirk.

Bucky winces slightly at the nickname and strokes your hair back, “Doll, don't call me that, you know I don't like it. Anyway....the first time I make love to you, it's gonna be beneath the stars. Ain't nobody gonna be around us for miles. Just you and me.”

You have to admit that sounds damn romantic. You've never been big on the idea of Hollywood style romance but with Bucky it just kinda felt...right?

“That sounds nice,” you smile.

“See,” he grins. “Much better idea than the threat of the old lady walking in.”

“Yeah yeah,” you sigh. “I'll give you that one, Barnes.”

He gives you a sweeter kind of kiss before rolling off you to the side and drawing you to his chest.
“For now, I'll just be glad to hold ya,” Bucky murmurs into your hair. “Since...ya know, we got rudely interrupted the last time.”

“Then hold me whilst I fall asleep,” you say, curling your fingers in his shirt.

“Already am, doll,” he smiles. “And if it were up to me, I'd never let you go.”

You tried to fight the feeling of drowsiness rushing back to you, afraid Bucky was going to fall asleep too and you'd both be discovered like this in the morning. After a few minutes of his comforting warmth and steady breathing, however, you couldn't hold out any longer and succumbed to sleep.

A few minutes after, you never heard the words that Bucky whispered when he knew you were finally asleep, too afraid to say them earlier.

“When the war is over, doll, I'll tell the whole world you're mine....I love you, Missy.”
You woke up to the feeling of nothing.

Bucky had seemingly left you in the night, probably too afraid of the old lady's wrath if she were to catch you in the same room. It didn't mean you weren't slightly pining for his comforting embrace but you push that feeling aside. You needed to get in the mind set of fighting again because today was going to be a rush.

The door opened and the elderly man came with a hunk of bread and some hard cheese which you graciously accepted. You were sure they were burning through their own food stores just to keep your platoon going and you felt incredibly guilty for depriving them of food. You vowed then and there to make sure this war ended soon, no matter the cost.

When you redressed and got down to the courtyard, Bucky's face immediately lit up and he flashed you a beaming grin. You couldn't help but return it. Behind him you saw Steve give you both a fond look before turning back to the other guys.

“Hey, there's my best gal,” Bucky smiles at you, wrapping his arm around your waist as you get close and placing a kiss on your forehead.

If there was one thing you could say for Bucky, he wasn't shy when it came to showing affection in front of other men. You found it very endearing.

“Sleep okay?” he asks.

“Much better than when we got caught in a raging inferno,” you joke.

“That's for sure,” Dugan snorts from the other side of you. “Felt like I was sleeping on a goddamn cloud.”
“Alright everyone,” Steve calls over the general murmur of conversation. “Quiet. Let's go over tactics today.”

A collective groan rippled through the Howling Commandos and you tried your best to cover your mouth to keep the laugh from bubbling out. Nobody enjoyed Steve's vigorous planning sessions.

“This is gonna be tough so we have to prepare,” Steve continues. “This base is in the middle of an urban development so it's not gonna be a simple flank attack. They will see us coming. They will probably have barriers around the entire city. We will need to be stealthy and we will need to be silent.”

“Can I not just...errr...blow it up?” Dernier offers, casually twirling a stick of dynamite. “You know...I run by, I throw this in, boom and we all carry on?”

“Jacques, you can't just run into a heavily occupied Nazi city and hope for the best,” Steve admonishes. “That's a suicide mission.”

You swear you see the glimmer of disappointment in Dernier's eye. You certainly had a mad bunch of soldiers under your command that's for sure.

“So what's the plan Cap?” Morita asks.

“We approach from the river, straight into the heart of the city. Then we take the rooftops whilst some take the sewers. Pincer movement from above and below.”

“Boy, you're outta your damn mind if you think I'm crawling in shit,” Morita snorts.

Immediately you stick your hand up, “I'm smaller than you and more agile Steve. I'll lead the rooftop charge.”

“Was kinda thinking that Missy,” Steve smiles. “Although it doesn't seem mighty appealing to go the sewer way, I'll brave it.”

“Thanks for taking one for the team, Stevie,” you grin, intensely happy you won't have to smell like the New York drains whilst fighting.

“I'll divide the teams,” Steve nods.

He's about to start pointing at people when a commotion sounds from the village. People start running towards you and you're pushed to the boundaries of the town, yelling in their fear. You have no idea what anyone is saying but they seem terrified.

“Steve, what's going on?!?” you yell above the din.

You get your answer quickly as the roar of tyres screeches in the distance and you hear the harsh assonance of the German language start barking out across the chaos. Someone has told Hydra that you're here. You were betrayed.

“Alright, everyone scramble!” you shout. “Hydra's coming for us! Someone ratted us out!”

That prompted everyone to stop resisting the shoving hands of the villagers and you all raced into the tree line where the Jeeps were hidden. You'd never seen grown men so gymnastic in all your life as some somersaulted and some made flying leaps into the vehicles. You jumped yourself and ended up nearly missing the seats with your increased strength. You landed in the driver's seat and waited about three seconds for the last of the stragglers of your commandos to get in before
flooring the accelerator and speeding into the forest.

“Do you know how to drive this thing?!?” Bucky cries. “You ain't passed a test, doll!”

“Are you serious?!” Dugan yells from behind you. “Lemme drive then!”

“Take a powder both o' ya!” you snap back. “You think I was twiddling my goddamn thumbs in the factory? I've driven more cars than you've had gals!”

Dugan holds his hands up in surrender whilst Falsworth loses his composure completely, laughing like a mad man, despite the danger just behind you.

“That's me told,” Bucky murmurs.

“Just make sure we don't get shot,” you order, pointing behind you to where you can hear the Hydra vehicles bearing down on you.

“That we can do,” Falsworth nods, pulling his revolver out from his pocket as Pinkerton in the very rear brings up a Garand rifle, training it on the movement through the trees.

To your right, you see Steve manning the other Jeep a little ahead of you and you both share a look. It's a look that says you're both frightened as heck that you'll get your platoon killed. Steve makes motions that you understood from your days in Brooklyn, running away from various bullies. Split up and then circle back on yourselves.

You slam the wheel to the right and the Jeep lurches, almost throwing you all out but it's just in time because a hail of bullets starts coming your way and you manage to dodge the volley before you speed through the brambles. Your boys fired back as best as they could with the bumpy terrain and erratic driving you were doing to avoid more gunfire.

“I got one!” Pinkerton whoops as he hits a Hydra soldier in the neck and they fall backwards letting the forest floor claim them.

“Nice shooting,” Dugan says, clapping him on the shoulder.

The celebration is short lived, however, as when you make the turn to hare back to the village, another volley comes your way and although you all do your best to duck, you get winged in the bicep by a stray tank round bullet, almost making you lose control of the car. You growl heavily at the pain but you keep your hands on the steering wheel.

Damn. Guess this suit didn't block everything. You'd be having words with Howard Stark if you made it back alive...

“Shit! Missy!” Bucky yells, seeing the blood start weeping down your arm and staining your suit. He must have seen red because he yanks the Garand from Pinkerton and starts firing in a rage at the Hydra jeep, picking them off like they're in a carnival shooting gallery. Meanwhile Falsworth quickly pulls a handkerchief from his pocket and ties it expertly around your arm, staunching the flow.

“Not perfect old girl but it'll have to do,” he says.

“Does anyone care if I swear a whole lot right now?” you say through gritted teeth.

“Go ahead, Lieutenant,” Dugan encourages. “I wouldn't be waiting for permission if I got shot.”
“Fucking goddamn bastard fuck!” you hiss and the pain marginally eases up. “Shit!”

Bucky headshots the driver and the Hydra car slams full speed into a nearby tree, crumpling the bumper like it was made of paper and the remaining soldiers fly out with the force, slamming into the forest floor. You see the satisfied smirk as Bucky turns back around and casually tosses the rifle back to Pinkerton.

“You alright, doll?” he asks, the smirk giving way to concern.

“I'll live,” you sigh. “I'll need someone to dig out the bullet when we get a quiet minute. Can't have it healing in there.”

“I'll do it,” Bucky nods resolutely. “Ain't gonna be pretty but I'll do it.”

“War's not pretty Buck,” you shake your head as the village starts coming back into view.

You skirted around the boundaries to the other side where Steve's party was waiting. They seemed mighty relieved that you'd made it back alright. In fact, Steve hops out of the car and runs for you and his eyes widen the second he sees your arm.

“Jesus Christ, Missy!” he exclaims. “What happened?!”

“Nothing,” Bucky interjects. “Bastards are dead now. Doesn't matter. Hold her arm steady whilst I get the bullet out, Stevie. She can't flinch when I'm doing this.”

You had no time to prepare as Steve extended your arm out and gripped your wrist tightly whilst Bucky wrapped himself around you, keeping your body in place. You can't help but tense up ready as you hear Bucky unsheathe his combat knife. He takes his belt off as well, putting the leather strap in your mouth.

“Bite down on this, doll. Can't have you ruining those beautiful teeth now, huh?” he jokes but you can hear the edge of worry in his voice.

The second the knife starts digging into the wound...god you wanna scream so loud you'd bring every German in Poland down on your position. You wanna stay strong for your boys and set an example though so nothing other than a strangled grunt passes your lips as you worry the belt in between your teeth, grinding your marks into it.

“Hurry up, Buck,” Steve urges, seeing more fresh blood trickle down your arm.

“I'm doing it as precise as I can. Back off, punk,” Bucky snarls, edging the bullet up with the point of the blade. “You want her to have a larger scar?”

“Chaps, perhaps stop fighting and concentrate?” Falsworth suggests. “The old girl looks terribly in pain.”

Bucky's eyes shoot guiltily to your face and his mouth sets in a hard line. You see the grim resoluteness pass over his features and with one swift flick that almost made you pass out, the bullet pinged out.

“Med kit,” he barks and Morita hops out of the other jeep, producing a bundle.

Bucky flutters through the tinctures, almost knocking one over and breaking it until Morita puts a gentle arm on his shoulder.
“Let me do it. I'm no stranger to patching folks up,” he says.

Bucky just nods and Morita picks the right bottle, washing the blood from your arm. It stings like hell and Bucky must have felt you tense up because he hugs you fiercely, kissing your face to calm you down. Once the wound is disinfected, Morita places a gauze over it and bandages it up.

“It's not pretty but it'll heal without infection,” Morita pronounces before turning to Steve. “Definitely don't send her down into the sewers or she might lose the arm.”

“I was never even thinking of sending her down there,” Steve smiles slightly. “I'd never hear the end of it otherwise.”

You spit the belt out which you note has teeth marks stamped down to the bare leather, “You're damn right.”

“Are you okay?” Bucky whispers in your ear.

“Yeah, I'm good. I'm just not gonna play tennis with Falsworth any time soon,” you laugh.

Your little platoon starts sniggering.

“Settle down,” Steve orders. “Missy's fine. She's tough. We'll press on to the river and get a boat.”

**

The journey to the boat was largely uneventful. You were relegated to the back of the Jeep with Bucky cradling you from behind. You felt a bit mollycoddled but you also secretly liked how protective he was being over you.

When you reached the river, there were several boats floating there, most appearing to be fishing boats but one was more of a leisure riverboat.

“That's what we'll take,” Steve points.

“How are you two not gonna stand out?” Gabe snorts, pointing to your bright outfits, albeit yours a bit stained.

“We'll figure something out,” Steve sighs. “Just get on the boat.”

Squeezing all of you on was a challenge but soon you were casting off, almost punting lazily down the water. You and Steve found some blankets to wrap yourselves in so you were less conspicuous and your weapons were hidden in the hull. To the casual observer, you'd just appear to be a bunch of happy go lucky fishermen.

The deeper you went into Warsaw, however, the more nervous you felt. This was the enemy territory and from here on out, you guys were on your own. Taking down a building in the sticks of Poland was one thing but a major city?

Buildings loomed around you, casting dark shadows on the river and you saw the bustling public, hurrying from street to street. The marching steps of soldiers caught your ear and to the right you saw patrols doing drills. Your body clenched at the sight.
You reached a junction point and Steve ordered the men to slow down. There was easy access to the roofs from here with a factory ladder right by the port.

“Missy, think you got enough in the tank to lead?” Steve asks quietly so the other guys can't hear. “I'll send Buck first if you're too beat up.”

“I would sooner kiss 'Bad Breath' Billy from back in Brooklyn than give up now,” you smirk.

Truth be told, the wound was already itching less. The remarkable healing factor you'd gained from the serum was a saving grace in times like these.

“Oh well gee, that's just nasty, Missy,”Steve wrinkles his nose.

“Not as nasty as where you're going,” you poke fun. “Enjoy the scenic route. Let me know what Polish diets smell like.”

Without letting him change his mind, you scamper up the ladder and onto the factory building. You wait at the top, body close to the concrete so you're less conspicuous before Steve starts dividing the teams up and your little team is soon joining you.

You take one last look down and wave at the sewer team, of which there were a few unhappy faces...mainly Morita. Steve gives a wave back before they move the boat towards the outflow pipe for the city.

“Doll,” Bucky says gently. “Stevie's annoyed you didn't listen to his plan.”

“Steve's always annoyed,” you snort. “Lemme guess, meet at the Hydra base. When they come up from the ground and cause chaos, we start fighting our way down?”

“Oh well, she got it, huh?” Gabe laughs. “Are you and Cap the same person or what?”

“No, I just know how he thinks,” you smile. “He's predictable. Come on, we've got some roof hopping to do. Make sure you keep as low as possible and no fancy movements.”

You deftly jumped with cat like ease to the next building and waited for your little gang to follow. They were not as graceful but they all made the jump at least. You were thankful the buildings were so close together otherwise you'd be doing a whole lot of rappelling and trapezery to get to where you needed to go.

There were several points where one of your party almost plunged from the sheer heights you were at but you were there to catch them on the particularly lengthy jumps. Steve had generally picked your team well. They were the more agile men of the platoon and less heavy, not that you'd have a problem with picking anyone up.

“Is that it?” Junior asks, pointing to a large library looking building that housed a Hydra flag just flapping in the breeze.

“Well unless that symbol is a damn octopus and nothing more...'course it's the right building you dummy!” you laugh.

Junior blushes and the rest of your team tries to contain their sniggers.

“Come on, we can't lollygag here,” you order. “Steve could be waitin’ on us. Pick up the pace.”

You hop from building to building before you tie a rope around your waist and connect it to the
masonry. You take a flying leap onto the pillar of the Hydra base and shimmy up to the top before removing the rope and tying the other end to some exposed rebar, creating a link.

You look back at your boys and motion for them to shimmy up the rope. There's a worried expression that passes between them but Bucky steps up and sets the example by wrapping his body around the rope and scampering up towards you. Once the others see that Bucky is across, the rest follow and soon you're all stood on the roof.

“Remind me never to do that again,” Gabe pants, shaking with the exertion. “Goddamn that was scary.”

“You made it though,” you smile, patting him on the shoulder. “I'm proud.”

“Think the others are here yet?” Junior asks.

You look down through the skylight into the grand hall below and see Hydra officials milling around. This must be more of a political base than an army or research one because none of the men walking about seem particularly agile at fighting.

“Nobody's screaming yet so they mustn't be ready,” you shrug. “I think this one will be a goddamn walk in the park. They're all businessmen or politicians or something like that.”

Bucky peers down himself, “She's right. Some of them are armed though. I can see the holsters under the jackets.”

“Keep your wits about you,” you tell everyone. “No heroics. The main objective is to burn this building to the ground or...you know, wait until Dernier can't contain himself any more and blows it up.”

“The French sure are crazy,” Junior mutters. “Don't ever let me annoy him, Missy. I like my limbs attached to my body”

“Can't promise that,” you smile.

From below comes an unearthly boom and then the sounds of panic ringing out. A plume of smoke covers your view for a while until it dissipates and then you see through to the carnage below.

“Think that's our cue boys,” you nod and smash the skylight with a well placed kick, sending glass shards raining down in the chaos.

You wave Gabe and Junior through before gently pushing Bucky forward. He stops and quickly clutches the back of your head, pulling you into a fierce kiss.

“Don't you die on me now, doll,” he smirks before disappearing into the building.

Don't you die on me either, Buck.

You took a deep breath before jumping into the smoke and the shrieking echoes.
Still finding chapter titles from World War II posters!
Something barrelled into you in the dense haze of destruction and you panicked, kicking out harshly and hoping that it wasn't one of your men.

Luckily some harsh German swearing told you otherwise and you quickly made sure he didn't get up again. The less noise around you, the less you gave your position away in the cover of the smoke.

You crept, low to the ground, towards what you thought was the edge of the balcony. From here you could just about make out the stark white against the red on Steve's outfit and the occasional shine of the shield as it rattled off a man's head. Clearly he'd made it without being too marred by his sewer trip.

Steve's party was two levels down from you and had mostly cleared out the soldiers standing guard. You reckoned the upper two levels were going to contain the dignitaries and politicians. Really you had the easy job.

You unholstered the Liberty Crown, fingers curling around the leather grip and just watching the frantic silhouettes as they came closer. You were ready to fight.

A tap on your shoulder nearly had you plunging the weapon into Bucky's neck as he hurriedly stepped back, realising his mistake.

“Holy cow, doll! It's me! We gotta get to the vaults. I heard a bunch of Fritz saying they're gonna hide there. Looked real important people.”

“Alright, let's get goin',” you nod.

“Were you really gonna kill me?” Bucky breathes, his heart obviously still hammering.
“I can't see a goddamn thing in this smoke, Buck. I could've easily died if I wasn't on my toes,” you explain.

“I get it, I get it,” he smiles. “That's my gal. Always thinking.”

You smile back at him and for a moment, the battle recedes into the background. The sweet little moment is cut short by Gabe being flung backwards across the polished floor where you scoop him up onto his feet like he weighed nothing.

“Problem?” you ask in amusement.

“Sorry, Missy! Didn't see the Fritz until he was right in front of me!” Gabe babbles in his embarrassment.

“Well go on and get,” you point back to the balcony. “Bucky and I are going after the big guys and we'll need you to keep the soldiers off our backs.”

“Yes Ma'am!” he says, his face becoming stoic as he charges back into the thick fog.

“You have a way with kids,” Bucky jokes.

“Don't even start that, James,” you point at him. “You're the biggest goddamn kid I know.”

“And yet you still love me,” he smirks before racing towards the back offices.

Geez this man was going to give you such a headache...

You ran and easily caught up to him before surpassing his speed. You took great mirth in seeing his expression change from the smirk to bewilderment as he was lagging further behind. When you got to the door, you barged it open with your shoulder and it nearly flew off the hinges with the force.

There were a few straggling bodyguards who immediately opened fire on you and you blocked Bucky's body with your own, obstructing the bullets with your reflexes with the Liberty Crown. When there was a pause to reload, you struck, letting the disc fly out in an arc which severed the throats of the men unlucky enough to be in its path. When the Crown returned to you, you picked off the remaining survivors fairly quickly until only one particularly muscular guy was left.

“Can you leave me one?” Bucky mocks.

“Well gee, this one's all yours then,” you say, dramatically stepping back. “Have fun, champ.”

Bucky squared his shoulders in that adorable way that guys do when they're trying to be impressive. In one swift motion, the German soldier was pummelling him to the floor but you didn't intervene. You knew well enough that Bucky had a huge sense of pride and you'd be kicking his ego to step in.

Bucky managed to squirm away and booted the guy in the face, causing him to reel back. He fluidly drew his gun and blew the soldier's brains out before straightening his wild hair.

“Well that was...unexpected,” he pants, trying to catch his breath.

“That was swell,” you say sarcastically. “Nice grand plan to distract him by offering your face as bait.”

“Well you know me, doll,” Bucky winks. “My plans sure are somethin’.”
"Somethin' aint the right word," you mutter but he catches it anyway and gives you a dazzling grin showing off the blood staining his teeth from the punches.

“Well go on then, Lady Liberty,” Bucky laughs. “Show me how it's done.”

“When we get outta here, I am so hitting you for that damn Liberty comment,” you huff. “It's such a goddamn piece a’ shit that I got stuck with it.”

“Yeah but without it I never would've seen you in this suit and frankly I consider seeing you like this a God given miracle,” he smiles.

You flush horribly before clearing your throat. How in the Sam heck did Buck manage to make you feel so...so....girly? You never got this flustered.

“You're sweet when you blush, doll,” Bucky says, obviously amused by your embarrassment.

“Can it, Barnes,” you hiss. “Ain't the time to be courtin' when there's Fritz to clear out.”

“Oh I ain't courtin' sweetheart,” Bucky says in a lowered tone before coming up behind you and you can feel his breath tickling your ear. “I think you're well and truly my gal.”

“Maybe,” you smirk, turning to see the split second of a possessive expression on his face before you started turning the vault mechanism to open it. “Gotta keep me interested, Buck.”

“I don't think that'll be a problem,” he says cockily, readying his revolver and waiting for you to open the door.

You can't help but laugh at his enthusiasm before you wrench open the heavy metal door to the sound of men squeaking like little girls.

“Do not...uh..do not shoot!” one of them calls out in stilted English.

“Don't have anything to shoot you with fellas,” you shrug.

They look baffled for a moment before seeming to size you up as not a particularly big threat. One even darts forward and grabs you, holding a knife to your neck. He looks at Bucky who isn't even phased.

“Give me the gun or her life will be ended,” the man spits.

“Go ahead and try it punk,” Bucky folds his arms. “You won't get far.”

“Was? Ich verstehe nicht?” the man says and although you can't understand German, you can catch the tone of confusion. “She will die.”

“No she won't,” Bucky shakes his head. “You will.”

You took that as your cue to swivel in the bewildered politician's grip and brought the Liberty Crown down across the arm holding the knife. You never got over how sharp the blades were as they sliced clean through the bone and the useless flesh dropped to the floor with a heavy thud, followed by the clatter of the knife.

The man howls in agony before you expertly decapitate him and turn to the other men who instantly shrank back against the wall.

“Told you fellas,” Bucky laughs. “You won't get far.”
“Spare us!” one cries.

“Mercy!” another yells.

The mission you had was exact. All Hydra bases to be obliterated. All Hydra personnel to be wiped out, all high ranking personnel doubly so. You couldn't afford to let them run, knowing they would pop up at another base and spill your tactics or secrets. The way forward was completely clear. They had to die for the good of the Allied effort.

“Sorry boys,” you say. “You would do the same to us.”

A volley of gunfire and clanging metal and bodies were strewn around you and Bucky as you both watched the life ebb away on the floor.

“That...didn't feel good,” Bucky mumbles.

“Didn't feel good to me either,” you admit. “But you know they wouldn't have defected from Hydra.”

“I know, I know,” Bucky sighs, running a hand over his hair. “Just murderin' folks who ain't armed still gets me, you know?”

“I understand, Buck,” you nod. “War ain't pretty work.”

“God...” he whispers. “I'm so glad you're here with me, doll. Doing this without you and Steve...I couldn't do it.”

“Stop doubting yourself,” you chide before going up to him and kissing him softly. “And that's an order.”

“Bossin' me around huh?” Bucky laughs softly. “Seems about right for you, Missy.”

You roll your eyes, “Get on it, sergeant. The good captain still needs our assistance.”

“Can't disappoint Captain America now can we, lieutenant?” Bucky dramatically bows before running back down the corridor to the balcony area.

You follow suit, noticing the smoke had cleared a lot. Sticking your head over the side, you see your party had managed to fight to the level below and not many Hydra soldiers were left.

In a blur of red, white and blue, Steve vaulted up the central column and leapt up to your level.

“Nice of you two to join us,” he sasses, one eyebrow raised.

For saying he hadn't fared too badly in his sewer expedition, you now were within smelling range and you couldn't help but wrinkle your nose.

“Trying to stay away from that goddamn stench more like. Holy cow, Steve!” you waft in front of your face.

Steve looks embarrassed and awkwardly shuffles backwards a bit, “Ah gee, I'm sorry guys. Hopefully it'll wash out.”

“Or we can just burn the damn thing,” Bucky says pinching his nose. “We just took out the high rankers in their cosy little vault.”
“Excellent work,” Steve smiles. “Bottom floor is clear and the Commandos are just picking off the last of them, then we’ll get Dernier to demolish the building.”

“Still got everyone?” you ask immediately.

“No casualties for us,” Steve reassures you.

“Thank god,” you smile. “Every time we get into one a' these fights, I feel like my Ma. Worryin' about everyone.”

“You're not the only one, Missy,” Steve says, giving your shoulder a squeeze. “Mostly I worry about you, considering you charge into dangerous situations like you don't have a care in the world.”

“I do not!” you protest.


“Well gee guys, keep up then,” you wink before throwing yourself over the balcony and landing on the lower floor with an expert roll.

You hear both men shout your name in alarm but there was no use chit-chatting whilst there was still fighting to be done. You weren't going to let your platoon bear the brunt of the assault alone.

“Good to see you, old girl!” Falsworth calls as he spears a Hydra soldier with a bayonet. “All good upstairs and whatnot?”

“The high rankers are eliminated,” you tell him.

“Well we're nearly done here, Missy,” Dugan says from your left. “We did you proud.”

“You always do guys,” you smile broadly. “I'll find Dernier.”

“He was somewhere on the bottom floor last I saw him,” Dugan tells you. “Setting up some charges on the support columns.”

Of course he was. Dernier was a smart man and probably started doing that the second he got in the building.

“Alright, keep up the good fight,” you nod. “Stay safe all of you.”

“Is that an order, Missy?” Falsworth says, raising an amused eyebrow.

“You're goddamn right it is,” you grin before vaulting over the railing to hit the ground floor with an almighty clang as your boots rapped on metal.

You looked down to see a placard built into the floor with the Hydra symbol on it and you noted it was stained in blood. You moved off it quickly in disgust before seeking out the Frenchman.

You found him strapping some dynamite to a pillar with hurried motions but the most dexterous ones you'd ever seen. The man truly was an artist with his destruction.

“How are we doing here?” you ask, making sure to announce yourself well before you came close to him.
“I ’ave nearly finished,” he tells you. “Just one on that column and then I suggest we couriez.”

“Alright,” you say, patting him on the arm. “Good work. I'll round up the others.”

In no time at all, all of you were standing in the foyer area.

“Now when this building goes down, we need to run like heck,” Steve announces. “Morita's fixed up a couple of cars in our favour so we can make a speedy exit.”

“Only because I'm not wading through shit again,” comes the disgruntled response.

You had to admit, Morita had taken the worst of it. From the looks of him he'd fallen down whilst climbing through the sewers.

“Language, soldier,” Steve chides. “We take the cars and head for the river, ditch the vehicles in the water and use the boat to ferry down towards Czechoslovakia. We need to be heading down to Italy for the next attack.”

A chorus of acquiescence rippled through the men. From the looks of them, they'd needed a good break soon. Back to back bases had really taken a toll.

“Where's the safehouse?” you ask Steve.

“Nitra,” Steve answers. “It'll be a long journey but Peggy...ah I mean Agent Carter has secured us a hiding place at a dignitaries' house so it'll be a lot nicer than a barn.”

The small blush didn't escape your notice when Steve mentioned Peggy. He really was so sweet on her.

“You and me in a nice bed,” Bucky whispers in your ear and you end up biting your lip in your shyness. “God, doll, I'm gonna kiss you all night long.”

“A gal needs her rest, Buck,” you whisper back. “Beauty sleep n’ all.”

“Sweetheart, you're plenty beautiful,” Bucky says, kissing your cheek lightly.

“Get a goddamn room,” Pinkerton sniggers from behind you.

“Stop watching, flyboy,” you hiss back at him. “Anyone would think you ain't got nothin' better to do.”

Pinkerton gives you a mock offended face before it splits into a wide grin, “Sure don't, lieutenant. Gotta have my fun, right?”

Dernier joins you again with an almost maniacal expression, “Complete. We ’ave to go....now.”

The speed at which your platoon scattered always impressed you. Within moments, you were all leaping into the cars and covering your uniforms with blankets before those that were driving sped off down the Polish streets. In a minute or so, the ground rumbled beneath you and the cracking sound of stonework splintering assaulted your senses. Then you smelt the smoke. You didn't think you were capable of smelling it any more but the blast wave almost singed the hairs in your nostrils.

“Magnifique,” Dernier croons, looking wistfully at the fireball pluming into the night sky.

“Get down, Missy,” Bucky implores, trying to hide you more under the blankets.
“Why me?” you ask.

“You stand out,” Bucky answers. “Plus you're too valuable to this war. Can't have anyone recognising you or Stevie right now.”

You want to complain but you know he means well. You chance a glance at Steve who gives you a wry smile before disappearing under the fabric. You decide to follow suit.

“Don't worry, I'll protect you,” Bucky says in a quiet voice. “Even though you don't need my help. I still will.”

You sought out one of his hands from your covered position and squeezed it gently, “God you're such a charmer James.”

You hear his low laugh. “Only for you, Missy. This is the real me and my real words. I ain't ever been like this around a gal before. I just feel....free to talk about anything, you know? Even what I'm feeling.”

“You've always known you can tell me anything,” you reply, imagining his shy face like he had on the night you first found out what he felt.

“I'll hold you to that,” he says, laughing softly. “And when you're saying 'Buck, shut the goddamn hell up', I'll remind you of this.”

“Go ahead,” you snort. “I've got plenty of dirt on you Bucky to use if you try.”

You feel his hand tickling at your side through the blanket to which you squirm. You guessed being a super soldier didn't make you immune from that.

The drive to the boat went smoothly and soon you were all huddled back on it, having pushed the cars into the river where they sank heavily. You were pretty sick of being covered at this point and you longed just to breath fresh air but you understood you were a national icon and needed to stay out of sight.

It felt like hours went by until you finally heard Morita announce that you'd arrived. It only took two men to do some recon and get more vehicles for the next leg of the journey. Thankfully you were now in a different country and could be out in the open again. Steve seemed to appreciate it too when he surfaced, red faced and sweating.

It took him a while to pat around for the map he'd hidden in his suit but he slowly unfurled the crumpled paper until he could read it again. You just lost yourself in your daydreams at this point, appreciating the rush of wind as you drove on to the next safehouse. The cold air felt glorious to you and you could no longer smell your unfortunate comrades from this angle, only the scent of wild flowers.

It took about an hour to reach the next stop where you pulled into the rear stableyard of a stately home. Peggy had sure outdone herself this time. This place looked like it could house twice the size of your commandos.

“Are you sure this is right, Captain?” Falsworth mutters. “Looks awfully grand.”

“That's what Agent Carter told me,” Steve shrugs. “They're sympathetic to the Allies. Now I'm going to go on ahead with Missy. You guys stay here. They don't need to smell you.”

A grumble murmurs up from those who went into the sewers. You could tell they were desperate
to get clean and were probably imagining the bathrooms in this house.

“Come on, lieutenant,” Steve says formally and you hop out of the vehicle, winking to Bucky as you did so.

You went to the backdoor before Steve smartly rapped on it in a coded sequence. A flustered looking maid opened the door, looking you both up and down before ushering you in.

You were left in a large reception room that looked so fancy that you didn't want to move in case you knocked anything over or got dried blood on it. Steve was equally as awkward, bending his elbows into his body to make himself smaller.

A rather austere looking pair of gentlemen entered the room, looking your battle wearied bodies up and down and you caught the brief glimmer of disgust from one of them. You couldn't help but feel self conscious with a bullet hole in your suit and stains marring the whole thing.

“So you are the team Miss Carter told us about?” one begins.

“Yes we are, sir,” Steve starts, nodding slightly. “We would like to humbly request your help in hosting us for one night before we move on.”

“And where will you go next?” the other asks.

“Prague,” Steve answers and you feel a prickly sensation.

Turin is the next place you're supposed to hit so why was Steve covering that up? Was he getting an untrustworthy vibe?

“Dreadful place,” comes the answer. “All the better that you won't be making it there, Captain.”

Your stomach tightened. The prickly sensation intensified into full blown dread. They had either turned on the Allies in the time it took you to get here or they never were with the Allies.

“Then we'll be taking our leave,” Steve says firmly, moving to block you from view. “Sorry to have troubled you, gentlemen.”

“I don't think you'll be going anywhere,” one of them smiles.

You feel something cold press against the back of your head and you know instantly it's a gun. You curse yourself that you didn't hear someone sneaking up on you.

'Buck private' mistake, Missy.

“Unless you want your charming girl to get more blood on her fetching attire,” the other continues.

Steve turns around quickly and his eyes widen at the situation.

“You let her go right now,” he growls. “Or you and I are gonna have a problem, buddy.”

Turning his back was a mistake. One of the gentleman quickly draws a revolver from his suit jacket before pointing it at Steve's head and loading the chamber. Steve hears the noise and stops dead.

“Now. I think we shall all just wait here until Hydra arrives, shall we?”
“Shit on a stick,” you hiss, realising just how bad the situation was.

You felt the butt of the gun smack you across the head and you know there might be a lump there if you went to check.

“Such atrocious sentiment from a woman,” a German male voice says from behind you. “And you're really the icon of America? Schmidt is right. You are all barbarians.”

“Leave her alone!” Steve shouts, making towards you but an elbow snakes around his neck pulling him backwards into the path of his own assailant.

“You willingly put up with such an insolent spouse?” the man continues, directing his question to Steve. “I'd have her beaten until she learned some manners.”

“I'll show you some goddamn manners,” you spit. “Put down the gun and fight me like a man.”

“Nice try, Miss Liberty,” the man scoffs. “We have you right where we want you.”

**

Bucky paced in front of the jeeps.
God, what was taking so long?! He was going to be mighty annoyed if you two were just playing tea party with the hosts.

“Gee Buck, stop wearin' a hole in the ground!” Dugan called. “They're fine!”

“Something ain't right,” Bucky muttered, more to himself than anything.

He always trusted his gut instinct and right now it was telling him something bad had happened. He couldn't ignore the encroaching feeling of dread. His deep thought was disturbed when Falsworth put a hand on his shoulder making him jump slightly.

“You can't settle can you, old boy?” the Englishman asked.

“No,” Bucky admitted.

He wasn't going to admit that he was worried about you though. That would seem too...improper. He was already pushing the boundaries being open with you in front of the Commandos and would probably have already been court marshalled for your relationship if Steve wasn't so lax about it.

“Come on then,” Falsworth smiled. “Let's take a peek shall we? If they're just eating cake and talking then no harm done, right?”

“Alright,” Bucky nodded.

“Let's go, sergeant,” Falsworth said, readying his pistol in case.

Bucky turned to the rest of the guys, “We're just going to check if everything's peachy. Stay here, stay quiet. We don't know who's around. Dugan, you're in charge until we get back and don't let it go to your head."

“Wouldn't dream of it Barnes,” Dugan grinned.

With that sorted, Bucky and Falsworth moved up to the house, careful to keep out of sight. Even though they had no reason to suspect they were being watched, they did it anyway. Better to be safe than sorry.

When they approached the windows, they gripped the sill like curious children, poking their noses above the ledge to peer in. Bucky's fingers tightened on the sill until they turned white as he saw what was going on.

“Blimey,” Falsworth muttered quietly beside him.

You were being held at gunpoint, both of you. Looking closer, Bucky could see blood in your hair.

I goddamn swear if you've hurt her, I'll kill you all.

“What's the plan, sergeant?” Falsworth whispered.

“Can you shoot that guy from here?” Bucky whispered back.

“Most definitely,” Falsworth nodded. “Glass will lessen the impact but it will take him down all the same.”

“Alright, good,” Bucky said grimly. “I'm going to sneak around to the other side. When you see me give a signal at the window, shoot the guy. I'll take out the other one. I don't think those two standing off to the side will put up much of a fight.”
“Understood. Good luck, old bean,” Falsworth smiled, crouching into the perfect position.

Oh geez...now Bucky had to make sure this plan went perfectly. He wished he had Steve's knack for leadership about now, or your headstrong attack method. One slip up and he could lose you just as quickly as he'd gained you.

_Not gonna lose the best gal in the world. You can do it, Buck. You can do it and then you're never gonna let her leave your arms. Marry this goddamn woman the second the war is over._

That gave him some comfort thinking about the future and he steeled himself, creeping around the house. He had to dive into a prickly bush to avoid being seen by the maid who threw out the chamberpots into the drainage line. Bucky tried his best not to gag and give himself away.

When she left, he continued his sneaking until he hit the opposite window. He knelt up, catching Falsworth staring across and put his palms together in a V shape. From there he knew he had five seconds to start firing.

_God don't screw this up. Five...four...three...two..._

_BANG!_

The guy standing behind you was flung into a chair by the impact of the bullet. Bucky'd managed to hit him square in the neck. It was bad aim but it was going to do the job. He could see the artery just spewing blood out like a fountain. Falsworth had dropped his guy a little more elegantly.

“What is happening?!” one of the two suited men says, wildly looking around for something to defend himself with.

Bucky hopped through the broken window, pointing his revolver squarely at the guy.

“Don't try anything,” he growled.

“Nice shootin', Buck,” Steve said pointedly.

“Shut up, punk,” Bucky retorted. “Saved your sorry ass, didn't I?!”

One of the gentleman tried to make a run for it but Falsworth picked him off. The last remaining man huddled himself against the wall, seemingly trying not to cry.

Bucky didn't care though, all he could think about was you. You seemed a little shaken.

“You alright, doll?” he asked tentatively.

“You alright, doll?” he asked tentatively.

“Just feel a little sick,” you admitted to him, gingerly touching the back of your head. “Ah shit. I didn't think he hit me hard enough to do that much damage.”

Bucky quickly holstered his gun, coming over to you and hugging you from behind, careful not to touch any wounds.

“Christ, Missy, you need some rest. You've been shot and pistolwhipped. I know you heal mighty fast but—”

“James,” you interrupted, sounding wearier than he'd ever heard you. “Find me the nearest bed.”

“Missy we can't stay here,” Steve says seriously. “They've called Hydra.”
“No they haven't,” you shook your head and Bucky felt you wobble off balance slightly so he held you tighter to steady you. “They've sent the errand boy of the house and where is the nearest Hydra base?”

Bucky watches Steve's eyes widen in realisation.

“Right,” Steve nodded. “The one we just destroyed. It's going to take him at least a day to make the full return trip.”

“Exactly,” you sighed. “So we can rest here for the night.”

“I don't think-” Steve started.

“She's exhausted, Stevie,” Bucky chimed in. “Look at her. Look at the men. We can ship out at first light but they've got a decent place to sleep for the first time in weeks.”

“Alright,” Steve agreed. “Falsworth, gather the men, tell them to get up here.”

“Right-o, chaps,” Falsworth nodded before disappearing from view.

“What shall we do with this one?” Bucky nodded to the cowering man on the floor.

You barely gave any indication before you threw the Liberty Crown to the side without even looking, decapitating the man, stopping the cry mid pitch.

“Jesus, Missy!” Steve cried.

“I don't have time for traitors,” is all you said before almost collapsing.

“Damnit!” Bucky grimaced, catching you and picking you up in his arms. “Christ Stevie, I need to get her to rest. Now.”

“Fine,” Steve muttered and Bucky knew he was concerned about your unemotional action just now. “She's not in a good way. Look after her, Buck.”

“With my life,” Bucky nodded and carried you up to where he thought the bedrooms might be.

You curled up against him, hand holding onto the front of his jacket and boy did he feel mighty protective in that moment. It was a rare thing considering how feisty you were normally and you could hold your own even before the serum.

He found a room with a giant four poster bed and set you on it, drawing the curtains all around before going back to lock the door. He didn't want one of the men coming in here and disturbing you.

“I'm not a child,” came the quiet response from in the cocoon.

“I know you ain't doll but can you just trust me that you need sleep?” he replied, grabbing a chair so he could sit by your bedside.

“Don't leave a gal cold, James,” you said.

Bucky grinned to himself before shucking off his boots and climbing into the four poster with you. It was dark so he lit one of the candles by the bed which cast a gentle orange glow around. He could see your features bathed in the warm light.
“You look tired, Missy,” he said gently.

“Rude,” you poked your tongue out. “Ain’t ya supposed to tell a gal she's beautiful all the time? Even when she looks like a moose?”

Bucky full on snorted which he didn't think was very attractive in hindsight, “Joan from the factory looks like a moose. You're like a Hollywood actress but even they need sleep, doll.”

You suddenly looked very vulnerable and exactly like the Missy Bucky knew from Brooklyn. This was the Missy he saw when Steve had gone home to his parents and it was just the two of you. You'd talk until the small hours about anything and everything on the rooftops of New York and you let your tough facade just fall away for a short time. The Missy that he fell for.

“Allright,” you nodded. “Stay with me? Please?”

“I'm right here, sweetheart,” Bucky smiled, kissing the top of your head. “Rest up.”

**

The next thing you knew it was sometime later and you awoke with Bucky wrapped around you, his chest to your back and limbs splayed all over you.

It was comforting and reminded you of the times when you'd stay at each other's houses where you, him and Steve would share a big bed. You all didn't exactly have sprawling mansions so you had to make do with what space you could.

You could tell Bucky was asleep behind you from the way his relaxed breaths kept rhythmically tickling the back of your neck. You didn't want to wake him so you slid out as gently as you could until you were standing by the bed.

When opening the curtains of the four poster, you saw it was probably somewhere in the middle of the night. You were mighty awake now so you trudged downstairs to see if any one was still up.

From searching the lower levels, it appeared everyone was fast asleep. Guess it was just you who'd slept that early. You did note that they'd moved all the bodies out of the house though which you were grateful for. Even your Liberty Crown was sitting on top of the piano, freshly polished.

Oh damn...I killed someone unarmed again without a second thought.

As the Colonel would say though, it was you against them and they'd already tried to betray you. Letting him live would've served no purpose than to have someone babysitting him for the next day.

You shake off that uneasy feeling before stepping outside and walking to the garden with its rows of hedges and sprawling flower bushes. Being around nature in the moonlight was comforting and helped you sort your mind out a little.

A crunch of leaves underfoot made you whirl around to see Bucky with his hands up, one foot precariously tented on the ground.
“Woah, doll. Just me. Was wondering where you went.”

“I just needed....I needed to clear my head,” you say, looking up at the twinkling stars.

He comes up next to you, staring where you're staring for a time before turning and smiling at you, “Different stars to the ones in Brooklyn, huh?”

“I miss those nights,” you sigh wistfully. “It was a lot simpler then.”

“Hey,” he says gently, placing his arm around your shoulder. “I miss it too. God we could talk for hours, couldn't we? Let's sit down and look up like we used to on the old Henderson building.”

That brings a smile to your face and you both lay down in the centre of the spiralling garden, just surveying the midnight sky above you and inhaling the scent of the many flowers. You quietly watched the star strewn inkiness until you felt Bucky grab your hand and interlace the fingers.

“That's better,” he grins.

“Such a romantic,” you roll your eyes.

“Can't a man appreciate his gal?” Bucky laughs, giving you big puppy dog eyes.

You still didn't really understand why Bucky felt the way he did. You were really nothing special and always the last girl by the wall at a dance. You decided though that you simply didn't care in that moment.

You leaned across, closing the gap between you and kissed him. If he was surprised by your boldness, he didn't let on but he eagerly returned the kiss.

It started innocently at first but it soon morphed into something hungry, something primal. Your hands were exploring up inside his shirt and he was half rolled on top of you. He broke away with a start.

“God...” he pants. “I...I want...”

“James,” you breathe and it comes across as more of a plea.

He dives back on you, full passion unleashed and you can feel your body responding. Your fingers tangle in his hair, keeping him close to you.

He breaks off, pressing his forehead to yours, “I need to stop, Missy. I...I'm gonna lose control if I don't.”

“You promised me stars Bucky,” you say, brushing an errant strand out of his face.

His eyes widen as he remembers his promise to you before he smiles warmly.

“That I did, Missy. Are you sure? Are you sure you're ready? I don't wanna push you or anything.”

“Just do it James before I lose my nerve,” you laugh anxiously.

“Allright, it may hurt at first and tell me to stop if you need to,” he says seriously.

You're nervous, frightened at being caught by any of your platoon but you follow his lead as he systematically strips you of your clothing, kissing at the newly exposed skin that follows in its wake. A flush of heat dances over your body as it responds wholeheartedly to his touch.
Once you're both naked, you feel shy. This is the first time any one has seen you since the serum change. Bucky must have sensed it because he leans over you, stroking your hair back.

“You were beautiful then and you're beautiful now,” he whispers before his fingers start tracing patterns down your torso and along to your inner thighs. “Let me show you.”

You guess it was lucky he'd had practice with so many girls because the way his fingers moved against you was just bliss. When they finally came to the juncture of your thighs and hit that spot that you'd discovered on your own during the restful hours of the night, a moan you didn't mean to make escapes your lips.

“That is fucking music to my ears, doll,” Bucky grins.

God it was incredible. You had to clutch on to his muscled arms to centre yourself as his fingers danced across you. It was so hard trying to suppress your noises.

“Let go for me,” he whispers in your ear.

You can feel that familiar pressure building in your core and you pull his head down for a kiss, not trusting yourself to keep silent. When it hits you in that glorious wave, you knew you made the right choice because you moaned so loudly that someone would've heard you.

“Jesus Christ, doll. You drive me crazy,” Bucky praises, peppering kisses across your face as you recover. “That was the most heavenly thing I've ever seen.”

“Shut up, Barnes,” you flush, embarrassed.

He just chuckles, the sound vibrating through his chest as you place your palm on it.

“You're cute when you're shy,” he smirks. “Sure you wanna continue?”

“Yes,” you nod. “I want you, Buck.”

“Can't leave a lady wanting now, can I?” he smiles, rolling on top of you properly.

For never having done this before, it was strange that your body just somehow knew what to do. You allowed him to settle in between your legs, pulling them up slightly so he can get better access.

You feel him position himself, pressing against your entrance.

“Last chance, doll,” he says, and you can tell he's using great restraint on himself.

“I'm ready,” you nod.

“Alright. I'll go real slow. It's gonna hurt a little,” he says.

As he pushes his hips forward you feel that slight internal resistance. It's a little uncomfortable but you can get by it. You feel like he can't get any further until there's a sharp pain that makes you wince and he full slides into you.

“Shit!” you hiss.

“It's alright, it's alright,” Bucky soothes you, stroking your hair back and giving you tiny kisses. “I'm not gonna move until you're okay.”
Gradually the pain subsides and you stop tensing so much. To his credit, Bucky stays completely still throughout.

“I'm alright now,” you say, looking up at him.

“God I never would've dreamt this would actually happen,” he murmurs. “I feel like I'm gonna wake up soon.”

“Then enjoy it before you do,” you laugh.

He starts slowly, ever the considerate lover until you just can't take the pace any more and start encouraging him by hooking your arms behind his back. He takes the clue and picks up his speed and goddamn did you see stars of your own!

In that moment you forgot everything, the war, the serum change...everything. It was just you, him and the heavens above you. It felt...natural, like this was the only logical path you both could've taken that led to this point in time.

“I love you,” you say in your daze, not really realising until the words tumbled out of your mouth.

*Oh heck! That was too forward! He's gonna run, he's gonna-*

“God I love you too, Missy,” Bucky groans.

Your mind switches off at this point, your overthinking put to rest. You love each other.

He leans down to kiss you and pushes as deep as he can go, fully moaning against you before he half collapses slightly, finding his own release.

“I hope I did right by you, doll,” he breathes, trying to recover himself.

You never took Bucky for being insecure but he seemed really uncertain as you both lay there.

“I wouldn't have had it any other way,” you answer honestly and watch his face light up.

He eased himself off and landed with a thud on the grass next to you, “Did I hurt you too much?”

“Nothing that won't heal quickly,” you assure him. “God I hope I don't get pregnant now. That would be mighty inconvenient when fighting.”

Bucky takes your face in his hand to turn it to him, “If you do, I'll do everything I can to protect you. You'll always be safe with me around. I promise.”

“We'd best get dressed before someone finds us,” you half giggle, acutely aware you're both wearing only the clothes God gave you.

“Probably,” Bucky grins. “Wish we could stay like this but I bet the guys would blow their rations lid if they saw you.”

You started pulling everything back on until you were both dressed again and Bucky placed the softest kiss on your lips.

“Come on, sweetheart. Let's get some more sleep. Tomorrow's gonna be a long day.”

“Somehow I think I'm gonna nod off just fine,” you smirk.
He escorts you back to the house where you both freeze as you see Steve stood in the doorway, arms folded and giving you a look like your Pa might have done.

“And what are you two doing?” he says sternly.

“Oh take a powder, punk,” Bucky hisses. “Go to bed or something.”

“What were you doing?” Steve repeats.

“Fraternising,” you answer bluntly and you get to watch as Steve processes and then he turns bright red.

“Oh...” he stammers. “Gee, can you do that somewhere not near the rest of us?”

“Felt like the right time,” Bucky smirks, clearly pleased at how embarrassed Steve was.

“I mean, I'm happy for you guys but god, you're not even engaged,” Steve shakes his head.

Poor poor traditional Stevie. You hoped Peggy wasn't a modern day gal otherwise she's got some convincing to do.

“Go on up to bed, doll,” Bucky says kissing the top of your head. “I gotta talk to Steve for a minute. I'll meet you up there.”

You give him a funny look but think nothing of it before placing yourself back in the bedroom and flopping down on the mattress. You're aching, you're sore but you have the biggest grin on your face.

You were in love with Bucky Barnes and he was in love with you.

**

Bucky takes Steve off into another room.

“Would you quit raining on our parade?” Bucky hissed.

“You're not doing right by her,” Steve said austerely. “Don't start getting too involved when we have a war going on. That's not fair.”

“Fair on who, huh?” Bucky crossed his arms. “Couple of months back I thought I was dead, Steve. You gotta take the chances that life gives you.”

“And what happens when you get her pregnant, you idiot?!” Steve growled. “Then my whole goddamn platoon has to protect her and she can't fight any more. You're risking everyone's lives!”

“You damn jerk!” Bucky said, pushing Steve backwards in a display of defiance. “I'm gonna make an honest woman outta her the second Schmidt is blown to pieces! This ain't no summer fling Stevie!”

“Would you listen to yourself?!” Steve shouted. “You don't even care that you could be putting a target on her back!”
Bucky grabbed Steve by the scruff of his collar and slammed him against the wall, “I don't give a shit if you're stronger than me now, Rogers, you're gonna listen to me. I will protect Missy with everything I got. I will give my life for that woman. You ain't gotta understand it, you just gotta trust me that it'll work out.”

“Don't you dare hurt her like you do with all those other gals,” Steve warned.

Then it came into place. Steve was being protective. He saw the lifestyle Bucky had lead and he was afraid for you.

“I would never,” Bucky said seriously. “If I had a damn ring I'd ask her to marry me right now.”

Steve looked absolutely shocked.

“Jesus Buck,” he whispered. “You really feel that strongly about her?”

“Surprised you couldn't tell,” Bucky laughed softly, letting go of his friend. “Been mooning after her for a few years now.”

“I thought you were just being...you know...you,” Steve admitted. “I mean your letter was a lot of the lines you used to use on Brooklyn dames.”

“It's serious, Stevie,” Bucky sighed. “She's under my skin. I love that gal. I goddamn hate it when any of our guys tries courtin' her.”

“Alright,” Steve said, clapping a hand down on Bucky's shoulder. “Just please...be careful. You're both my friends and I don't want to see either of you upset.”

“We will be, I swear,” Bucky nodded.

“Then go on and don't leave her waiting,” Steve smiled. “You know she has no patience.”

“Sure do,” Bucky grinned. “Night, punk.”

“Night, jerk,” Steve laughed.

**

Steve watched Bucky almost bound up the stairs.

He'd never seen him so lively and vibrant about anything. Maybe he was head over heels for you after all. Maybe this was the change he needed to stop being such a womaniser.

He couldn't help but feel worried for you though. You were inexperienced with men and could be taken advantage of quite easily...not that you wouldn't beat the living tar out of them afterwards but still.

Once upon a time Steve might have felt dejected about this turn of events. He often felt you and
him had a better connection than you and Bucky and, had you stayed in Brooklyn, Steve might have tried to make a move.

Now all he could think about was this feisty British gal and how much he wanted to see her again. Peggy was more and more in his dreams lately and he hoped to god he would make it back to her.

In that way he guessed he could understand what you and Bucky were finding in each other. He made a choice in his own head that should you pass by any jewellers on the way to the next base, he would help Bucky find a ring.

After all, life is too short when you're fighting a war and who knows how long any of you had left?
Luxembourg.

What a rich place this was. The Fritz certainly hadn't made their mark here. It was mostly sympathetic to the Allied effort.

Bucky turned his attention back to you, riding in the front of the Jeep. Your suit was refreshed, your hair blowing in the breeze of the acceleration...God you were a vision. You always had been one of the prettiest gals in New York although you never had realised that yourself.

He watched as Steve said something to you and you laughed, the smile lighting up the car. It was infectious and even the guys riding in the back seat with Bucky cracked a grin.

“Getting the green eyed monster there, Barnes?” Dugan joked.


He then really did go to enjoy the view. He watched the expensive boutiques and sprawling architecture pass by. Then he caught sight of a small family owned jewellers.

He looked up to Steve who was staring straight back at him with his eyebrows raised and he motioned with his eyes to the shop. Seems he had the same idea.

Bucky nodded surreptitiously and Steve flashed him a pearly grin, mouthing the words 'later'.

You had no idea what was going on as you looked off into the horizon.

*I'm gonna get something real pretty for ya, doll.*
When you hit the safehouse, Steve made some excuse about recon, meaning Bucky and him were free to revisit the shop.

Bucky squatted on his haunches, staring at the twinkling gemstones in the window display and felt incredibly overwhelmed. God, would you even like any of this? You were such a tomboy that maybe this was a stupid idea.

“What is she gonna like?” Bucky sighed, completely lost.

“If I know Missy, nothing flashy,” Steve smiled in that reassuring way. “She likes...simple, practical. Pick a ring that won't hamper her fighting ability but is elegant.”

“What would I do without you, Stevie?” Bucky laughed nervously.

“Be terrible at proposing?” Steve smirked.

“Probably,” Bucky snorted. “How about that one?”

He pointed to a simple gold band that had inlaid diamonds along it. None were particularly prominent and they sat at the same level as the metal. It wouldn't get in your way and it was luxurious enough to not seem cheap.

“I think that's pretty perfect, Buck,” Steve nodded.

Without another word he went into the shop and began bartering with the owner. Bucky watched in amazement as the man fawned over Steve, adding a velvet box and ribbons to the purchase which Steve paid for with gold he'd hidden in his suit.

Bucky didn't even know Steve had that stashed there. It was probably for emergencies and here he was spending it on something trivial, something that didn't matter to the war effort. Bucky was going to pay for it himself, using his grandfather's old watch that he kept with him.

Steve came out a moment later and presented the small box to Bucky.

“Don't say I never do anything nice for ya.”

“How did you do that, punk?” Bucky asked. “I could've paid for that myself.”

“I want my friends to be happy,” Steve shrugged. “And maybe for you to be married before you end up getting her pregnant.”

“It's a modern world, Stevie,” Bucky laughed, pocketing the box into the inner lining of his winter jacket. “But I get your point. After this next mission, I'll ask her.”

“Good man,” Steve smiled, clapping him on the back. “Let's get back before she gets suspicious and comes marching out after us.”

**
“James we're going to get caught,” you giggle, feeling his hands gliding down your sides and the gentle rocking motion of him inside you.

“Say my name again, doll,” Bucky whispers in your ear, gentling nibbling at your lobe.

“James!” you say more forcefully. “Stop it! They're right next door!”

“Let them hear, I don't care,” he smiles.

Your mouth was making false excuses, wary of being walked in on by your platoon but your body was screaming out for Bucky. In the end, you surrendered to the moment, drawing him by his shirt collar to you in a fervent kiss.

“God I love you, Missy,” he purrs against you.

“I love you too,” you pant, letting your head loll back against the pantry wall. “Now stop treating me like I'm made of china.”

“Yes lieutenant,” Bucky smirks, letting the word fall sarcastically.

He picked up his pace and you melted in his embrace, completely losing all of your cares. One leg hooked around his waist, you shook all over as the pleasure barrelled through you and Bucky followed soon after, hands crushing you to him like he was desperate to feel the skin contact.

“You are incredible,” he breathes against you.

“Not so bad yourself, Barnes,” you laugh. “Although we need to be more careful. I think having a baby on the battlefield is generally frowned upon.”

“I get your point,” Bucky smiles, nudging his nose against yours. “We really oughta get back now. Steve's going over the mission plan for capturing Zola.”

“Then I'm glad we skipped out,” you grin. “God his strategies are so goddamn dull...”

“I know, doll, but we need to put in the effort otherwise we'll get his famous lectures instead. Remember the one he gave us when we snuck into the theatre that night?”

“About how we were causing the local economy to crash? Yeah I remember. Boy, Stevie's a real straight n' narrow.”

“He's mellowed a lot recently, especially since you both...”


“That's not what I meant,” Bucky stammers.

“It's alright Buck, come on, let's go.”

**
What felt like an eternity later, the plan was settled.

It started with a hike up a damn snowy mountain to a vantage point on an arterial train route. That was bad enough with the wind beating down at every turn, almost pitching you off the side of the crevasse. You didn't expect it to be so cold though.

Your suit, whilst amazing in many ways, was less warm than Steve's and you'd lost the sensation in your legs, only willing them to go on by sheer determination.

“Shit, Missy, you're turning blue!” Bucky cries, palming your icy face in alarm. “Why didn't you say anything?!”

“Has anyone got spare blankets or clothes?” Steve asks your platoon.

“Here,” Pinkerton says, taking off his signature neckerchief. “That'll help a little. Sorry I don't have anything more.”

Bucky tied it around your neck, the residual warmth seeping into your chilled skin.

“Anyone else?” he implores but they would be in the same position you are to strip any of their clothing off.

“Damn it all,” Bucky hisses, taking off his jacket and forcing you into it, despite your protests.

“You'll freeze!” you say. “Take it back! That's an order!”

“Overruled,” Steve says sternly. “Buck can wait til you're warmer then have it back later. I'm not having my lieutenant die for pride's sake.”

“You really are an ass sometimes, Rogers,” you poke your tongue out.

“And you're a stubborn mule,” Steve fires back. “Put it on.”

You hated being shown up in front of the men like this but you could feel the snow almost in your bones. When Bucky buttoned up the jacket, the pains of returning feeling started and you stopped shaking violently.

The second that happened you started to try and take it off but Bucky surprised you by yelling your actual name, not your nickname. That brought silence to the entire squad.

“Are you going to listen now or do I have to break out the middle name too?” he hisses.

“Fine, James,” you say sardonically. “But when you're like a snowman in Central Park, don't come cryin' to me, okay?”

“Would never give you the ammunition, doll,” Bucky winks.

“And the rest of you,” you announce to the Howling Commandos. “Get that zip line up.”

“Yes Ma'am,” came the chorus of men too frightened to backchat.

They scrambled to work whilst you took out some binoculars, looking at the scene before you.

“What the hell would you do without us Missy?” Steve sighs.
“Probably be a really dashing legendary war hero in a shallow grave,” you scoff.

“Probably,” Steve agrees.

“Gee, Stevie,” Bucky swallows, looking at the erected zipline. “Remember that time I made you ride the Cyclone at Coney Island? This isn't payback is it?”

“Why would I do that?” Steve smiles enigmatically. “Just because I threw up?”

“Actually you both did,” you remark and point to Bucky. “He just held it in until you were in the bathroom to vomit in some bushes.”

“Hey!” Bucky cries. “You promised you wouldn't say anything!”

“I knew it!” Steve grins. “I knew you were sick too!”

“You could quite easily not be my best gal ya know?” Bucky pouts. “Spillin' all my secrets like this.”

“Come off it,” Steve snorts. “The two of you are nauseatingly happy together.”

You look at Bucky and his roguish smirk and can't help but smile. He comes towards you and gives you a gentle kiss.

“Not in front of the children,” Steve laughs, gesturing to the Commandos who were shuffling awkwardly.

“I'm sure they've kissed some girls in their time,” you address them.

“Got a girl back home,” was the general consensus of a few, some had no gals but their mommas.

“Ahem,” Gabe coughs awkwardly, trying to steer the mission back on course. “Zola's on the train. They've given him permission to open up the throttle so wherever the train is going, they need him there badly.”

“Must be the main base,” you muse.

“Come along then chaps, they're moving like the devil,” Falsworth smiles genially. “No time to lose.”

“Okay, Missy, Buck, we've got a ten second window to get on there. We miss it, we're bugs on a windshield,” Steve tells you.

“No pressure,” Bucky mumbles.

“Mind the gap,” Falsworth chuckles to himself. Must be some British humour, you think.

“Maintenant!” Dernier almost screams behind you and you end up scrambling to the handholds as quick as you can. Time to go.

God you hated heights. You hated dangling over a rocky ravine more. You hated ziplining with the wind scraping your face with snowflakes whilst over a rocky ravine the most.

You bit your lip, desperate to not make a sound until your feet hit the carriage roof and you almost buckled off the side but sheer balance kept you on. Steve and Bucky were a little more graceful in their landings.
You swung over the side and Steve held your feet whilst you jimmyed the train car door open. He pulled you up just in time to miss a volley of fire.

“Friendly, huh?” you remark before angling into the open doorway and kicking the soldier to the back wall before pinning his head to it with the Liberty Crown.

You ducked behind a set of crates as gunfire exploded at the spot you'd just occupied. You yanked the Crown out of the dead soldier's skull before working out your best plan of attack.

Steve was in the carriage now, using his shield to take the brunt of the assault with Bucky picking off those Hydra soldiers unfortunate enough to peer out.

You had to get up the train so you vaulted over the crates, running at full pelt and punching men out of your way with such force that they ricocheted off of various objects.

You turned back for a brief moment to see Bucky nearly getting his head blown off but Steve threw his shield in the way. Your heart started again after its momentary scare.

“I had him on the ropes,” you hear Bucky say to Steve.

Typical Bucky...

“I know you did,” Steve answers in that sympathetic way.

It was odd hearing the reversal of their roles sometimes. Little Stevie from Brooklyn who picked fights with men twice his height and weight and Bucky Barnes, the hero who'd swoop in and defuse the situation. Then there was you, who often inflamed the situation but got a good few licks in, enough that they thought twice before messing with a girl.

Your daydreaming caused you to get socked in the face and you stagger for a moment, blinding slashing with the Crown. You hear an almighty scream as something heavy thumps to the floor and you suddenly focus, noticing you've cut his hand off. Quickly the rest of him follows suit.

You were almost at the door when it was blown clean off the hinges and you were flung backwards along the carriage, skidding across the floor.

Holy cow! Whatever that weapon was, it sure was strong! You wouldn't like to be in the direct blast path of it.

“Missy!” your two boys call for you.

“I'm alright! Get down!” you yell, diving behind a pallet.

Steve flings his shield, knocking the heavily armed soldier backwards but he soon recovers, firing a shot around some canisters that were stored near the back. The resultant blast ripped apart the metal of the carriage structure, the walls peeling away like wet paper and you watched in horror as Bucky was sucked out into the bitter tundra, clinging on for dear life onto an errant pole.

“JAMES!” you scream, not caring about the fight, trusting that Steve would protect you.

You threw yourself onto the floor, hand outstretched to Bucky, who was trying to climb back into the train.

“Take my hand!” you call, willing yourself to stretch just a couple more inches, barely staying in the carriage yourself.
“Missy!” Bucky says through strained teeth. “I can't! I-”

A groan rends through the train and the pipe drops an inch, almost shaking Bucky off.

“Fuck!” you cry in terror, hooking your foot in the gap between the door and frame and leaning most of your body out to reach for him.

A jerk of the carriage on the line almost dislodges your foot from its holding spot but strong hands grip your ankle.

“Bucky! I've got her! Just reach up!” Steve shouts from behind you, keeping a firm hold on you.

With the added security of Steve's help you elongate yourself more than you ever thought you could. You can touch Bucky's knuckles now, clinging onto the metal pole.

“Grab my hand!” you repeat.

Bucky takes one hand off the pole to lunge for yours but in that moment the metal finally gives way and all you receive is the ghost of a touch as he slips through your fingers and plunges into the ruthless ravine below.

Chapter End Notes

I'm sorry :) we're following the First Avenger storyline here. You knew this was coming...
Chapter Summary

You've lost Bucky but that doesn't mean the mission stops. Schmidt needs to be taken down.

Chapter Notes

This is going to be feels central (fair warning)
I don't usually get chapters out this quick but I had the inspiration
Warnings: Angst
Happy...or unhappy reading!
-TLP xx
(Still might be proof reading errors)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The image of Bucky's face screaming in terror assaulted your senses constantly.

You'd failed him. If you'd just reached further maybe....

You were back in London after continuing the mission and capturing Arnim Zola. Steve had had to stop you from beating the man to death, although you came damn close to it. Bastard didn't deserve to live.

You got a verbal ticking off from the Colonel for almost causing a casualty but Philips didn't seem to really put his heart into it. He knew after all.

Everyone knew.

You couldn't stand the looks of pity, the kind words, the soothing touches. It all just made you rage inside that you'd lost him. Nothing they could do would bring him back to you.

So here you were, in the bombed out pub where you'd danced with Bucky for the first time, sat on the floor, trying to drink your sorrows away but only feeling the burn of the alcohol and none of the headiness.

“Mind if I join?” Steve asks, startling you.

“How in the Sam heck did you find me?” you ask harshly, hunching down into yourself more.

“I know you, Missy,” Steve says, sitting down next to you. “Please tell me that alcohol works on us. I could do with not feeling anything right now.”

You glance up at your lifelong friend and see how much he's hurting too. You feel damn selfish in that moment. Of course he'd be devastated. The three of you were thick as thieves.
“Works as well as a dud grenade,” you laugh bitterly before tossing the rest of the bottle at the wall and watching it shatter, spraying amber liquid onto the rubble around you. “Can't even drink his memory away. I hate this.”

“Shh,” Steve soothes you, pulling you into a hug. “You don't wanna lose that memory.”

“We're damn super soldiers, Steve,” you start crying, not caring how weak you seem right now. “And I couldn't even save him. Erskine was wrong to pick me.”

“Don't ever say that,” Steve barks at you and his bluntness makes you jerk in his arms. “You've saved hundreds of lives. So have I. Our....our luck just ran out.”

“I see him every time I close my eyes,” you whisper. “Falling, endlessly falling.”

“I see I too,” Steve whispers back, gently rocking with you. “I'm going to kill Schmidt if it's the last thing I do.”

“Let me get a punch in too,” you say.

“Deal,” Steve nods.

**

He'd never seen you like this.

Steve looked at your tear stained face, still so pretty despite the tracks marking it.

You never cried. Even when you broke your arm performing some misguided jump you kept it together. Even when your momma died you were brave in the face of mortality.

“Steve?” a voice says and he turns to see Peggy.

He knows she gets the wrong impression because her lips purse in annoyance but upon her walking round and seeing your haunted face and his, the expression drops.

“It wasn't your fault,” she says softly. “Either of yours.”

“Did you read the report?” Steve asks in a low tone.

“Yes,” she answers hesitantly.

“Then you know what you say is not true,” you answer, your voice burned out from crying.

“You damn well did everything you could,” Peggy snaps. “He was your friend and he was your lover, Missy. You believed in him right? Then allow him the dignity of his choice to follow you. He must have damn well thought the both of you were worth it.”

“We're going after Schmidt,” Steve says resolutely.

“I know you are,” Peggy nods. “I'm already setting up the arrangements. Be back at HQ in an hour.”
With that she promptly leaves.

He feels you slide more of your body weight against him, leaning into his hug further.

“We'll get him, Missy,” he says softly, kissing the top of your head in affection. “I promise you.”

You said nothing but pulled Bucky’s jacket around you tighter.

God you hadn't taken that thing off in days. He'd catch you occasionally, smelling the fabric as if you were trying to imprint the scent of Bucky into your mind forever.

“What?” you say, brow furrowed as you felt along the side of the coat, patting the length. “There's something in here.”

_Oh God, please don't be that, please....please God._

“That sound haunted him for days after....
The Howling Commandos snigger. They loved when you showed Steve up a little.

“Gee thanks,” Steve huffs. “Such loyalty in my platoon.”

“Happy to serve, Captain,” you fire back.

God you were trying to get some sense of normality back but it was hard. At least Steve was giving you comfort. You weren't alone in your mourning.

“Alrighty then,” the Colonel smirks. “Ship out ladies and don't come back until the war is won.”

**

This seemed very undignified being captured this way.

You were hefted in by a horde of soldiers, all of them too scared to let go of your arms in case you beat them to tar. Steve was practically swamped in them too.

Johann Schmidt stood with his back to you before finally deigning to turn around and acknowledge your presence. Everything about his posture just screamed haughtiness.

“American arrogance may be a unique trait but I must say...the two of you rather excel in it,” he began, that red glistening skin shining as he spoke. “But there are limits to what even the two of you can do. I'm sure Erskine mentioned...or did he say otherwise?”

“He said you were insane,” Steve counters.

“Ah so he tries to deny me what is rightfully mine but gives it to you? And who are you to wield such power?”

“No one,” Steve smirks. “I'm just a kid from Brooklyn.”

You felt the rush of air as Schmidt pummelled Steve's face, breaking the cheekbone and splitting the lip as he continued his assault.

“I can do this all day,” Steve says proudly and you remember his bold attitude from when he was scrawny. God he never changed at all.

“I'm sure you can,” Schmidt sneers. “Maybe her...not so much.”

“Try me,” you snarl.

“I don't hit good breeding stock,” Schmidt cups your chin. “I prefer a pleasing face after all.”

“God, you're still thinking of that?!?” you say in horror.

“The child of two serum enhanced beings is still a powerful thing, girl,” Schmidt smiles horribly. “I've told you that before. When I get rid of your famous lover, you'll finally accept your true destiny.”

“The hell I will!” you shout, fake struggling against the men.

“I'd love to debate this with you but I'm on a tight schedule, Miss Liberty,” Schmidt sighs, picking
up some kind of weapon.

“What a coincidence,” Steve laughs. “So are we.”

At that moment, the Howling Commandos come crashing through to the room. Chaos erupts everywhere as bullets fly and you see Falsworth in the din throwing Steve's shield and your Liberty Crown towards you.

“Think you might need those old beans!” he yells before headbutting a Hydra soldier trying to rush him. “Jolly good now!”

“Thanks!” you shout back, making short work of the men holding you.

You turn to see that Schmidt has fled.

Bastard.

You race after him, speeding down the corridors with Steve hot on your heels.

“You'll never get away!” you scream like a banshee, eyes wild and body filled with purpose and rage.

Schmidt turns a corner and you make to also but a jet of fire plumes out at the spot where you would've just run into.

“Missy!” Steve shouts, pulling you out of the blast path.

Your suits were no good against fire and the constant blaze of the flame was dazzling your eyes too much. You had no chance of throwing the Crown accurately.

A gunshot rings out from somewhere and the soldier drops in front of you, the flame petering out to tiny sparks. In the wake of his fall, Peggy stands, hair messy and breathing hard.

“You're late,” Steve smiles.

“Don't you have somewhere to be?” she motions.

It didn't take long before you were chasing the Hydra leader down again.

“He's getting in the plane!” Steve yells. “We have to stop it taking off! He can't unleash that superweapon!”

You sprint harder than you ever have in your life, trying to keep up pace with the plane that was taxi-ing on the runway. No matter how fast you ran, you couldn't catch it. It was getting further and further away and you were almost crying in frustration.

This couldn't be happening, not again. You couldn't fail again.

A beep of a horn surprises you and you turn to see Chester Philips and Peggy in a Jeep. Steve has climbed in on the seats and is motioning for you to do the same.

You vault backwards, landing on the bonnet just in front of Steve.

“Keep it steady!” Steve says to Philips.

“Give it some gas!” you order.
You feel the acceleration and now you're gaining. The hatch is almost within your grasp.

You're about to make the jump when you hear a voice.

"Wait!" Peggy cries before leaning forward and dragging Steve down by the suit into a passionate kiss.

God you never expected that!

Part of you ached at the sight, reminded of what you'd lost but you buried that feeling. You could be momentarily happy for your friend, even in the face of the mission.

"Go get 'em," she says to both of you.

Colonel Philips snorts, "I'm not kissing either of you, get to it!"

That makes you laugh properly for the first time in days.

You ready yourself and take the leap, landing with cat like ease onto the closing hatch. Steve barely makes it and you have to pull him in quick before the door closes.

"Close one, huh?" he says with a stupid grin, clearly smitten with what's just happened.

"Focus Stevie," you whisper.

"Right," he shakes his head.

You burst into the cockpit where Schmidt stands with his hands folded behind his back.

"You just don't give up do you?" he snarls.

"Nope," you nod, pouncing forward and delivering a hook that would make your Daddy proud.

Schmidt reels back as you and Steve take turns dodging and weaving, throwing punches and kicks, getting the upper hand.

"You could have been gods of the new world," Schmidt growls, stumbling backwards to catch his breath. "Yet you wear flags on your chest. This is not a battle of nations. I've seen the future and there are no flags."

"Not our future," Steve shakes his head before turning to you and giving the secret wink.

Both of you let your weapons fly into the console housing Schmidt's superweapon.

"What have you done?!" Schmidt screams, desperately trying to fix the machine.

He grabs a glowing cube from inside the contraption, blue light flowing out of it like dense fog. In one almighty crash, a beam of pure energy surrounds the Hydra leader, pulling him upwards, upwards and into the heavens. You hear the cries as he goes.

With a clunk, the cube settles on the ground, melting through the floor and dropping out of the plane into the sea below. You didn't even have a chance to catch it.

"We've got a problem," Steve says grimly, walking to the console. "This is heading to New York."

"What?!" you pale. "We have to stop it somehow."
Steve patches the radio, “This is Captain Rogers, come in. Do you read me?”

The voice of Morita crackles through the speaker but he barely gets three words in before Peggy must have obviously shoved him out of the way.

“Steve?! Is that you?!”

“I'm alright, we're alright,” Steve says. “Schmidt's dead.”

“And the plane?” Peggy asks.

Steve takes a breath, “Bit harder to explain.”

“Well give me your damn co-ordinates,” comes the bossy voice from the other line. “We can find a safe area.”

The look in Steve's eyes tells you the whole story.

“There isn't a safe landing area,” he sighs. “This thing is heading for New York and I can't stop it. I've gotta set her down in the water.”

“Please,” Peggy begs, the voice crackling in and out. “Don't do this. You owe me a dance.”

“Steve,” you say softly. “Take the parachute and go.”

He clicks off the radio, looking at you in absolute horror, “Why the hell would I do that?”

“You've got someone waiting for you,” you explain. “Let me pilot it.”

Steve violently grabs your arms, shaking you, “Are you crazy?! You want me to walk away and let another friend die?!”

“I have nothing left!” you scream, all of the anguish coming out at once. “I lost the man I loved and if I don't do this alone, I'll lose my best friend too. Get out!”

You shove him back across the cockpit, manning the controls.

Steve rushes back turning you round and grabbing your hair forcefully in his panic.

“I'm not leaving you!”

“For God's sake Stevie,” you start crying. “Don't let Peggy down. She needs you.”

“You need me more,” he says simply. “I'm not letting you die alone, Missy. We've been through too much. I won't leave you.”

He brushes past you, picking the radio back up where Peggy is still frantically trying to get through to him.

“I'm gonna need a raincheck on that dance,” he says, trying his best to sound jovial.

“Alright,” you hear her choked words. “A week next Saturday, Stork Club. 8pm. Don't be late.”

“Wouldn't dare,” Steve smiles slightly. “You still have to show me how to dance.”

“I'll show you,” she implores. “Just...just be there.”
“I'll be there,” he says sadly. “Be seeing you.”

“Steve, wait!” she starts but he clicks off the radio, wiping a stray tear from his eye.

“You're a goddamn idiot,” you sob. “You find love and you throw it away.”

“Stop that,” Steve says gently, tipping the controls so the plane starts to nosedive. “I'm not an idiot. It was always us. You, me and Buck. Always us. Til' the end of the line.”

He hugs you tightly, cradling your head so you can't see out of the windshield at the sea rushing towards you.

“Goddamn you, Stevie,” you whisper. “Til the end of the line.”

The plane lurches, you're flung into the wall as the glass shatters.

All you know is darkness and ice and then...nothing.

Nothing but the image of Bucky's smiling face as you succumb.

Chapter End Notes

And with that closes the First Avenger arc of this story. The new arc will start presently.
You were surprised to find you were awake.

You were more surprised to find you were in a hospital bed, a soft cotton t-shirt and drawstring pants on your body whilst the radio blared out Tuxedo Junction.

“Good morning,” the nurse smiles kindly at you. “Or should I say afternoon now.”

Something’s off. You can just feel it.

You cast your eye upon the nurse and note several things that aren't supposed to be there. She has flawless skin, the kind you only get with Hollywood makeup, her hair seems expertly dyed, the clothes seem too fresh, almost like they're just out of the factory and her chest....well, her breasts certainly didn't look normal, far too high and round.

“Where am I?” you ask.

“You're in a recovery room in New York,” she answers kindly and you can see that even her lipstick is more advanced than you expect.

“Where am I really?” you press, feeling anxious.

“I don't know what you mean,” she feigns innocence.

You scramble from the bed, backing against the wall, “Who are you?!”

“Lieutenant, please calm down!” she implores and you see she presses a small button on the underside of the desk.

“WHO ARE YOU?!” you bellow, completely frightened now.

This was all fake. You were convinced you'd been fished from the plane and captured by Hydra.
trying to lull you into a false sense of security.

Armed men enter with strange sleek guns and attempt to herd you back into the bed but in your panic, you shove one of them through the wall which gives way completely exposing that this was nothing more than a cheap film set.

You sprint away, not caring that you had no shoes on as men called your name. You just pushed through as many doors as you could, hoping one would lead you outside so you could tell where you were.

In one whoosh of light, you popped out into Times Square only...it wasn't what you remembered. Cars sped by you but they weren't the giant clunky things in your memory, they were streamlined and in pleasing colours. Glittering billboards sparkled around you but goddamn the pictures moved.

It was all too much. So many sounds, so many strange smells, so much light. You felt like you were having a nervous breakdown.

“Missy!”

Steve is stood behind you, obviously having run out of the same place you did. He stumbles as he spins around, trying to take everything in.

“Steve,” you say in a trembling voice.

Despite everything about your character, this is terrifying for you. You don't know where you are. Shit, have you been in a coma?

The sight of you looking so lost must have spurred something protective in Steve because he pushes aside his own discomfort and comes to hug you, trying to soothe your shaking body with small words of encouragement.

“What is this place?” you ask.

“I don't know,” Steve admits. “I woke up with some fake nurse and a baseball report from 1941.”

“I had a fake nurse too. Is this....is this New York?”

“That it is,” a stern voice says from behind you and you whirl around to see a man with an eye patch in a leather trenchcoat approaching you. “Sorry for the amateur dramatics back there but we wanted to break the news to you gently.”

“What news?” Steve almost growls and it seems he's barely clinging onto his emotions himself.

“You've been asleep. You've both been asleep for almost seventy years,” the man announces.

“Seventy...” you trail off.


No wonder everything looked completely futuristic. It was like watching one of Howard Stark's shows.

Your chest closed when you thought about him. He was probably dead by now. Shit they were all probably dead by now.

“Everyone we've ever known Steve,” you whisper. “They're gone.”
“Oh god,” he breathes, taking in the enormity of what it all means. “I had a date.”

Your heart breaks a little more as you see tears start to form in his eyes and you hug him impossibly tight to you, not caring about the government official shuffling awkwardly next to you.

“I had a date,” he repeats, a tear finally spilling down his cheek.

**

Director Nick Fury he said his name was. The man with the eyepatch.

He ran a government program called S.H.I.E.L.D which specialised in keeping America safe, and by extension now, the world.

He'd given you both homework in terms of catching up on your lost years and now that you were sure he wasn't a Hydra agent, you settled into something of a research pattern.

Whilst it had been seventy years for everyone else, it had only been a few short weeks since you'd lost Bucky and really you were still grieving. Learning about this new world was a welcome distraction and you became obsessed with it.

Your eager assistant was only too happy to show you about this thing called the 'internet' which was a library in a machine to you. You could ask it anything and it would have an answer.

You also carried around a notepad to jot down things that people said you should look into, any references you didn't understand or movies that you simply had to watch.

“What on earth is that?” Steve asks on one particular day, looking over your shoulder to see a strange video.

“Apparently whilst we went out and chalked pictures on walls, people today make videos and put them on the internet. This is apparently the 'evolution of dance'. Think I preferred our era if I'm honest.”

“I'm gonna go train, wanna join me?” Steve asks, chuckling at the silly dance moves on the screen.

“You don't wanna see what I've found?” you ask.

“What is it?” Steve asks apprehensively.

You pull up the Wikipedia article about Peggy and you feel Steve stiffen behind you.

“Why are you showing me this?” he says grimly. “She's gone.”

“She's still alive, Stevie,” you say gently, pointing out there was no death date.

You hear the tiny choked sob in his throat which he stifles quickly before shaking his head, “I can't. I can't, Missy. It's been too long. I can't bear to see her all grown up without me.”
“Alright,” you don't push him.

“I'm gonna hit the gym,” he coughs, muscles coiled and you know you've really upset him with the news.

“I'm sorry,” you call out. “I thought...I thought it might make you happy.”

“That I missed my chance?” Steve says bitterly. “Sure, I'm swell about it.”

“I told you to go,” you spit, standing on your feet. “I told you to get out of the goddamn plane and you refused. You could've had a life with Peggy but you chose to stand there like an ass and die with me.”

“Maybe I shouldn't have,” he hisses. “If I knew I'd end up seventy years in the future with everyone I've ever known dead around me, maybe I wouldn't have.”

“Gee, thanks you asshole,” you growl, doing a poor job of concealing your tears of hurt. “Didn't realise I was such a horrible damn prospect for you.”

You stalk out of the room and that bastard doesn't even follow you. He lets you get to your room where you rage, tossing things around and screaming at the walls as though they were hemming you in.

You drop to the floor, openly sobbing like you were letting all your pent up frustration and mourning out at once. Even Steve had abandoned you now.

You look at the large taunting empty space of wall behind the bed and grab, what the assistant called, a Sharpie before writing down everyone's names.

James Montgomery Falsworth

Timothy Dugan

Jim Morita

Jacques Dernier

Gabe Jones

Junior Juniper

Pinky Pinkerton

You hesitated for a moment before writing in bigger letters right at the top over your list.

James Buchanan Barnes
They would not be forgotten by you, even if Steve wanted to run from the idea of mortality. They would stay with you forever. Your Howling Commandos.

You sit on the floor, just staring at the list of names and finding an odd peace in that.

A knock at the door breaks your meditation and you utter a small, “Come in.”

Steve and Director Fury open the door and Fury seems a little annoyed at the sheer amount of mess in the room but Steve’s eyes lock onto the words on the wall.

“I need to speak with you Lieutenant,” Fury says firmly. “If you're not too busy trashing the place.”

“Fine,” you utter emotionlessly, getting up and turning to him, not even bothering to wipe your tear stained face.

“Directory Fury, can you give us ten minutes actually?” Steve says quietly.

“Sure,” Fury shrugs. “Maybe you can get to her clean up while you're at it.”

He leaves the room and Steve just silently stands by your side, staring at the list.

“I didn't realise how in pain you were,” he murmurs.

“No one ever does,” you say bitterly. “They think I'm this big tough dame who sucks it up and gets on with it but I have feelings too, Stevie. I miss them. I miss them so goddamn much and I ain't ever gonna see them again.”

“You know,” he starts, holding your hand and squeezing it. “I would've stayed on the plane and you know why? Because I don't like the idea that you could've been staring at my name up there too, all alone in this godforsaken era.”

“You know,” he starts, holding your hand and squeezing it. “I would've stayed on the plane and you know why? Because I don't like the idea that you could've been staring at my name up there too, all alone in this godforsaken era.”

“Is that your idea of an apology?” you laugh.

Steve chuckles, “I'm sorry, Missy. Can you forgive me for being so awful to you? I'm just...I'm not adjusting well and I don't mean to take it out on you. You've always been there for me.”

“I forgive you, you stupid jerk,” you give him a small smile.

“We need to stick together,” he announces, giving your hand another squeeze. “Help each other like we've always done. You, me and Buck. I firmly believe he's here in spirit.”

He purposefully taps the engagement ring on your finger and you bite back more tears. God you hated crying in front of people.

“Now let's see what the Director wants,” Steve says, pulling you outside where Fury has obviously been listening in.

“Here with a mission, sir?” you ask.

“I am,” Fury nods.

“Trying to get us back out into the world?” Steve prompts.

“Trying to save it actually,” Fury chuckles, tossing two dossiers over to you.

You open it and blanch to see the Hydra superweapon on the first page.
“What the hell is this?” you demand.

“Howard Stark fished it outta the sea when we picked you up,” Fury explains. “He thought we could use it for sustainable energy.”

“So who took it?” Steve says suspiciously.

“Clever,” Fury smiles. “His name is Loki. He’s not from around here. There’s a lot we have to bring you both up to speed on. The world is even stranger than you realise now.”

“Honestly, sir, after seeing a man get shot into the heavens, nothing would surprise me,” you snort.

“Ten bucks says you're wrong Lieutenant,” Fury chuckles. “Is there anything we should know about the Tesseract?”

“You shoulda left it in the ocean,” Steve says grimly.

Fury gives you a curious look with his one good eye before deciding to change the subject.

“Anyway, Missy, you'll be happy to know your actions on the plane earned you a posthumous promotion. Congratulations Captain Liberty, glad to have you back in service.”

With that he stares for another few seconds before walking off down the corridor.

“Do you trust him?” Steve whispers, mindful of cameras in the hallway.

“No,” you admit. “I'm not entirely sure they weren't doing something bad with that thing.”

“Glad it's not only me that gets that feeling,” Steve says, before bundling you back into your own room. “We’ll play along until if or when we're uncomfortable.”

“Agreed,” you nod. “Holy cow, a captain huh? Wonder if my Daddy got to know.”

“I'm sure he did, Missy,” Steve says, his face softening. “And I'm sure he was real proud of you too.”

You start fiddling nervously with your ring again and Steve places a gentle hand on top of yours.

“Do you need me to sleep next to you again?” he asks.

You give a silent nod.

Since your ‘awakening’ sometimes you’d ask Steve to sleep in the same bed for comfort or to stop nightmares from happening. In turn, Steve would ask you to do the same sometimes.

You were sure it was starting chatter and rumours around the S.H.I.E.L.D complex but you didn't give two hoots. They didn't understand, they couldn't understand. After losing everything about your life, you were going to cling onto the one remaining thing from it.

“Alright then,” Steve smiles. “Just don't try and hog the bed this time. I nearly fell out of it last night.”

He helps you rearrange the room back into something vaguely tidy before kicking off his shoes and stripping to his t-shirt and underwear before getting into the bed. You throw on some comfy shorts and a vest top before joining him.
You lay there in silence, just staring at your list and contemplating.

“I miss them too,” Steve admits. “I miss him most of all. Please don't ever think that I don’t.”

“I know, Stevie, I know,” you say softly before turning onto your side and catching sight of the dossier left on your desk marked with big bold words.

The Avengers Initiative

Chapter End Notes

This story may take a bit of a different turn than you expect so bear with me. Most things will be revealed by the time the Winter Soldier arc comes.
You snuck out from under Steve's heavy arm in the early morning.

Quietly you padded out and changed, rendezvousing with your assistant, Sarah, as you'd planned to do.

“All good, Missy?” she says, looking around the deserted corridors.

“Ready as I'll ever be,” you nod and with that she pulls you down a side hallway until you're almost out of the complex.

A stern looking woman you know to be Maria Hill blocks your path when you get to the exit.
“Where are you going with her?” she directs a curt eyebrow at Sarah.

“Field trip,” Sarah mumbles.

You have the impression you may have just got her in a lot of trouble so you pipe up, “It's my fault. I bullied her into it.”

“I can believe that,” Maria snorts. “Your files said you were stubborn.”

“A gal is who a gal is,” you shrug, daring her to say something else.

She just gives you a strange smile before folding her arms, “Where are you going?”

“Tattoo parlour,” you cut in before Sarah can make up some lie. It was useless to be untruthful to this woman.

“You want a tattoo?” Maria says bewildered. “Why?”

“For everyone I've lost,” your voice drops in volume. “Sarah told me gals can get ink these days and it ain't so frowned upon. I just...I want to remember them always.”

You must have looked a pathetic sight because Maria gives you a sympathetic look before nodding and stepping to the side.

“If you're late to the briefing I'll get Fury to glare at you,” she smirks.

“Wouldn't want that, would we?” you smile back. “Thank you.”

“Get going,” she shakes her head before walking off. “And make it count.”

**

God-fucking-damn this hurt like hell!

Being a super soldier really sucked when they had to dig the tattoo needle in really deep to leave a mark. You were ruing the day you ever came across Erskine.

“Not long to go,” the tattoo artist proclaims before chuckling to himself. “Man I never thought I'd be inking up Lady Liberty, 'specially not on her chest.”

“Hey, none of that,” you frown. “I'm old enough to be your grandma about now.”

“Lookin' good for some chick in their nineties,” he scoffs before pausing the needle. “Definitely those initials?”

“Yeah,” you nod. “J.B.B”

“Awfully sweet,” the guy nods. “Whole world knows your love story with Bucky Barnes.”

“They do?” you say confused, turning to Sarah who just smiles sadly. You made a point of not researching yourself or Bucky.

“Made a couple of TV dramas outta it,” the artist says, flicking the needle back on. “Bet nothing compares to the real thing though.”
“Sure doesn't,” you confirm. “Say they got someone attractive at least to play me.”

“You know, seeing you in the flesh...gotta say you're prettier,” the guy laughs.

“Well ain't you just a charmer,” you smile. “All men this forward nowadays?”

“And the women,” Sarah chimes in. “It's a new world.”

“Damn, I missed a lot, didn't I?” you sigh.

“Hey, I'm sorry,” the artist gives you a pitying look. “Didn't mean to drag it up for you. Just a little starstruck is all.”

“Looks like you're about to get more starstruck,” Sarah nods towards the entrance.

You look to see Steve in casual modern clothing just staring disapprovingly at you. You think he's probably mad you're almost topless in the presence of other people.

“Gonna stand like a boogeyman in the doorway or coming in?” you challenge.

Steve eventually enters, striding forward and giving that paternal glare he's gotten very good at until he sees exactly what design the artist is tattooing over your heart.

“Our Howling Commandos,” he breathes, almost reaching out to trace the lines of the wing logo. “Oh Missy...God I wish I could ease the pain for you more.”

The artist finishes the last 'B' before wiping off the excess and Steve chews his lip upon reading the tiny initials.

“Keeping him with you always huh?” Steve notes.

“Always,” you nod. “They say you never forget your first love right?”

Steve looks incredibly upset and you jump up, giving him a sideways hug. You can feel him restraining his emotions greatly.

“Hey,” Steve says to the artist. “Give me one too. That is, if Missy is okay with me stealing her design.”

“'Til the end of the line?” you say.

“'Til the end of the line,” Steve affirms before hopping into the chair himself. “Although if you don't mind, I'll go for P.C rather than J.B.B.”

Steve did a much better job of keeping still than you did.

**

You barely had time to get settled again before you were bundled on a plane on Fury's orders, heading god knows where.
Some agent was showing you a video of a man turning into something monstrous, like one of the old B-movies. It was horrifying to watch and you could just imagine it was a similar pain to when you changed into the soldier you are now.

“Forty minutes out,” Agent Coulson announces.

“So this...Doctor Banner,” Steve starts, studying the footage. “He was trying to replicate our serum?”

“A lot of people were,” Coulson replies. “You guys were the first superheroes. Doctor Banner thought gamma radiation could crack Erskine's original formula.”

“Poor guy,” you muse. “Didn't go his way, huh?”

“Not so much,” Coulson nods. “When he's not...that...he's actually like Stephen Hawking.”

“Who?” Steve says confused.

“The very smart man who does space theories,” you remind him, thanking Sarah internally that she'd gotten you up to speed so quickly on the big things of the modern day.

“Ah right,” Steve nods.

“Can I just say something?” Coulson starts, his hand over his chest. “It's an honour to meet you two. I mean...officially. I kinda watched you both sleeping when you were on ice.”

You quirk your eyebrow and the agent immediately realises how odd that must have sounded, “I mean...ah you know...god it really is an honour-”

“We hope we can live up to that,” you interrupt him, trying to stop himself from digging a bigger hole.

“Oh absolutely you will,” Coulson nods emphatically. “We made some modifications to your uniforms by the way. I myself had some input.”

“Our...weren't they destroyed?” you ask, pretty certain your Howard Stark Lady Liberty suit was shredded upon impact.

“I mean your USO tour ones,” Coulson smiles politely.

“Aren't they a tad...old fashioned?” Steve grimaces.

“With everything that's about to come to light, I think people will need old fashioned,” Coulson says cryptically before looking out of the cockpit window.

You and Steve just exchange glances.

God you hoped to hell they weren't going to stuff you back in that teal monstrosity.

**

When you touched down on some giant carrier type thing, you were glad to be on something a
little firmer again.

A redhead woman met you on the landing strip, seeming to size both you and Steve up. You got the feeling she must be in part of a special task force considering the full body sweep she was giving you.

“Agent Romanoff,” Coulson announces before turning back to you and waving his hand. “This is Captain Rogers and Captain Barnes.”

Both you and Steve look in utter shock at Coulson who gives a mischievous little smile.

“What do you mean, *Barnes*?” you ask.

“I...uh...I altered your records,” Coulson admits, a tad sheepishly whilst Agent Romanoff tries to hide her burgeoning smirk. “I read the debriefs from the Howling Commandos. They said you and Sergeant Barnes were an item, which everyone knows, but that he'd gotten you an engagement ring and planned to propose so...I thought since you would've accepted anyway....”

“You made me Mrs Barnes,” you finish. “Holy shit. I don't know whether to punch you or hug you.”

“Ah, why punch?” Coulson winces.

“Because you invaded her privacy,” Romanoff rolls her eyes. “She's only been outta the ice for a few weeks and you're bringing that back up for her.”

“Oh, I'm sorry,” Coulson hangs his head. “I didn't think. I just thought it would be a nice tribute.”

“Missy Barnes does have a ring to it,” Steve admits, giving your shoulder a reassuring squeeze.

“Captain Missy Barnes if you don't mind,” you smile, trying not to showcase the raw emotion bubbling underneath.

Everywhere you went, every person you spoke to...Bucky was everywhere.

Everyone wanted to tell you how amazing your romance was, how perfect but it wasn't perfect. You lost him before you could ever get to spend a life with him. He would always be this immortally young charming man whilst you grew old without him.

“Missy?” Steve nudges softly. “Don't get lost in your head again. The mission...”

“I know,” you give him a nod. “I'm alright, really. Thank you, Agent Coulson. That was damn nice of you.”

Coulson's face splits into the widest grin before he coughs and reassembles his face into something more serious, “Ah, they need me on the bridge. See you there.”

As he walks away, the woman known as Agent Romanoff tuts loudly.

“Thought he was going to swoon,” she sighs. “Did he ask you to sign his Captain America and Lady Liberty trading cards yet?”

“Oh, they're vintage,” Romanoff winks. “He's very proud. Call me Natasha by the way.”
“Missy,” you say, extending your hand and she shakes it warmly.

A crash to your left sounds and you see Doctor Banner stumbling past some crates in a clumsy sort of way.

“Oh they told me you were coming,” Banner mumbles, trying to readjust himself.

“Word is you can find the cube, Doctor Banner,” Steve says, giving a mini salute.

“Is that all the word on me?” Banner cocks his head curiously.

“Only word we give a shit about,” you say bluntly which earns an elbow to the ribs from Steve and a ‘Language!’

“Oh I don't mind, really,” Banner laughs quietly. “Must be strange for you, all of this.”

“Actually it's pretty familiar,” Steve admits, looking around the deck at the displays of warfare.


You don't know what she means until you're halfway across the deck and the damn carrier lifts into the fucking air.

“I hate heights, I hate heights, I hate heights,” you keep mumbling to yourself over and over again as you watch the world beneath you grow smaller and Steve has to physically steer you into the bulkhead.

“Just breathe, Missy,” Steve says quietly, dragging you into the corner of the room so you can't see out of the window. “I got you.”

“Promise?” you ask, the insecurities of the day coming back ten fold.

“Always,” Steve smiles brightly. “Now come on, where's my Missy from Brooklyn who'd sock me in the arm for trying to mollycoddle her?”

“Still in here,” you laugh. “Just damn terrified to be on a floating carrier.”

“Sure is spectacular huh?” Steve nods. “You'll get used to it.”

You look to the console room where Fury, Hill, Romanoff and Banner seem to be conversing rapidly about 'spectrometers' and 'cell phones'. You couldn't keep up with what they were saying.

“Wish I could get used to this,” you gesture out. “Give me London HQ and their godawful morse code machines and radios.”

“It was real simple back then but seemed so complicated,” Steve muses. “I suppose being out seventy years means we have a lot to catch up on.”

“Maybe I need to go back to school and relearn everything,” you joke. “Our present is now history after all.”

“God that's scary to think about,” Steve shakes his head. “I'm so glad I have you Missy. You're the only thing keeping me grounded right now.”

“Same, Stevie,” you sigh.
“Captains?” Fury calls, motioning for you to come over and you see a screen running through faces before settling on a particular angular profile of one man. “Got a hit on the face trace. Loki appears to be in Stuttgart. It might interest you to know that he's not hiding himself.”

“Then he's overconfident,” you surmise. “Probably thinks the Tesseract means he's won already.”

“Very good,” Fury nods. “You guys are up. Retrieve that cube at any cost.”

“Yes Sir,” you salute out of habit, along with Steve and you swear Coulson does a small dance to see the action.

“Suit up, boys and girls,” Fury shouts.

**

You were in the teal monstrosity again but Coulson's additions had given you a modicum of protection in that the torso was more rigid and structured. At least you had the familiar Liberty Crown which appeared to have not blunted in all that time.

You came upon Stuttgart, dropping off into an alleyway for a better element of surprise before snaking around the back of a fancy looking building to see a sight like 1939 all over again.

The man known as Loki was forcing a group of German citizens to kneel but one old man was refusing.

“There are always men like you!” the old man spits in clear defiance.

“Look to your elder, people,” Loki announces to the crowd, readying some kind of sceptre. “Let him be an example.”

“Steve!” you urge, shoving him forward, anticipating the blow that was going to happen.

Steve manages to slide in front of the old man, blocking a strange beam that shoots out of the sceptre. It bounces off of Steve's shield before arcing back towards Loki who effortlessly dodges like a trained dancer.


You couldn't get a clear shot from here. If Loki moved out of the Crown's path you'd hit a civilian and you couldn't live with yourself if you did that.

“Where's your darling paramour?” Loki hisses, like even the mere notion was farcical.

In one swift jump, you land behind Loki, slicing up but only manage to snip the barest fragment of his emerald cloak before his hand shoots out and grips your neck.

“There you are,” he practically purrs.

You aim a kick at his chest and he stumbles backwards, letting go in the process before you brandish the Crown, daring him to try that again.

“Wonderful,” Loki praises but before he can say any more, the quinjet arrives with Natasha
brandishing a gun.

“Drop the sceptre and stand down,” she demands.

Loki answers by firing his weapon at the jet and Natasha starts a barrage of bullet hailing towards him. You dodge out of the way, grabbing as many civilians as you can before running to the end of the plaza with them.

“Run and don't look back!” you urge them, going back to save more.

Steve and Natasha were keeping Loki occupied so you weren't going to join the battle just yet. The people needed to get out of here before this got uglier.

“KNEEL!” Loki bellows, trying to force Steve down to the ground with the sceptre but Steve fights back with everything he has.

“Not today!” Steve yells back, spin kicking Loki in the face.

A man in a metallic red and gold flying suit appears from nowhere, blasting Loki back with a beam of his own before declaring in a projected voice, “Your move Reindeer Games.”

“Good move,” Loki declares, lolling to the floor slightly.

The faceplate of the suit for your unexpected visitor peels back and you see someone from the Avenger debrief files regarding you both curiously.

“Mister Stark?” Steve asks to which Tony Stark nods.

“Captains,” Tony says to you both.

The kid of Howard Stark sure took after his father.

“Forgive this touching moment but I do have pressing business,” Loki says from right behind your ear and you feel the point of the sceptre digging into your throat.

Holy shit! How did he get behind you so quietly?!

“Missy!” Steve exclaims in alarm, running for you but Loki presses the sceptre further into your skin, breaking it slightly so a drop of blood snakes down.

“I don't think so,” Loki croons. “It appears to me that ensnaring one of Earth's chosen warriors is the logical choice.”

“Don't you dare!” Steve snarls whilst Tony seems to be calculating the best plan of attack.

“Oh...I dare,” Loki chuckles.

“No!” Steve yells.

He starts trailing the point further down until it hits on your chest and you feel your willpower being driven down inside your own body. You fight it as hard as you can, stubbornly refusing to give into this madman's magic.

“My my, we are a wilful one, aren't we?” Loki whispers in your ear. “Don't fight it. It'll be so much easier to give in.”
“Never,” you growl, expending all of your energy to keep your mind your own.

“Give. In,” Loki hisses, piercing the suit and the skin underneath.

The point of the sceptre digs so deep it hits your sternum and your freedom is drowned under a sea of Loki's design.

The orders he whispers to you are heard by the invader to your body and you seem to blindly obey, stepping away from him which earns Loki another blast from Tony Stark’s suit before you run off into the streets of Stuttgart, a clear purpose in your mind.

“Missy!” Steve shouts after you, trying to run you down but you've always been faster.

You lose him in the winding alleys, hopping up to the rooftop of a nearby building and watching as he seems to sink to his knees in despair.

In the haze of your controlled state, you register Steve swearing for the first time since you've known him.

“You goddamn bastard, you took her away from me. I'll goddamn kill you!”

With only a last look, you launch yourself from building to building, eager to meet up with Loki's team and the man known as Hawkeye who'd be waiting.

Chapter End Notes

-Protective Steve is best Steve
-Coulson is such a dork but we love him too
Loose Lips Might Sink Ships

Chapter Summary

Under Loki's control, you fight against the only person you have left in this world.

Chapter Notes

Sorry for the delay!
Been transferring a lot of stuff over to Tumblr and done an extra one shot for another fic but I'm baaaack!
If you wanna send any messages my email is theliveshipparagon@gmail.com / Tumblr: theliveshipparagon
I've had a couple of enquiries now about doing art for this fic and I would absolutely love that to be honest! Don't be afraid to message!
Happy reading!
-TLP xx
(Proofreading errors ahoy)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Steve was more furious than he could remember.

How dare Loki take you away from him! You were the only thing he had left and now you were under the control of the maniac sitting in cuffs at the back of the jet.

“Problem?” Loki croons, quirking up one eyebrow.

“You tell me how to fix her,” Steve growls.

“Hmmm I don't think so,” Loki chuckles. “The woman out of time is a formidable weapon and I intend to keep her.”

Steve smashes the wall with his fist where it buckles slightly, causing Tony to cry out in alarm.

“Hey hey! Cool it Capsicle!” Tony protests. “We're in the air! Don't damage the damn ship!”

“He took my friend,” Steve hisses angrily.

“I know, and we'll get her back,” Tony nods. “Don't listen to anything Reindeer Games has to say. He'll just get in your head.”

“Just like I got in hers,” Loki adds with a wicked grin.

“You're gonna get yours. Do you hear?” Steve points a shaking finger at the prisoner.

“I'm so very very frightened,” Loki rolls his eyes until a clap of thunder makes him jolt.
“What’s the matter? Don’t like lightning?” Tony teases.

“I’m not overly fond of what follows,” Loki mutters, all trace of his mischievous demeanour gone.

There was even a hint of fear as the sky flashed and Steve, for the third time that week, saw something fantastical. A man just wrenched open the ramp, took Loki and flew back into the sky.

“Goddamn,” he mutters under his breath.

Although he was in mission mode, he still thought of how you would've liked to have seen something like this.

*Oh Missy, god I hope you're safe.*

With that, he jumped out of the Quinjet after Tony.

**

Being trapped inside your own head was literal hell.

You could feel your body doing these things, interacting with people, preparing for war but you couldn't stop it. It was like you were watching a movie of yourself play out.

“Ready?” the man known as Hawkeye asks, ushering you into one of the planes.


“Go.”

That horrific flying carrier you were so eager to get off before, now you were attempting to breach it. Loki needed the distraction.

Your conscious thinks back to the words he whispered in Germany...

“This is a game, one I am winning. Find the man called Hawkeye, destroy the Helicarrier, destroy the Captain.”

Even as you thought about Steve, your hands clenched on the controls of the plane as if preparing themselves. This really wasn't going to be a pretty reunion.

*Fight it, Missy! Fight it!*

**

The ship was exploding all around him.

“Get to the engine and tell me what relays are in the overload position!” Tony's voice comes
through the tiny communications device in Steve's ear.

“Can do,” Steve nods, racing towards the centre of the carrier.

He ducks and dives in between the railings, hurtling down the gangways at top speed until two boots strike him hard in the face from above. Steve flies backwards, skittering on the uncomfortable cross hatched metal before he regathers his senses and looks up into your eyes, your ethereally blue eyes.

“Missy!” he cries out in relief before he barely dodges the Liberty Crown aimed at his head. “Stop it! It's me! It's Steve!”

“Sorry Captain,” you tilted your head in a way Steve had never seen you do before.

This wasn't you. None of it was you. As you launched yourself at him, he was fighting for his life, dodging your blows and the sharp sting of the Crown.

“Capsicle, I need to know now!” Tony's voice came through again.

“Little busy!” Steve hisses back, blocking an uppercut.

He thanked god the serum had given him the slight edge over you otherwise everything would've been lost. You were fierce in your Brooklyn days but without a constraint, you were downright savage.

“Missy!” he calls out again, managing to knock the Crown out of your hand by slamming your wrist down on the railing.

He ducks your hook and manages to hold both your hands behind your head. You struggled heavily but he managed to keep a grip.

“Remember me, please,” he urges. “Remember me, remember Bucky, remember the Howling Commandos.”

Your movements faltered, your arms not straining any more. Slowly you lowered them and Steve internally breathed a sigh of relief that he'd gotten through to you.

His victory was short lived when your hand came barrelling towards his face, splitting his eyebrow open.

“Won't work Captain,” you say in that emotionless voice.

Maybe he need to get rougher, knock you out.

Steve grabbed the back of your neck, throwing you hard against the wall. You crumpled like paper and Steve panicked that he might have done permanent damage. You were just lying on the floor, breathing quietly.

Had he done it? Did it work?

You slowly got up from the floor, almost cat like in your movements as you rested on all fours, just studying him.

Steve had never felt like prey more than he had done in that moment.

“Natasha says knock 'em out!” Tony's voice jolted him. “I'm assuming Lady Lukewarm is keeping
“Sure is,” Steve laughs bitterly. “I can't snap her out of it. She won't go down.”

“Can you bribe her with something?” Tony jokes. “I can have some expensive chocolates flown in.”

“Tony I-” Steve starts but barely manages to throw himself out of the way as you pounced, fist raised high.

“Jesus!” Steve exclaims, rolling to his feet.

“Just stay still Captain,” you smile horribly. “I can keep it quick. Fighting against me is futile.”

“This isn't you,” Steve implores. “Missy would never say anything like that. Please remember me!”

You went to tackle him but Steve caught your upper body, twisting it round to pull you off balance and sending you to the floor with him crashing on top of you.

There was one thing Steve could try but it was damn risky. Maybe it would shock you enough to come back to your senses.

He gathered your wrists quickly, pinning them either side of your head and pressed his forehead to yours, pushing your skull to the gangway to prevent you from headbutting him.

“I hope this works,” he mutters.

He kisses you.

He feels the struggle you put up but he doesn't stop. He doesn't care when you bit down on his already busted lip. He still doesn't stop. Eventually he feels you relax before your body starts rhythmically jerking. It takes him a while to realise you're crying.

Instantly he pulls away, afraid he's overstepped the boundary but he keeps a wary hand on your wrists all the same, slightly fearful it's another tactic.

“Steve?” you rasp out, in between your sobs. “Goddamn I'm so sorry!”

“It wasn't you, Missy,” Steve smiles. “Are you really back?”

“Yeah,” you nod and Steve notes your eyes have returned to normal. “That was one hell of a kiss, Rogers. Never would have expected that.”

Steve can feel the blush creep into his cheeks and he awkwardly looks away. He didn't think this far ahead. He didn't think about the consequences of kissing his life long friend. Was it awkward now?

He fiddles in his suit quickly for something to distract him and pulls out his handkerchief. He was going to give it to you but instead he found himself dabbing your cheek gently.

“Steve,” you say quietly. “You need that more than me. I did a real number on your mouth there.”

“I'll be fine,” he grins. “Just happy you're not trying to kill me any more.”

“Help a gal up?” you ask.
Steve stands, gallantly holding his hand out to pick you up but you end up crashing into his body. Steve guessed the sheer acrobatics had worn you out.

“Why did you...” you trail off, trying to meet his gaze but he wouldn't look at you.

In truth, Steve didn't know himself. It seemed like a shocking enough thing to jolt your memory but there was other things that he could have done. Why did he kiss you?

He briefly cast back to the Quinjet and how he felt when Loki had stolen you from him. Pure anger, loss, desperation....maybe this was his way of expressing how important you were to him. Maybe-

His train of thought was interrupted by you reaching up and cupping his cheek gently with an expression he'd seen on your face a few times before.

*With Bucky.*

You were closer than he realised and he didn't know what to do.

*Buck...would you forgive me if I made a move on your gal? I know you're up there, watching over us both. I think....I think we both need each other. Is that alright, buddy?*

“I just kept screaming over and over in my head,” you almost whisper. “It nearly damn killed me that I was hurting you, Stevie. I was so scared I was going to lose you. I can't lose anyone else. Not that I care about. Not again.”

Before Steve knew what was happening, you were kissing him back and in that moment he just let go of his awkwardness. You were two kindred spirits just happy that you still had each other.

**

It took a moment to register with all the adrenalin surge and hormones that you'd just kissed your best friend.

There was a flash of guilt that burrowed down to your core. It felt like you were being loose, cheating on Bucky but....Bucky was gone. Bucky was gone forever. Was it time to move on?

As you pulled away sharply, Steve seemed incredibly flustered but smiled warmly at you. He didn't seem particularly disgusted by what you had done so maybe...

*But with my Stevie? My sweet, gentle little Stevie? This is taking goddamn advantage to offset your own grief.*

“Don't you dare overthink,” Steve notices your expression. “Let it be what it was. Mission comes first.”

“Right,” you nod, smudging away the last of your tears before picking up the Liberty Crown again. “Get going and save the world, Captain. I'm gonna go kick the goddamn shit outta that slimeball.”

Steve, whether unintentionally or not, cups your cheek, staring at you intently, “Be safe. If I have to rescue you again I'll never let you live it down.”
“You’re on, Rogers,” you wink before dashing off into the carrier.

In truth, being away from him gave you time to think. As you raced further into the belly of the ship, your mind whirred with all the possible outcomes once the immediate danger was over.

Did Steve like you as more than a friend right now? Was he just seeking comfort? Were you? It was a dangerous concept with a friendship that had lasted almost two decades. Sure you had made that jump with Bucky but you felt like such a floozy for even thinking of your other friend that way.

Back off, Missy. Let him find a gal that’s better for him than me. Hell of a lot of pretty dames in this era.

With your mind at rest, you entered the room where you knew Loki would be. Hawkeye had told you the layout of the carrier and where it was expected that the god would be held prisoner. Sure enough, you saw him outside some round glass room that housed a very frantic blond man, battering on the window.

“Move away,” you heard Coulson say and saw him pointing some kind of gigantic gun at Loki. “Do you like it? We made it from the Destroyer you sent. I don't even know what it does. Wanna find out?”

You saw the ripple of energy blur behind the agent and Loki materialised behind him, stabbing a spear straight through Coulson's chest.

“No! Brother!” the blond man bellows.

“Animal!” you rage which catches the attention of the god as he mischievously slams a button on a panel.

The cage which the blond man is in plummets out of view.

“So glad you could join us, Captain Liberty,” Loki drawls, a slight predatory saunter to his step. “So you broke free, hmm? Fascinating....your race is usually so pathetic.”

“I'll show you pathetic,” you snarl, putting yourself in front of Coulson who was clutching his wound and barely clinging to life.

In one swift duck and spin, the Crown rushed past Loki at a speed you believe he didn't see coming. It slices a gash into his razored cheekbones that seems to outrage him immensely.

“Insolent mortal!” he spits. “You will come to heel again! That I promise you!”

“You know, I'm sick of power hungry bastards like you thinking you can enslave me. Guess what? It ain't gonna happen,” you scoff, a split second before you launch your fist at his face. “Liberty's in the name for a reason.”

Loki barely dematerialises. You know he's somewhere behind you because you hear a sharp breath from Coulson.

“Duck!” Coulson yells and you fling yourself to the floor as he fires the gun, blasting Loki out of the Helicarrier, leaving a giant hole in the hull in his wake. “So that's what it does.”

“Shit!” you panic, quickly crawling over to the dying agent on the floor. “Tell me what to do!”
“Bit late for me, Missy...I *can* call you Missy right?” Coulson smiles as warmly as he can.

“Call me whatever you want,” you fake laugh, trying to keep his mood up.

“Motherfucker!” you hear from the door and you spring up in alarm.

Director Fury looks completely dazed as he stumbles into the room before collapsing at Coulson's side also.

“Sorry boss. They got rabbited,” Coulson coughs.

“It's fine, it's fine. Eyes on me, okay?” Fury instructs him.

“I'm clocking out here,” Coulson mumbles. “But hey, at least I met my hero right?”

“You saved *me*, Phil,” you take his hand. “You're *my* hero.”

“Aww geez,” the agent grins lazily before you feel the slump and his hand goes limp in yours.

“Phil?” you call gently but you know it's fruitless.

He's gone.

“God-fucking-damn!” you punch the interior wall, buckling it.

He didn't deserve it. Sure he was awkward and a little obsessive but he was one of the most genuinely approachable people you'd met since waking up again. All he ever wanted to be your friend but you never got the chance to talk to him because of Loki.

“Captain Barnes,” Fury says in a low voice. “I'm to assume you're back with us.”

“Steve snapped me out of it. I got one rookie shot on Loki before he Houdini’d me,” you grit your jaw, placing Coulson's hands in his lap. “That son of a bitch is gonna pay.”

“Keep that, internalise that, *use* that,” Fury tells you. “Fight is not over yet. Go to the bridge. I'll meet you there.”

“Will he...will he be okay?” you ask softly, gently looking at the body in front of you.

“I can categorically promise you he'll get the send off he deserves but right now you need to pull some goddamn focus and get the asshole who did this to him, who's trying to do this to everyone,” Fury tells you sternly. “Now go.”

“Yes sir,” you nod, moving back towards the bridge.

When you enter, Steve and Tony are stood awkwardly around a table, Maria Hill in the background nursing a head wound.

“Missy!” Steve says in alarm. “Are you hurt?!?”

You look down and see blood smeared from where you'd held Coulson and balk a little.

“It's not mine,” you whisper.

“So whose is it?” Tony asks, arms folded.

Fury enters at that point, throwing some trading cards onto the table. Some were stained with
blood, some were crumpled beyond recognition.

“Agent Coulson’s,” Fury sighs, grabbing the back of the chair for support. “He died fighting Loki, he died protecting Captain Barnes, he died believing in the Avengers.”

“Don't start this again, I'm not interested in your boys club,” Tony rolls his eyes.

Fury slams his fist down on the table, “Alright, enough! Truth time! Steve and Missy, yes we were using the Tesseract to build an arsenal but I never put all my chips on that number. Tony knows I started the Avengers Initiative. I wanted a group of extraordinary people to fight the battles we never could. These are unusual times and common soldiers aren't enough. The world needs heroes. Phil Coulson knew that.”

Tony abruptly walks out and you get the sense he's trying to mask his emotions. Maybe it was the first time he'd ever lost someone on his side.

You follow him, keen to know what he was doing considering you hadn't truly met him yet. You wanted to see what kind of man he was like.

You tracked him back down to the detention room where he was staring at the dent in the wall where Coulson had hit it with the gun kickback.

“You know, I don't need a 90 year old babysitter, sweetheart,” Tony says sarcastically, not taking his eyes off the spot.

“If we're talking true age here I'm actually younger than you,” you stand beside him.

“Great so you can be the annoying little kid who doesn't get the hint to leave people alone,” Tony sasses.

“He was doing his job you know,” you point out, nodding towards the dent.

“Because that worked out so well,” Tony scoffs.

“He died saving me,” you say quietly.

You sense Tony is studying your face and a resoluteness seems to settle into his features.

“He was an idiot...but he was a good man,” Tony sighs.

“First time you've lost a soldier?” Steve's voice pipes up from the doorway.

“We are not soldiers,” Tony hisses, instantly tensing back up again. “I don't dance to the tune of Fury's fife.”

“Neither do we,” you nudge him. “I knew he was up to no good with the Tesseract.”

“That aside, we need to get this done,” Steve urges. “Loki will need a power source to complete his goal.”

Tony doesn't reply, he just keeps staring at the wall as if it will sprout the ghost of Agent Coulson.

“This is personal,” he mutters.

“That's not the point,” Steve shakes his head.
“It is the point,” you muse. “Everything he said to me, it's all for show, maximum effect. He wants to be seen subjugating us, beating us.”

“Captain Pin Up is right,” Tony rubs a hand along his jaw. “He loves an audience. He loves the full works, parades, banners in the sky...son of a-”

“What?” you ask him, ignoring the pin up comment.

“Stark Tower,” Tony tells you. “Come on, we have work to do. Rogers is right.”

With that he quickly leaves, no doubt to tinker on more inventions like his father used to. They were similar in a lot of ways but Tony lacked the gentleman-ness of Howard Stark.

“You okay?” Steve asks. “Must have been hard to see.”

“I don't like losing anyone,” you sigh. “Even if I didn't know them that well.”

“You still have me,” Steve smiles.

You return the smile but only briefly before fiddling with your hair nervously. There was so much of this modern war that was overwhelming and frightening but you had to push it to the back of your mind and carry out the mission.

“Do you wanna...talk about what happened?” Steve says tentatively. “Between us?”

“Right now, I just want clean clothes,” you murmur. “I honestly can't think about this right now, Stevie. I'm covered in his...in his blood.”

You make to move out of the room until Steve calls after you, “Just so you know, I have no regrets.”

But did you?

Chapter End Notes

Oh Steve....
RIP Coulson
Steve watched you go with a sense of trepidation and sadness.

He knew you probably only kissed him out of relief but that still didn't quell the tiny bud of hope in
his chest.

_Gee, am I the worst man in the world for wanting to be close with her? She's barely had time to grieve for Buck..._

He snapped himself out of his spiralling thoughts and admonished himself for being so forward. You didn't need it at a time like this. You needed a friend.

Steve allowed himself one brief fantasy of holding you close in bed and kissing you softly before he squashed the notion with thoughts of Peggy and how much he still missed her.

_Be a Captain, Steve. Stop moping around. The world needs you._

With that, he went around the entire ship corralling those that were left and inspiring them to suit back up for the big fight ahead. They would need every man and woman they could to defeat Loki and Steve had a personal bone to pick with the false god.

**

You darted out immediately, unwilling to continue the conversation any longer.

You didn't want to start analysing your feelings in a time of war. There was just too much to think about already, never mind the fact you'd watched a good man die in front of you.

When you reached your designated room, you hightailed it to the shower, stripping off the suit with quick motions and diving into the stream of water. You scrubbed furiously, desperately trying to get Coulson's blood off of you. You scraped away until your skin felt raw but the prickly sensation still remained.

“God-fuckin'-damnit!” you hiss into the torrent of water.

You hated losing people. You didn't want to lose anyone any more. You'd do whatever it takes, even protecting those you'd briefly met.

_No more. No more death at the hands of megalomaniacs._

You could still feel the residual itch of Loki's presence in your mind, lurking at the edges of your brain. It made you angry, furious even. You'd let the Tesseract deal with Johann Schmidt as it may but Loki...Loki would not be so lucky.

You weren't Steve. You couldn't be the apple pie superhero that everyone wanted you to be. The capacity for darkness and revenge had always been there and the god had finally stirred it to the surface.

As you braced your hands in the shower, water beating down on the back of your head, your promise to Erskine came to the fore. You'd promised him you'd always be kind, always be a good woman. Could you realistically keep that promise in a world like this?

You finally got out of the shower and wrapped yourself in a big towel, staring at your bloodied suit on the floor. It took a good while before you tore your gaze away and opened the bathroom door.

“Hey Missy,” the voice of Steve came from nowhere.
You inelegantly shrieked, stumbling backwards and the towel gave way, exposing you to him. You make a grab for it, hurriedly pulling it tight around your body but it was too late. You could tell by the way the blush had reached into Steve's blond hair.

“Oh god, I'm so...I'm so sorry,” Steve babbles, turning around quickly. “I assumed....I'm an idiot....I'll just leave you to it.”

“What did you want, Steve?” you say, a little sharply.

“Just wanted to tell you we're assembling by the Quinjet. We're taking the fight straight to Loki,” he mumbles. “Gee I really am sorry, Missy. You must think I'm a peeping Tom.”

“It's fine,” you sigh. “You just nearly gave me a goddamn heart attack. I wasn't expecting it.”

“I'm sorry,” Steve repeats again.

“Can it,” you order. “It's fine. Not like you've never seen it before, right?”

“As kids,” Steve points out. “I'm not gonna invade your privacy as an adult.”

Oh Steve.

Steve was so conscious about your modesty and honour. The other agents in S.H.I.E.L.D hadn't given a rat's ass about being chivalrous during your time here and had regularly called out some less than blue collar perversities. Then Steve....Steve was the last of a true set of gentlemen in this day and age. You wouldn't let him lose his moral compass so you decided to humour him.

“Thank you. That's very sweet,” you say.

“I'll always look after you,” Steve smiles, still turned around.

Should I?

God, why was your head split between so many decisions and so much guilt? It was so much easier to think when it was you and Buck, him and Peggy. Now the two of you were alone in this godforsaken world and you had the gall to start getting interested in your friend.

I'm such a gosh darn mess. I'm only doing this to cling onto something from before. This can't be genuine.

“Steve,” you say softly. “Look at me.”

“Are you decent?” Steve asks, not moving a muscle.

“I'm still in the towel if that's what you mean,” you laugh.

You see him take a steadying breath before turning back around and he seems intensely shy about making eye contact.


He lifts his eyes to you and you see so much sad emotion swirling there.

“Tell me,” you whisper. “Something's bothering you. I can see it.”

“It's nothing,” he shakes his head. “Don't worry about it.”
“Liar,” you call him out. “I can read you well enough Steve Rogers.”

“Us,” he admits after a long silence. “I...I don't know what to do. It was all so clear when we first woke up that I had to help you, help you heal from losing Bucky, keep you safe in this future world...then I suddenly couldn't keep you safe and it felt like my world was wrenched from under me. I was so happy when I got you back but...the way I did it....god, Missy. I don't know how to talk to you any more. I feel I've ruined our friendship like this.”

You let him spill his emotions out and you're saddened to know he feels so useless around you.

“Steve,” you take a deep breath. “Talk to me as you always have. Take each day as it comes. I don't know what I'm doing either. I'm the goddamn idiot that got mind controlled after all. I'm the one that couldn't save Coulson. I understand. This is all a giant disaster. I just need someone I trust right now.”

“I will always be that person for you,” Steve says earnestly.

“I know you will, Stevie,” you smile. “As for...us.....give me time. I need to sort out my own head and my own feelings. I don't wanna hurt you.”

“That's fair,” Steve nods. “Take all the time you need. I'm sorry for being overwhelming.”

“It's fine,” you shrug. “You know I ain't good with this sort of thing. You watched me bury feelings for years before.”

“I know,” Steve smiles. “Now I suggest you look in that closet because there's apparently a back up suit for you, so I'm told.”

You walk to the closet and open the doors to see a solitary textured suit in black with the radial crown of the Statue of Liberty on the chest in that distinct copper green.

“Why in the shit couldn't I have had this before?” you yell causing Steve to burst out laughing. “This is so much nicer!”

“Well now you can be happy,” Steve smirks, coming up behind you and reaching around you to feel the fabric. “Seems like the one Howard Stark made.”

“Then I definitely like it more than the other one,” you huff, turning your head to look at Steve who was a lot closer behind you than you realised.

You were paralysed. It was like all you could do was flick your gaze between Steve's eyes and his lips. Surely you weren't thinking about doing that again?

You could tell he was fighting the same conflict and both of you just stood there in some strange stand-off.

“Missy,” Steve says in barely a whisper. “If you don't want me to, say now.”

He gives you ample chance, just like a true gentleman before his hand rests on your jaw line, pulling your face towards him and meeting you in a sweet kiss.
He doesn't try for a lengthy kiss or a deep kiss, he just simply settles for an affectionately short one.

“Was that okay?” he asks.

“Yes,” you nod, a shy smile blooming on your face. “But we really should get ready to save the world.”

“I...I just couldn't go into battle again without doing that at least once more,” he proclaims. “I don't want to potentially die regretting anything, Missy. Life is too short.”

“Or exceptionally long in our case,” you remind him which earns a small chuckle. “And don't you dare die on me, Rogers. I don't want any more names on that list, you hear me?”

“Loud and clear, Captain,” Steve smirks, taking one last long look at you, stroking the pad of his thumb across your cheek. “Now suit up. That's an order.”

**

You caught up with Natasha and Steve with one extra addition...Hawkeye.

“Oh hey,” he waves at you casually. “You were part of the mind control club too, weren't you?”

“Are you...” you trail off.

“Back to normal? Oh yeah. Takes more than a guy in LARP to bring me down. Name's Clint by the way. I know being part of Loki's cheerleading squad didn't give us time to swap names.”

“Missy,” you extend your hand to shake his. “You wanna punch this asshole as much as I do?”

“Oh yeah,” Clint smirks. “With an arrow...to the face.”

“Enough grandstanding you two,” Steve admonishes. “We've got work to do.”

You give Clint a sly smile which he returns and you note Natasha just rolls her eyes.

You make it onto the Quinjet to see a S.H.I.E.L.D engineer who looks completely startled.

“You guys aren't meant to be in here!” he offers weakly, cowering away from you and Steve.

“Son, just don't...” Steve sighs before hoisting the man into the air and setting him gently outside of the confines of the jet.

In one swift motion, the other two members of your rag tag party start flying out. You watch out of the cockpit window as Tony Stark in his Iron Man suit zooms overhead, leading the charge.

“Where are we going?” you ask.

“Stark Tower,” Steve fills you in. “Tony says Loki is likely to be setting up there since it's the most grandiose building around.”

“So it'll be an eyesore then,” you snort. “Big buildings are always ugly looking.”

“I heard that,” comes Tony's voice throughout the comms system. “And I'll have you know my girl
is sleek and modern looking so put your vintage prejudices aside Captain Pin up.”

“Call me that one more time, see what happens Stark,” you hiss back.

“Is that a promise?” Tony chuckles. “Because I've seen the drawings. What are you gonna do? Strangle me with your stockings?”

“You little asshole!” you yell and make sure to gesture at him in a very unladylike way as he passes by. “See if I save you now, huh?”

“I'm seriously quaking in my Gucci boots,” the bored reply crackles through.

“Alright, enough,” Steve steps in. “We've gotta work as a team. Tony, stop working Missy up.”

“She started it,” Tony says childishly. “You don't insult a man's building.”

“I don't care who started it, focus!” Steve barks in that voice he only uses for his 'Captaincy'.

“Sure thing, old timer,” Tony agrees. “But she owes me a drink.”

“You'll be lucky I don't poison it,” you spit.

“Missy!” Steve chides you.

“Fine,” you sigh. “I'm sorry.”

“Quite alright, sweetcheeks. Now let's disrupt this party, shall we?” Tony says before his suit seems to rocket faster and he disappears into the horizon.

“I've dropped the comms if you want to let it out,” Natasha smiles knowingly. “We've all been in your spot before.”

“I'm alright,” you shake your head. “I won't let him get under my skin any more. There are bigger things at stake.”

“Just beat his ass later,” Clint offers. “After you beat Loki’s.”

“Good idea,” you nod, turning to Steve. “I like these two.”

“Well at least you get along with someone,” Steve sighs before his eyes lock onto something. “What in God's name is that?!?”

You see a plume of light bursting up into the heavens and as the raging maelstrom whirled above, movement peeked out from beyond the bottom. Suddenly things...things like metal locusts it seemed to you, they dived out before unleashing carnage on the world below.

“Jesus, did you guys stop for drive thru?!” Tony cries out through the comms. “You're late!”

“Then build us a faster jet, you jerk!” you quip back. “Or can the great Tony Stark not stretch his imaginations to planes too?”

“Oh sweetheart, just you wait til your frosty lover boy isn't looking,” Tony growls. “You're gonna get yours.”

“Children! Focus!” Steve shouts loudly. “Romanoff, get on the cannons!”
She obeys immediately, grabbing the guns and shooting anything that flew near.

“Grab the controls, hot stuff,” Clint says to you before pulling an arrow from his quiver and letting it loose into some huge whale looking animal which plummets to the ground.

“Shit, I don't know how to fly this thing!” you protest, hoping to God it was like the old bomber planes.

“It's simple, you'll get it. We trust you,” Clint smirks before firing off another arrow.

“No pressure,” you mumble, holding the controls and trying to keep the Quinjet level.

“Missy!” Steve cries out. “Hard right!”

“No time!” Romanoff yells. “It's gonna hit!”

A smaller sized beast careens into the jet as it falls out of the sky and damages one of the wings. It sets the plane into a tailspin and you're fighting the wheel hard to keep it steady whilst praying everyone's holding on. Your muscles strain to their maximum as you just manage to level off before the jet smacks into the ground and you're thrown into the side of the hull, banging your head off the harsh interior.

You feel hands dragging you out and soft touches at your cheek as someone calls your name. You're not sure who. Your ears are still ringing. Your mind is completely fuzzed.

As your eyes come back into focus you see Steve looking at you with horrified concern before he looks up at the sky as more and more flying metal beasts come through with armoured warriors dropping to the floor. You see them shooting any civilian in their path.


Oh god it was awful.

“Missy!” Steve shakes you slightly. “Missy I need you! Missy!”

Don't you dare black out, Missy. They need you. Save the world.

“MISSY!”

My Stevie needs me. Hold on.
“MISSY!” Steve practically screams at you until your brain finally catches up and you spring upwards.

You don't realise how automatic the motion is until you slice one of the metallic warriors clean in two around a terrified young girl. Protecting people was just a natural instinct to you, you guessed.

You wrap your arms tightly around the kid and pick her up, sprinting to the safety of a building where people are huddled in the entrance lobby.

“Alright folks,” you announce. “You're going to look after my friend here and I'll look after all a' you.”

“Shit, you're Lady Liberty!” one middled aged guy says. “You'll save us right?”

“I'll do my damn best,” you nod. “Keep away from the entrances and look after that girl. I don't know where her family is.”
That prompts one woman from the group to protectively hen the small child whilst you do a deft salute and return to the battlefield.

“God, are you alright?!” Steve asks as he fends off another creature. “You hit your head so hard I thought you were out of the fight all together.”

“Takes a lot more than that, Stevie;” you wink. “Now let's give ‘em hell.”

“Can't argue with that,” Steve smiles and the two of you set to work.

Steve starts a defensive strategy of keeping the beasts away from civilians whilst you herded them to safer hideouts. Natasha and Clint kept stragglers and surprise aerial attacks at bay whilst you did this until eventually the street was clear.

“We need to get up there,” Steve points to Stark Tower.

“How?” you ask but your reverie is interrupted by a sudden flash of lightning that makes you jump a mile. “What in the shit?!?”

It was the blond man from in the cage on the Helicarrier.

“This is Thor. He's with us,” Natasha nods.

“I know you,” Thor says, looking you up and down. “You fought my brother.”

“And you're....Thor?” you sound out. “As in...god of thunder, Thor?”

“The very same, my lady,” he says courteously. “If I am to fight and die by your side, might I have the honour of your name in these short moments?”

“Missy,” you tell him. “Though I go by the name Captain Liberty in these times.”

“Lady Missy,” Thor says completely seriously even though it sounds ridiculous. “I overheard you wish to take the fight up there but the powers surrounding the Tesseract are impenetrable.”

“What we need are a smaller team to deal with Loki and a bigger team to help those on the ground,” you strategize. “It's not going to be much use beating Loki if New York is wiped from the map.”

“She's right,” Steve nods. “Stark's up top keeping Loki distracted but we can't abandon the citizens of this city.”

“So what do you propose Lady Missy?” Thor asks.

“Can you get me up there?” you ask. “Steve can lead the ground charge. He's good at directing platoons. I'm much more of a covert gal. You and I can help Tony.”

“You wanna get near Loki after what he did to you?” Clint raises an eyebrow. “I don't know if you're brave or suicidal.”

“Read her records. She's both,” Natasha snorts.

You look to Steve who appears completely grim in his expression, “Do you trust me, Stevie?”

“You know I do,” he sighs. “With my life. Just be...careful.”
“Keep everyone alive for me,” you beg him. “I’ll try and do the same with myself.”

“You’d better,” comes the half growled response. “God I wish you weren’t so headstrong sometimes. Thor make sure she doesn’t do anything rash.”

“I get the sense my words will not have an effect,” Thor chuckles good naturedly. “I can see the stubborn attitude.”

“Damn right,” Steve mumbles. “Now go on, Missy.”

You surprise him with a quick kiss to his cheek before you stand next to Thor, just as Doctor Banner pulls up on a small motorcycle.

“So this is horrible,” he proclaims as he gets off.

“Sure is,” Steve nods. “Now might be a good time to get angry, Doctor.”

Thor grabs your waist, pulling you flush to him and encouraging you to hold on. You just have time to hear Bruce state, “That's my secret Captain. I'm always angry,” and turn into a raging green giant. Thor propels his hammer and you shoot upwards unexpectedly as you cling onto the god for dear life.

He gracefully lands on the viewing platform of Stark Tower and unhands you, giving you a dazzling smile before locking eyes with his brother.

“You've brought me a present, brother,” Loki purrs. “My woman out of time. How fortuitous”

“Gift wrap this you bastard,” you hiss, letting the Crown fly free.

He dodges but barely and you see strands of hair fluttering down where they'd been sheared from his head.

“You insignificant mortal! Do you really think you can stand at the Pantheon of the Gods and win?” Loki sneers. “Humans are weak! Fragile! You are mildly better but that is still woefully inadequate.”

“How's your cheek doing?” you ask cockily.

You see Loki’s fingers ghost over the tiny scar you’d left him on his face.

“I shall enjoy making you kneel,” Loki hisses before launching himself at you.

Thor steps into the wake, hammer at the ready and knocks Loki back through the glass windows of the penthouse. That gives you an opportunity to assess your surroundings.

On the top of the platform is Selvig, another one of Loki's mind controlled party you'd met with. You knew he was keeping the power source stable but there was something in his eyes that just read....free. He’d broken Loki’s control and was half slumping over the machinery.

“Keep him busy!” you yell to Thor as you dash over.

“I'm sorry, you can't protect yourself,” Selvig wheezes a little.

“It's not your fault,” you reason with him. “None of this is your fault. You didn't know what you were doing.”
“I think I rather did,” Selvig smiles slightly. “I built a failsafe to cut the power source.”

You follow his gaze to the two fighting gods and a moment of clarity comes to you.

“The sceptre.”

“It can close the portal,” Selvig urges you. “Hurry. Don't let him win.”

“Wouldn't dream of it,” you grin before leaping across the chasm to the penthouse and punching Loki square in the face.

You weren't going to lie to yourself. That felt damn good.

“HOW?!” Loki screams in outrage.

“Rule number 1 of battle. Never underestimate your opponent,” you lecture before ducking and booting him in the stomach.

“Lady Missy, the man called Steve needs my help,” Thor comes to your side. “Are you alright to distract him?”

“More than alright,” you nod.

“Good fortune,” Thor pats your shoulder heavily before flinging himself off the tower, presumably to join the front lines again.

“If you think a worthless wretch like yourself will keep me occupied, you are mistaken,” Loki wipes his mouth as he stands up straight again. “I am the god of mischief and I will not be outmatched by an experiment.”

This time he's ready for your fist and he captures it with his own, spinning you around until you're choking yourself with your own arm.

“Let's see what makes you tick,” he spits savagely by your ear. “I'll lock you in your nightmares. A living illusion.”

“I have no nightmares,” you rasp out, kicking backwards and scraping his shin.

“We'll see about that,” Loki chuckles before his hand places on your forehead and then...

Suddenly he lets you go.

You whirl around but are only met with...

“Bucky?!”

In fact, several Buckys were around you.

“Why did you let me fall, doll?” one asks.

“I loved you. You didn't catch me,” another spoke.

“You're kissing my best friend,” yet another says angrily.

“You forgot me,” they all chant in unison.

This had to be Loki’s trick but it was just so damn real. You could almost reach out and touch the
Bucky in front of you and your hand nearly did. It was rising so quickly towards his face, his anguished and betrayed face.

“You forgot me, doll,” the one in front of you says so softly and so brokenly you felt like crying. “I wanted to marry you and you kissed our Stevie.”

“I'm sorry,” you can't help but say. “I've never forgotten you. You're with me always.”

Your hands touch over the tattoo on your heart.

“No I ain't,” Bucky grimaces. “You left me to die in the snow whilst you and Steve live happy lives. Did you want him all along, Missy?”

“How can you say that to me?” you breathe, completely lost in this interaction. “I still wear your ring. I would've said yes.”

A hard knock to the back of the head makes you flinch and when your eyes open again, all the Bucky's are gone.

“Get it together, Captain,” Natasha scowls at you. “It's just an illusion.”

“Goddamnit,” you shake your head. “Sorry. It just...it felt so real.”

“That's real,” she points to Loki having been pummelled into the expensive flooring by a grinning Hulk.

“Hulk smash,” Hulk proclaims proudly.

“That happened?!” you squeak out. “I never heard anything! Never felt anything!”

“My illusions are perfect you ignorant-” Loki coughs out from the floor but is stopped mid sentence by the Hulk stamping on his chest.

“I like you big guy,” you grin at the Hulk who almost seems bashful.

You take the opportunity to walk over and kick Loki hard across the face.

“Feel better?” Natasha asks knowingly.


“I can shut it down, yeah,” Natasha produces the sceptre before bringing a finger to her earpiece. “I'm about to bring down the Tesseract.”

“No go, ginger,” Tony's voice crackles through the speakers in the penthouse. “There's a nuke coming in and I know just where to put it.”

“A what?” you blink.

“A nuclear bomb,” Natasha explains. “No idea why there's one heading our way.”

“Probably some government cowards who think blowing up New York is the way to stop this,” Tony scoffs.

You watch him out of the window flying super fast upwards and know exactly what he's going to do. He's going to fly into the portal and detonate it there.
“That's a suicide mission,” you say angrily.

“Oh, you noticed Captain Pin Up,” Tony chuckles. “You know, I'm not completely selfish.”

“Stark, get back here,” you order. “I'm not losing anyone else.”

“Not your call sweetheart although I'm flattered you care so much,” Tony's voice starts becoming more and more crackly. “Guess all the insults just meant you liked me after all.”

“Stark!” you call although you know you have no hope of getting him to turn back. “Shit. Natasha, get that sceptre ready. If Tony's going to be a damn idiot and sacrifice himself, let's make his death count for something.”

“Yes Captain,” she nods grimly.

“Hulk?” you address the big green guy, “If Loki moves...smash.”

The Hulk gives you a malevolent grin which you take to mean he understood you.

You and Natasha walk out to the platform, staring at the sky where more metallic beasts were pouring through the portal. It seemed never-ending the sheer scale of this army. You chanced a look below to see Steve and Thor fighting hard to clear the street.

“Keep fighting, Stevie,” you say through your comms piece. “We're keeping it steady up here.”

“Glad to hear it, Missy,” Steve answers. “Could you hurry up though? It's getting overwhelming.”

“Since when have you ever cared about being outnumbered?” you snort.

“Since aliens came out of the sky. Hydra is one thing. This....”

A loud boom sounds out from overhead and you see a blast wave ripple throughout the entering creatures and the base of the portal. It saddens you to think Howard Stark's kid has just sacrificed himself to keep the world safe.

“Now,” you order Natasha and she rips the sceptre from the power source, cutting off the beam.

“Look!” she points into the sky and you see the Iron Man suit falling fast.

“Son of a gun, he made it,” you breathe but your joy quickly turns to concern when Tony doesn't start flying at all.

He just keeps falling.

You calculate the angle of his descent and know you could just about reach out and catch him.

“Oh no,” Natasha says studying your face. “Do not do-”

You don't give her a chance to finish before you dash to the edge of the platform and cling onto some broken railing as you stretch out your hand.

“You let me fall, doll.”

Well you wouldn't let anyone else fall. Not ever again.

You reached out further just as Tony's hand came to your level and snatched him out of the air,
yanking him heavily onto the platform, almost dislocating your shoulder in the process. You note Hulk had pulled Tony more centrally onto the dais and away from the ledge and he picked you up gingerly, setting you down away from the edge too.

“Hulk think you fall. Hulk bring you here,” he says and you realise he's not quite the angry ball of rage you'd first pegged him to be.

“Thank you,” you nod before ripping off the faceplate of Tony's suit.

He's not moving.

You feel his cheek and it's ice cold.

“Steve?” you call. “He's so still. I don't know what to do.”

“We're coming to you. Hang on,” Steve assures you.

In less than a minute, Thor has aided Steve up to the top of Stark Tower and Clint has building hopped his way across. All of you crowd around Tony, shaking him, prodding him but nothing works.

Hulk scares the living daylights out of you by roaring which prompts Tony to suddenly wake up flailing.

“Oh god,” he pants. “One of you didn't kiss me did you? Because I only mind if it wasn't the two girls...and maybe Cap.”

“He's fine,” you laugh.

“What the hell happened?” Tony groans, sitting up.

“We won,” Steve smiles.

“Oh good,” Tony says nonchalantly. “Let's get shawarma. I don't know what it is but I want to try it.”

“The battle is not over yet,” Thor nods towards the penthouse where Loki is still lodged in the floor.

“I like your thinking,” you mutter.

The god of mischief stood no chance when a bunch of heroes surrounded him.

“No hard feelings?” Loki chances but the glare you give him soon shuts him up.

**

Thor takes Loki into his own custody, something about facing justice on Asgard...wherever that was.

In the weeks that followed, you avoided Steve as much as you could. Loki’s trick had really hit home about the guilt you felt in developing feelings beyond friendship. You'd really taken it to
heart that it was a betrayal of Bucky's love for you.

Steve didn't understand of course but he respected you enough that you'd tell him in your own time. He mostly partnered up with a running partner, Sam Wilson, who kept him busy.

You fell into training yourself and grew closer to Natasha who happily swapped tips on fighting and espionage techniques. You felt like you'd evolved your own skill set more and you were eternally grateful.

You were even more grateful that your list on the wall of your room at S.H.I.E.L.D didn't have any names to be added to it. The Battle of New York really should have killed most of you but everyone had survived.

Lucky should be your new middle name...or maybe your first.

*Lucky Lady Liberty has a ring to it.*

You were just musing from your vantage point in the air ducts (one of Natasha's training exercises) when something caught your eye.

A man was very obviously trying to be unnoticed.

A hoodie and a baseball cap concealed most of the man's face as he scanned through Director Fury's office. You didn't even know how he got in. The security on the Director's door was unprecedented.

You watched as he riffled through paperwork before planting something under the desk.

A gleam brings your eyes to his arm and you see he's got a metallic hand, maybe even the whole arm from the way the material clung.

*Just who the heck are you?*

You're about to pop out and surprise him when he suddenly looks upwards quickly, straight at your hiding place, though the hat obscures most of the view. Without another word, he opens the window and dives out before bringing it back down again.

That was most definitely weird but one thing kept niggling at the back of your brain...

That jawline.

It seemed so familiar....
That familiar jawline....
Til We Meet Again

Chapter Summary

Settling back down into civilian life, you keep catching the glint of metal out of the corner of your eye…

Chapter Notes

Oh my gosh, this chapter.
Welcome to the Winter Soldier arc guys.
Expect some angst, some menace and those eyes....
My tumblr: theliveshipparagon
Happy reading!
- TLP xx
(As usual, I am bollocks with doing proofreading)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Winter Soldier Theme

You listened to Steve berating Director Fury for what felt like an hour. You could hear it from down the corridor.

Him and Natasha had gone on their own mission and from the yelling it must have gone wrong. You’d stayed behind, feigning illness but there was a motive to the lie.

Ever since you saw the stranger in Fury’s office, the occasional flash of silver was always in your eyeline. Natasha’s training had clued you in to a lot of things and you knew the guy was assessing the building, possibly assessing you too.
The night before Steve’s mission, you’d seen the glint of something shiny as you tried to sleep and you’d immediately slinked under the window, peering up through the curtain line. As fast as you did that, they were gone. You knew they’d definitely been there though because there were heavy footprints in the grass outside.

*Just who the hell are you?!*

Whoever they were, they avoided cameras and detectors like a professional.

You couldn’t explain why you were so obsessed with this mysterious person. It was like you were drawn to finding out exactly who they were.

Heck, even their gait was familiar.

The whole thing was driving you stir crazy. You’d not even told Steve what was going on. I mean, would he really understand?

_Oh hi Stevie, I’ve just been keeping the fact that a spy has been rooting around S.H.I.E.L.D and I haven’t told you because I feel like I know them._

Sure that was going to go swell.

A slight scuffling noise outside made you leap out of the window as fast as you could. You were confronted with a man in a mask and goggles, hair falling over his face, wearing all leather with that metallic arm sparkling in the evening sun. You couldn’t discern the expression on his face but his body language telegraphed a degree of surprise before he widened his stance, his muscles coiling for a fight.

“Who in the Sam heck are you?” you challenge him.

He says nothing but appears to assess you before walking off.

“Hey! I’m talking to you, mister!” you chase after him.

He runs as fast as you do before seemingly disappearing into thin air as you round a corner.

“Motherf….” you trail off.

How the hell did he do that?! He just….vanished.

You look wildly around yourself, trying to see if there were any points where he could’ve hidden but you don’t see any. Chancing a look upwards, you see him crouched on the top of the goddamn building, just staring at you.

Even though you can’t see his eyes, you feel like you’re holding direct eye contact with him. Neither of you moves for an age until he finally cocks his head like he’s curious or maybe like he’s remembering something. He shakes his head violently before pointing a rifle at you. You respond by pulling the Crown out of the back of your t-shirt.

He visibly stills, fumbling a little bit even with his grip on the gun before he clutches one hand to his temple viciously and then sprints backwards with a speed you’ve only seen with you and Steve before.

“What in the shit was that?” you mutter to yourself.

“Trouble?” the voice of Brock Rumlow says and you whirl around, Crown at the ready. “Woah
“Missy?” Steve says as he jogs over. “What’s going on? You weren’t in your room.”

“Thought I saw something,” you mumble.

“It’s being a war veteran,” Brock tells you, putting his hand on your shoulder. “You’re always looking for the danger.”

“Maybe,” you lie.

“Come on, Missy, they’re moving us today,” Steve says, that look of concern still plastered all over his face.

He leads you away from Brock who just gives you a nod of the head before continuing his patrol of the perimeter. You feel Steve’s hand wander down towards the small of your back where he pushes you to walk faster until you’re out of sight of everyone.

“Alright, what’s going on?” he asks.

“Nothin’” you say.

“Now that’s a lot of horse manure and you know it,” Steve narrows his eyes. “You’ve been avoiding everyone since we got Loki and you seem distracted.”

“I’m fine, Stevie,” you tell him.

“Missy….you’re not fine. I can see it. Don’t lie to me. Even if you don’t want me as your guy I’m still your friend. Talk to me.”

“I just feel like….ever since Loki showed me those illusions, I can’t get it outta my head.”

It wasn’t quite a lie that you told him but it wasn’t the whole truth. If Steve knew about the metal armed man he’d ruin your chances of getting close. Subtle wasn’t Steve’s style.

“Natasha told me,” Steve says quietly, looking at the floor. “You saw Buck?”

“I feel like such an awful harpy,” you sigh, leaning back against the cool wall. “It’s been the best part of almost two years since he died and I….I just can’t seem to move on.”

“Oh Missy,” Steve gathers you in a hug. “He was the first guy you fell in love with. Of course it’s gonna be hard.”

“I just don’t want anyone else to get hurt because of me, because I can’t deal with it,” you whisper and he responds by hugging you tighter.

“I understand,” he says softly. “And I’m sorry I didn’t help by trying to make a move. That was too forward of me and it was selfish.”

“No Steve, don’t blame yourself,” you shake your head. “This is my fault.”

Steve tips your head back up so he can look you square in the eye, “If you say that one more time I’ll hide the Charleston Chews Maria got you.”

“Gee, are you my friend or my Pa?” you roll your eyes.
“Both at this point in time,” Steve snorts. “I’m older.”

“By like two days!” you protest.

“Still older,” Steve grins, bopping you on the nose. “Now get your stuff together. We’re moving out.”

**

Fury had decided it was time for you both to get back into society so he’d gotten you two apartments on Connecticut Avenue in downtown Washington DC.

You hefted your meagre belongings up the stairs and noted yours and Steve’s apartments were opposite each other. As you turned the key in the door and walked in, you got a shock in the bedroom.

All of your list of names was stencilled in fancy lettering on the wall with the Howling Commandos logo proudly displayed at the top.

“What the…” you trail off.

“Thought you might wanna take that with you too,” Maria says from behind you as she shifts the bags with your Lady Liberty suits in, including the new one that was a replica of the Howard Stark suit. “Though I made it nicer.”

“You did this?” you stammer. “Thank you. Wow…I-”

“It’s fine,” she smiles. “We’ve all got people we lost. I kinda like your idea on how to remember them. Now there’s a grocery store on the next street and your phone has a direct line to S.H.I.E.L.D should you need it. Welcome back to civilian life, Missy.”

She gives you a small hug before leaving and you do your best at making the apartment more homely. In truth, you’re still overwhelmed. It was a little easier to adjust to waking up in the future with S.H.I.E.L.D’s futuristic bedrooms and set up but this was…well it was like home. Everything except the modern appliances that was.

There’s a knock at the door and Steve stands there.

“Howdy neighbour, I guess,” he grins sheepishly. “I’m gonna do an explore and then a grocery run. Want anything?”

“Some milk would be good,” you nod. “Think I’m gonna take a nap for now. I feel….drained.”

Steve walks in and sees the new list and his arm immediately goes round your shoulder, squeezing you gently.

“They’re good people,” Steve notes. “They gave me a picture of you, me and Buck in London.”

“From the pub?”
“Yeah,” Steve laughs softly. “You looked beautiful that night and Peggy…wow. What a gal.”

“I miss it,” you mutter. “I still miss it. Our platoon, Peggy, Howard…I sometimes wish the plane would’ve been the end of it.”

“I feel like that too sometimes,” Steve kisses the top of your head. “But we have to make the best of what we got and I still got you so I’m gonna take care of you.”

“Well take care of me by getting some M&Ms too,” you snort.

“Yes Ma’am,” Steve rolls his eyes before grinning. “Have a good nap.”

He leaves the apartment and it suddenly feels deathly quiet. You’re at a bit of a loss of what to do. Ever since you were unfrozen, you’ve had the single purpose of having to save the world but now the world was saved. What was supposed to happen when the gunfire stopped? What was your purpose any more?

The metal armed man was not something you could look out for any more. He was likely to be still casing S.H.I.E.L.D and you couldn’t come up with a valid excuse to poke around the facility in case he showed up again.

You ended up kicking off your shoes and climbing into the bed, yanking the covers over yourself. It took a while but eventually you drifted off.

**

You woke up with the sensation something was not right.

You looked through the tiny gap in the covers and saw the sheen of leather. It just about made your heart stop.

*Oh god-fucking-damn, that’s the metal arm guy.*

You braced yourself for a second before bursting out of the covers and half squatting on the bed, ready to spring at him.

He appears to have pulled up a chair from your dining table and was sitting on it, hands tented and chin resting on the top of the point. You also notice for the first time, he doesn’t have his goggles on.

Two piercing blue eyes regard you as you stayed still, unsure what was going to happen. He didn’t seem like he was going to kill you. Heck, he could have done it already. So what was he doing here?

“Who are you?” you ask. “And how did you find me?”

He raises one eyebrow and you get the distinct impression you’re being assessed.

“What’s your true purpose?” you continue. “Are you spying on S.H.I.E.L.D or spying on me?”
Nothing.

He doesn’t speak, he doesn’t move. He doesn’t even seem to breathe.

Suddenly he stands up, towering over you and you waste no time in going for the uppercut. He catches your fist, grabs the hem of your t-shirt and uses it to yank you off the bed, whirling around until he has you pressed to the wall, his metallic hand then moving to your throat to keep you pinned there. You can hear the machinery whirring within it and hoped to god it didn’t malfunction and crush your windpipe right there.

It feels like he’s staring into your soul as he face comes up close to yours.

“Who. Are. You?” you repeat, struggling to get the words out around his grip.

This close, you could see the arch of his brow, the start of his nose, the darker ring of blue around his iris. God, it was so familiar, but why?!

“Why do I know you?” you murmur and he completely tenses up.

Within seconds he’s pressed the length of his body to yours, his mask mere centimetres from your face. There’s the minutest roll of his hips that you catch, almost how a lover would tease. The grip on your neck relaxes and you see his brows knit together.

“Are you trying to remember too?” you ask. “Do we know each other?”

Plaintiff eyes plead with yours for understanding but you have nothing to offer him.

“Take off the mask,” you suggest. “Let me see you.”

In a split second he goes from confusion to rage and punches a hole in the drywall right next to your head. Somehow you’re not frightened. Somehow you don’t think he’ll actually do you any harm.

You see him wrestle with his emotions for a while before backing off you and running for the window where he disappears down the fire escape.

This was driving you crazy. You had to know him, right? Why would he seem so familiar otherwise? Why would he himself be so affected by you?

“Hey, candy delivery,” Steve sings as he knocks on the door.

You quickly throw on a scarf that covers your neck before opening the door.

“Gee are you that cold?” Steve asks, pointing to your neckwear. “I know these apartments aren’t so great with heating but seems excessive.”

“Maybe I’m getting sick,” you shrug. “Come on in.”

Steve goes to the kitchen and sets the stuff down before his eyes flick to the damage on the wall and the chair by your bed.

“Did I miss something?” he asks warily.

“Some creep jimmyed my window from the fire escape,” you half lie. “We…uh…had a discussion.”
“And I thought Brooklyn wasn’t safe,” Steve snorts. “So what you actually mean is, he got a hit on you and you’re covering it up with that scarf.”

“Shut your goddamn mouth,” you blush out of habit.

“Ain’t you sweet?” Steve laughs. “Now enjoy your sugar fix. I’m gonna unpack the rest of my stuff. Sure you’re okay?”

“Yeah, just a lil’ surprised,” you murmur.

Steve gives you a sympathetic look before hugging you, “I’ll ask Maria to up security on these places tomorrow. I think we need a break from being on edge and burglars aren’t gonna help that.”

“Alright,” you nod. “I’m gonna rest up for the day so I’ll see you tomorrow.”

“Stay safe, Missy,” Steve kisses the top of your head. “If you get any more intruders, I’m just across the hall. Hey, I’ll take you to the Smithsonian tomorrow. They have an exhibit on us apparently. Let’s see what they say about us.”

“Reckless idiots most likely,” you quip.

Steve laughs, “Sounds about right.”

He leaves and you just half collapse on your dining table.

So many emotions were warring with each other in you. You felt guilt at constantly lying to Steve and felt like you were preying on his good nature. You felt restless, like you wanted to solve the mystery of the metal armed man once and for all. You felt drained and apprehensive, like digging too deep into this was going to backfire spectacularly.

Those blue eyes though….

God this was gonna drive you insane.

I know you, I swear I do….

Chapter End Notes

If any one can PM me on tumblr or my email (theliveshipparagon@gmail.com) about a sketch collab for the de-masked meeting between the Winter Soldier and Missy in the Captain Liberty suit, it’s something I would love to put in my next chapter!!!
“Rise and shine!” comes the voice of Steve, startling you awake.

“God-fuckin’-damn!” you yell, flailing and falling out of the bed with a heavy thump onto the floor.

“Oh I’m sorry. Did I scare you?” Steve teases.

“You’re an asshole, you know that?” you glare at him. “How did you get in here anyway?”

“We have keys for each others’ places on our keyrings, idiot,” he laughs. “Thought I’d make you breakfast since you had an eventful day yesterday.”

“Well it’d better be goddamn spectacular, Stevie,” you grumble, getting up from your twisted mess of limbs and sheets. “That was mighty cruel.”

“I think my famous pancakes just might be a good apology,” he grins at you in that beaming way.
“Pancakes?!” you shoot up, practically sprinting to the table. “I ain’t had your pancakes in….well hot damn, seventy three years almost.”

“Oh well, I’m way overdue,” he laughs, flipping one over. “Gotta say everything feels smaller now since I last made them.”

“That’s because you’re a lot bigger, Steve,” you point out, grabbing the syrups he’d brought over and setting up the table. “Easy for things to look small when you turned into an Adonis.”

“I’m…I’m an Adonis?” he flushes bright red.

“You ain’t exactly hard up on looks,” you shrug. “I’ve seen those dames at S.H.I.E.L.D and how they look at ya.”

There’s a shyness that creeps into his movements as he stacks the last pancake before bringing them over.

“Ever wonder what it would’ve been like to live out our days the right way? In our own time?” he sighs, grabbing for the syrup.

“All the time,” you admit. “Maybe I woulda been a great grandma by now.”

“Imagine that,” Steve smiles. “Maybe I woulda been a great grandpa.”

“You and Peggy would’ve had beautiful kids,” you laugh.

“So would you and Buck,” Steve adds.

There’s a pregnant silence that falls as your eyes move past Steve to the list on the wall. Steve notices and sighs a little.

“Come on, Missy. I’m taking you to the exhibit today. Maybe you can have some closure there.”

“Maybe,” you wolf down the last of your breakfast. “Just…just hide me in a corner if I become a wreck.”

“Can do,” he nods before leaving you to get dressed.

**

“Symbols to the nation. Heroes to the world. The story of Captain America and Lady Liberty is one of honour, bravery and sacrifice.”

That was the first thing you heard as you entered the Smithsonian.

“Oh god, really?” you wrinkle your nose.

“Shhh.” Steve nudges you, pulling his baseball cap down. “We’re not supposed to draw attention to ourselves.”
You take his arm as he leads you around the exhibit and you see your enlistment photos when you were just a skinny waif, a digital image projected for kids to compare themselves too. You also see a giant stand detailing your ascension from private to Captain.

Then your eyes fell on the Howling Commandos display and your heart just about stopped. All of their uniforms were proudly shown on mannequins with yours and Steve’s Howard Stark suits at the forefront. You looked to the left of yours and saw Bucky’s jacket, the one he’d put on you before you ziplined onto the train. Somehow they must have salvaged it from your frozen body.

“I actually don’t know if this is worse,” Steve says quietly next to you. “I thought it would help…seeing some things from our past but….I just feel sad.”

You link your hand into his and squeeze it, “Our boys.”

“Our boys,” Steve repeats, looking away and looking back to you in sheer panic. “Missy, please don’t look this way.”

“Why not?” you ask puzzled.

Steve blocks your view as you try and look around him, “Trust me. It won’t help you. Let’s go.”

Narration springs into life as someone walks near the exhibit, “Best friends since childhood, James ‘Bucky’ Barnes, Steven Rogers and Vera ‘Missy’ Adler were inseparable on both the schoolyard and the battlefield. Barnes is the only Howling Commando to give his life in service of his country.”

“Ah gee, they just had to use my full name,” you roll your eyes.

Steve relaxes a little at your humour, “To be honest, sometimes I forget your name isn’t Missy. We’ve used it for so many years, me and Buck.”

“Yeah well now the whole world knows,” you laugh before quickly dodging around Steve now his guard was down.

You knew he would try to stop you and your curiosity was just too piqued now. You needed to know what he was hiding.

When you saw the giant display of Bucky’s portrait, you wished you’d listened to your friend. Your gut entirely twisted upon seeing his face again and you felt even more sick when you realised what was displayed next to the photograph.

“They put his goddamn letters up!” you growl, barely containing your rage.

For all the world to see, Bucky’s personal letters to you were framed and hung up next to the exhibit stand.

“I’m sorry, I told you not to look,” Steve puts his hand on your shoulder.

“They were private, Steve,” you started welling up with tears. “He was so afraid to share his feelings and now anybody can stare at them.”

The narration kicks in again and a small television screen flickers to life showing pictures of Bucky, Steve and you together.

“A romance like no other, born from childhood friendship, Bucky Barnes and Missy Adler were
inseparable. The war propagating their unshared feelings, they embarked on a whirlwind love affair that inspired many. As told by James Falsworth, on the eve of Barnes’ fateful mission, he had procured an engagement ring but alas, never got that chance to propose to Missy before his untimely death.”

“Get me out of here Steve,” you whisper, the tear finally spilling over and down your cheek. “Please.”

“Alright,” he says calmly, wrapping his arm around your shoulders. “Let’s start walking.”

After this long it shouldn’t still hurt but after hearing the narration and seeing that photo of you and Bucky just before you left for Sweden, your heart shredded into tiny pieces. Even after all this time.

As you passed the Howling Commandos display again, you stopped.

“Steve, can I ask a mighty big favour?” you say quietly.

“Sure, Missy,” he nods.

“I’m gonna steal Bucky’s jacket back,” you announce.

“I’m sorry…what?” Steve blanches.

“It’s my goddamn jacket in the first place,” you hiss. “I want it back.”

“Missy, this is a museum,” he urges you.

“I don’t care. It’s mine,” you shake your head. “Give me a distraction.”

“Aw heck,” Steve sighs, knowing you weren’t going to let it go before he walks into the centre of the room and takes his cap off.

“Mom! Mom!” an excitable kid shouts. “It’s Captain America!”

The resulting flood of people crowding Steve gave you ample time to slip out of your jacket and switch it with Bucky’s. The warm wool felt comforting, familiar but it had long lost its scent.

You made a quick exit out of the gate and waited, until ten minutes later Steve finally managed to get out.

“My god that was awful,” he shakes his head. “Why are women so forward?”

“What happened?” you ask.

“They kept touching my arms,” he says in confusion. “Why?”

“Oh Steve,” you laugh. “You still don’t get what you do to women now, do you?”

Steve blushes again before coughing and pointing to your jacket, “Happy now?”

“Yes,” you say firmly. “I think it’s only fair that I can get my stuff back.”

“You certainly are something, Missy,” Steve sighs. “Let’s get home. I need a coffee.”
It was getting dark by the time you got back to the apartments.

Steve turned the key in his door and pushed it open but a noise he made stopped you from going into your own place. You hear music coming from inside and you both give each other a funny look before entering.

Director Fury is sat on an armchair, seeming waiting.

“I don’t remember giving you a key,” Steve says warily.

“You think I’d need one?” Fury raises one eyebrow. “My wife kicked me out.”

Wife? Well that was news to you. You didn’t know how any woman could put up with someone so married to their job.

“Didn’t know you were married,” Steve points out.

“Lotta things you don’t know about me,” Fury answers cagily.

“That’s the problem,” you say dryly before you notice the way he’s grimacing.

Clearly he’s hurt and now you look closely, you can see the blood shining on his face.

He writes something on his phone before turning it around to you both.

**Ears everywhere.**

“Sorry but I had nowhere to crash,” Fury shrugs as best as he can before typing something else.

**S.H.I.E.L.D compromised.**

“Who else knows about you and your wife?” Steve catches on.

**You, Missy, me.**

“Just friends,” Fury replies.

“Is that what we are?” Steve furrows his brow.

“Up to you Captain,” Fury tries to sit up a little straighter.

The three gunshots that punch through the wall and into the Director scare the living daylights out of you. You weren’t expecting it.

“Jesus-fuckin’-Christ!” you exclaim, ducking down and pulling Fury out of the chair into better cover.

“Don’t trust anybody,” he rasps, pressing something into your hand that seems metallic.

He looks at you with such an urgency that you know whatever it is he gave you is vital. You jam it
into Steve’s pocket as you didn’t have any. The sound of the apartment door being bust open makes you smash a nearby chair leg as a defensive weapon.

“Steve?” a woman calls and you know it’s your neighbour. “Steve, I’m Agent 13.”

Of course. Of course they’d place agents around you two to keep an eye on you. S.H.I.E.L.D never let you stray too far.

“I’m assigned to protect you,” she continues.

“And me?” you chip in.

“You too, Missy. On his authority,” she says as she gestures to Fury on the ground.

She pulls out a radio and begins speaking, “Foxtrot down. Unresponsive. Send EMTS.”

“What do you have a twenty on the shooter?” comes the reply.

You look out of the window cautiously and your stomach tightens to see the metal arm guy just casually prowling away.

“I do,” you growl, bursting through the window and giving chase.

“Missy!” Steve yells, leaping after you.

You end up crashing into an office block, rolling to absorb the impact as you see the guy running above you, just keeping the pace slightly out of your stamina. You bust through walls, bulldoze desks and almost run into a different department, your legs carrying you so quickly you nearly lost control.

“Missy, wait!” Steve is only seconds behind you but not enough that he can reach out and stop you.

You watch from above as the metal arm guy jumps down to your level and you ready your shoulder to barge through the fire escape door, the cool night air assaulting your face immediately.

“Don’t you walk away from me!” you yell.

“Missy, duck!” Steve calls and you dodge with mere seconds to spare as he throws his shield towards the assailant.

There’s an almighty thunk as the guy snatches it right out of the air. Holy hell, it doesn’t even phase him! He literally just absorbed the impact like it was a frisbee.

Steve puts a protective arm in front of you, pushing you back slightly and even with the mask on, you can see the guy’s expression change from determination to absolute rage.

He throws Steve’s shield back with such force that despite Steve catching it, he’s thrown back several feet and through the door you came through. In that moment after throwing it, the assailant lunges for you, grabbing you by Bucky’s jacket and pulling you off the side of the building.

He digs his metallic hand into the girders as you fall, slowing your descent until you touch down onto the ground floor and he barrels you back into a side office. His grip doesn’t let up though.

He shoves you against the wall, his normal hand tracing the lapels of the jacket as he desperately tries to remember something. You can see his brow screwing up and the intense gleam in his icy eyes.
You decide enough horsing around. You jam your hand up, knocking his hold on your clothing before forcing him around and holding him by his throat.

“Who the fucking hell are you?” you hiss. “Why are you stalking me?!”

You attempt to rip off his mask but he catches your wrist in his metallic hand, the grip bruising. He flings you onto the floor where you attempt to scramble up but he’s quick and he’s on you in seconds, pinning you with one knee to the chest, forcing the air out of your lungs.

“Who are you?” you ask a little more softly. “Please, this is driving me goddamn crazy.”

He says nothing but removes his knee, properly straddling you and holding both your wrists in his hands over your head. It’s perhaps the most unexpected thing he can do when he gently touches his forehead to yours, his hair falling in curtains around your face.

Why in the Sam Heck were you so relaxed about this? Something about the gesture was so familiar and so comforting yet you were thinking of this of a man who had just murdered Nick Fury.

Looking into his eyes, you saw a wealth of sadness, loneliness and loss. Whoever he was, he was drawn to you as much as you were drawn to him. He could’ve just escaped off the rooftop but he chose to take you with him so he could do this in private. You even half suspected he was angry that Steve was trying to protect you.

Before you knew it, you’d reflexively leaned your head back and kissed his forehead. He makes a vocalisation like contentment, his eyes fluttering closed. Then he leans his head against your chest, his regular hand feeling the jacket.

This was not normal behaviour for someone who was just an acquaintance. This had to be someone you were close to once. You simply didn’t know too many people in the modern world so that just left the option of it being someone in your past. But for them to have lived this long….maybe they went through what you and Steve did.

Goddamnit, why can’t I remember if any of the Commandos disappeared right now?!

You had looked up their respective fates but you couldn’t remember if any had gone missing at any point. Would you even know what they looked like if they’d gone through this much modification?

In a sudden flash, the guy had ripped a nearby coat and was jamming the strip of material over your eyes. You struggled but after hearing a ‘shhh’ you stilled.

This was the first time he’d ever remotely said something, even if it wasn’t proper words. Was he going to talk to you now? He must have removed his mask but wanted to keep his identity hidden.

“I must know you,” you say, trying to keep yourself calm. “You must be from my past. Were you in the Howling Commandos?”

You don’t get a reply but you hear a strangled whimper. Maybe the mention of the name was causing him distress.

“I’m sorry,” you try a different approach. “I just….I want to know who you are. Why the hell am I not fighting you right now when you have me pinned and blindfolded? Why am I so drawn to you? Why-”

The sentence is stolen from your lips as he kisses you. It’s messy but it’s full of want and need.
You can feel his rough stubble tickling at your skin.

God help you but you kiss him back. The urgency is just too much. He was your obsession and your greatest insanity.

It starts deepening to something more and there’s just raw motion, his kisses becoming more aggressive, the rocking of his body against yours which you can’t help but respond to. You let out a little moan, the action uncontrollable and he suddenly stops, jerking away from you.

You whip the fabric off as quickly as you could but his mask was back on and he was stood up, staring at you with a look of pure terror.

“Did you remember something?” you ask.

He quickly looks to the floor before assessing something and then walking backwards.

“Are you always going to leave when it gets too much?” you call after him.

He turns briefly, looking at you with an expression that breaks your heart with how broken it seems. He just walks back up to you, stroking your cheek with the back of his hand before leaving you on the floor wondering what the hell had just happened.

**

“Asset, report. Target is eliminated?” he hears as he re-enters the facility.

“Affirmed,” he responds.

“No problems I assume?”

“None.”

The Asset kept his issues to himself. He wasn’t supposed to. He was supposed to report every little detail but…the girl.

The girl plagued his mind all the time lately. He was desperately sure he knew her. Everything about her was familiar, comforting. The screaming in his head completely stopped when he was around her.

Clearly she knew him too by the way she responded. Almost like they shared a romantic history.

And he has kissed her. He hadn’t meant to but it felt like he should do, like he needed to. The girl was beautiful by normal standards that was true but something else was pulling him to her.

When she had moaned for him, he knew he was falling too deep into the rabbit hole. He needed to step away before he became compromised. If he could just keep your interactions to this level, he wouldn’t accidentally reveal anything about you in the mission report. He didn’t want to lose his knowledge of you by being shocked again.

*But just who the hell are you and why do I want you to love me?*
Chapter Summary

You’re going to find out the identity of the metal armed assassin once and for all

Chapter Notes

First off, over 300 kudos! Holy moly! So glad so many of you are enjoying it!
Second, on with the show.
Warnings: Smut (yes you read that right), threats of non con
Happy reading guys, been a long time coming. Extra long chapter just for this.

- TLP xx
Proofreading errors likely as always

You took a good while before you were able to get up off the office floor, hair splayed all over your face. God, Stevie was gonna murder you when he found out. There was no way you could keep this from him any longer.

When it was just casual interactions you could keep that to yourself but you were getting too involved. I mean…you’d just kissed a virtual stranger for heck’s sake and there was a high chance he was one of the Howling Commandos.

But who?!
You racked your brains trying to think of who those piercing eyes could belong to but you just ended up worrying about whether Steve was distressed about where you were.

“Goddamn, this is gonna drive me loopy,” you mutter to yourself, walking out into the crisp air back to your apartment block.

You decided against using the front door. If S.H.I.E.L.D was compromised maybe they were watching the entrances. Instead you scaled up the side of the building like the most agile spider monkey until you used brute strength to pull the ancient windows up.

*This must be how the metal armed guy got in.*

You shouldn’t be thinking of him right now.

You go out of your door towards Steve’s place and whisper his name by the door which is still wide open. Fury and your neighbour are gone but there’s still blood littering the floor. You hear nothing so head back, riffling through the drawers to get the telephone device Natasha had given you for emergencies.

Your hand hesitates over the new Captain Liberty suits. Could you trust anything they’d given you any more? You decide against taking any of them for that reason.

When you whirl around you spot something that makes your stomach clench.

Someone’s smeared a tar like substance on your list, specifically one name that has been blocked out.

**James Buchanan Barnes.**

“You goddamn fuckin’ assholes!” you seethe, like the strikeout is a personal cut to your soul.

They’d gone too far. The metal arm guy had to be connected to it all and you would find out exactly who was taking over S.H.I.E.L.D.

You send an electronic message to Natasha informing her of where you are going next and that you are safe before you slide out of the window and back down the fire escape, a single purpose in mind.

**

You tugged at the sleeve of your old Lady Liberty suit, the one Howard Stark had made.

It was relatively simple to steal it off the mannequin at the Smithsonian. You’re sure Steve would’ve been appalled but you knew that this was the only way to not be tracked and maybe to jog the memory of the assassin.

You receive a text back from Natasha as you’re walking towards the freeway in the sky, just wandering without a plan since you didn’t know where any one was.
Steve and I safe. Trust no one from S.H.I.E.L.D. On freeway, heading east. Will pick you up. Tracking you.

You sincerely hoped it was Natasha on the other end of the phone and it wasn’t some great trap. You’d just have to trust it wasn’t.

A great bang from above startles you and you grab the Liberty Crown in readiness. Smoke was billowing up from the top of the freeway and you heard screams. Not seconds later you saw something fly past you, smacking into a bus and it was only when you saw the shield that you knew it was Steve.

“Holy hell, are you alright!!” you run towards the bus, jumping onto it since it was on its side and wrenching the doors open. “Stevie?!”

“Missy?! Is that you?!” Steve says from on the floor, his clothes dusty and marred.

“Do I have to save your sorry ass every time?” you quip, picking him up off the floor and pulling him out of the bus before a barrage of bullets completely peppered the undercarriage.

You curve the crown around the corner and hear the sickening gurgles that signal it’s met its mark. There’s the telltale thumps of lifeless bodies before it ricochets back to you, slick with blood.

“What in the Sam Heck is going on?!” you demand of Steve, disturbed by the amount of killing you just had to do.

He says nothing but grabs your face in his hands fiercely and checks you over.

“Oh my god, are you alright?!“ he says quickly. “I was so worried when you got taken. I thought the worst. Please tell me you’re alright.”

“I’m fine, I’m fine,” you reassure him. “He didn’t harm me.”

“Thank God,” Steve pulls you into a hug, kissing your head. “I was so worried, I was so worried.”

An animalistic roar makes you jump and look to your left to see the metal arm guy absolutely incensed. He shoots his rifle straight at Steve who barely blocks it with his shield before throwing it at the assassin and catching him in the chest.

The guy staggers backwards and the two men come to blows.

You’re torn about what to do. You want to help Steve but if he kills the assassin you will never know who he truly is.

“Please don’t!!” you yell.

The guy turns to you briefly, eyes full of confusion and pain but Steve’s punch rocks the expression off his face and they grapple again, strength far beyond normal men.

“Shit,” you hiss, spotting Natasha running along the top of cars before leaping onto the assassin, gadget in hand as she slams it into the metallic plates of his arm.

It sparks horribly and you watch him shake it off violently, the arm malfunctioning. He simply just turns to Natasha, grabbing her by the throat with his flesh hand and throwing her far away into a bunch of parked cars where she bounces awkwardly off the bodywork.
“Stop it!” you brandish the Liberty Crown and the guy stills. “Steve stop attacking him!”

“What?!” Steve blinks. “Are you crazy?!”

“Trust me,” you walk up close to the assassin, carefully holding your free hand out. “Just trust me.”

The man’s arm reflexively rises to meet yours, a horrified pleading frown across his brow.

“Missy, get away from him!” Steve shouts, running towards you and bodily picking you up, before pushing you behind him, one arm firmly locked around your waist.

An inhuman cry wends out of the assassin’s mouth, full of anguish and fury. You knew then he was intensely ired over Steve’s protectiveness.

“Stevie, let me go. Now!” you protest.

“Why?!” Steve’s eyebrows shoot up.

You don’t have time to give a reply though as the assassin grabs Steve by the shirt and slams him into the ground, ripping him away from you. The punches are vicious, the guy’s strength invigorated by his seething hatred for Steve. The man grabs Steve’s shield and is about to bring it down on Steve’s neck when you leap forward, tackling him.

You scrap like desperate children, not really wanting to hurt the other. The blows are soft, the holds are gentle.

“Stop it, please!” you beg. “Remember us! It’s Missy and Steve!”

He freezes and with your arms locked around him you’re able to hook your hands under his mask and wrench it off. He staggers forward, head bowed, hiding under his hair.

“Look at me!” you yell.

Steve comes to the side of you, one hand on your shoulder, “Who the heck is he?”

“Look. At. Me!” you repeat.

Slowly the assassin turns and the second you see his face, everything makes sense. Everything fits together. Those eyes, that jawline, the reaction to the Howling Commandos mention.

“Bucky?!” Steve breathes.

“Who the hell is Bucky?” he speaks for the first time, brow scrunched in confusion.

“Oh my god,” your heart stops. “I should have known. I should have known it was you.”

“You know me,” he says curiously. “I….I know you?”

You take a step towards him and are about to reach out and touch him when Sam kicks him in the head from nowhere, metallic wings shining in the sun. That splinters the moment and all hell breaks loose with Bucky letting off small grenades that rock the road.

The smoke is acrid, cloying as you breathe and for a moment you feel like you’re back in the war, the same sensations running through you. Panic grips your chest and you blindly try to feel your way through the stinging cloud until someone takes your arm softly.
“Hello?” you call out but they say nothing, guiding you out of the thick fog.

Your hand finds smooth leather as it moves up your helper’s arm, “Buck?”

“Why do they keep calling me that?” he says monotonously.

“It’s your name,” you say simply. “Well your nickname.”

You see Steve staggering out of the smoke and Bucky just casually tosses another grenade his way where it rolls in front of his feet. You make to push him out of the way but Bucky’s grip on you tightens and you’re squirming desperately.

“Let me go! Let me save him!”

“No.”

He drags you away, kicking and screaming and you can only watch as the grenade goes off and you have no idea whether Steve made it.

“LET ME GO!”

“No.”

You end up actually putting effort into fighting him, desperate to see whether Steve survived. Where once Bucky was the weakest of your trio thanks to the serum, now he matched your strength. He countered your blows, he dodged your kicks, he overpowered your holds.

You end up crashing into a nearby 50s diner, the patrons scattering, the wait staff bolting. You fling him against the counter before attempting to spring back to the street but he’s far quicker than he used to be and he catches you, yanking you back with such force that you skid across the polished floor and hit the jukebox at the back of the diner.

It splutters to life, sending out an ear piercing level of music, the volume buttons damaged. You recognise it as Glenn Miller.

“Don’t sit under the apple tree with anyone else but me, anyone else but me, anyone else but me, no no no!”

Bucky covers his ears, spasms of pain seeming to shoot through him. His eyes are wide, completely feral.

“You remember this,” you get up from the floor. “This played when we shipped out from London. You said it was a stupid song for me to sing along to because-”

“There’s no apple trees in our part of Brooklyn,” he murmurs before completely screaming in agony.

His demeanour changes in an instant, the emotion wiped from his face and you hear that metallic arm whirring with purpose before it crashes down on the counter, bending it in half.

He grabs you, expression blank before bodily throwing you up where you rocket through the ceiling so fast you almost crash through the one above that too. You have enough wherewithal to grab the light fixture to stop you from dropping back to the first floor and you swing onto more stable ground.

You look out to the window and see your chance but as you glance back to the door, you see Bucky
walking menacingly towards you. There was no urgency to his step, just a silent monster bearing down on you, waiting for you to tire.

“What the hell have they done to you?” you back away slowly. “Buck?”

“STOP CALLING ME THAT!” he roars, hand catching your hair and bringing you close to him where he starts throttling your neck. “I AM THE ASSET!”

“No you’re not!” you hiss back around his tight grip. “You’re Bucky Barnes. You’re my lifelong friend and my lover. We would’ve gotten married.”

“Lies,” his cold eyes survey you.

“Look at the ring on my hand,” you gasp out, aware you have mere moments of air left. “You bought it.”

He views the slightly dulled engagement ring on your finger and you feel his hold loosen just a touch but enough that you weren’t going to die. His eyes land on yours, something of an understanding kindling there.

“Please, let go,” you beg, your limbs feeling weak.

“Who are you?” he whispers.

“Missy.”

“No. Who are you?”

“You always called me Missy. Said it was goddamn hilarious because I was so tomboyish.”

“WHO ARE YOU?!” he gets frustrated.

“Vera. It’s Vera.”

His eyebrows shoot up and his grip loosens even more. You can see the internal battle raging in his head.

“Please let go. James…” you start fading out.

He inhales sharply, backing away from you immediately and you fall to the floor, senses completely shot to shit. All you can hear is the faint sound of the jukebox.

“And I’ll be true, til you come marchin’ home.”

You feel yourself being bundled into what you think is the residential room above the diner where the owner lives. You’re placed with great reverence on the bed and you feel Bucky climb on top of you.

“Help,” comes the single word out of his mouth.

“How?”

“You know me. I feel like I know you. You’re telling the truth. Why can’t I remember? Why does it hurt when I try?”

“I don’t know,” you say honestly.
“Why do I feel this way?” he continues. “I just wanna…”

“Wanna what, James?” you use his actual name seeing as it got the best reaction.

He’s yanking down the zipper of your Lady Liberty suit in earnest, peeling it off before you could even protest. Every movement is desperate, urgent. You would’ve tried to stop him, worried he would freak out again and try to kill you once more but his mouth found yours and the familiarity put all anxious thoughts out of your head.

The kiss is laced with passion, longing and need. The way he almost overwhelmed you with it, you knew someone had broken him.

_**My Bucky…what the hell have they done to you?**_

“I can’t,” you break off. “This isn’t right. I need to see if Steve is okay.”

“No,” he growls. “You are not the blond man’s. He can’t touch you again.”

“Steve is my friend. He’s *your* friend,” you say firmly.

“No. You’re mine,” he says simply like the discussion is closed.

He manages to tug the suit off your shoulders and your tattoo is bared for him to see. He stops for a moment, tracing his fingers over the design, the initials.

“J.B.B.,” he says out loud. “This is…me?”

“Yes,” you bite your lip.

“Then you are confirmed as mine,” he carries on his methodical stripping of you. “You wear my name.”

“I thought you were dead,” you push him back. “Seventy fucking years I thought you were dead.”

“I’m not dead,” he parrots back before launching himself back on you. “I just wanna….I wanna…. ”

The way he moves against you, the harshness of his stubble against your neck, there was nothing of the sweet, gentle Bucky that you’d lost your maidenhood to. You fully knew where this was going and it was completely wrong. It shouldn’t be happening. Bucky was damaged, he needed help…he needed…

_**Oh god, this feels so goddamn good.**_

A soft moan escapes from your mouth as his rough hands skip over your breasts. That only seems to spur him on more.

“I just wanna fuck you,” he rasps, grabbing your hair by the root and pulling you to him, lips crashing onto yours. “I feel like….that’s right?”

You didn’t even notice his pants were off until you could feel the hardness pressing against your underwear.

“You never used to talk like this,” you manage to get out whilst he grinded against you.

“I don’t know what I’m supposed to talk like,” he stills. “I work. I do what I’m told.”
“Who tells you what to do?” you ask.

“Enough questions,” Bucky’s metallic hand shreds your underwear to ribbons before you feel the cold pressure against you, making you gasp. “That noise…that noise is how it should be.”

“I-” you make to try and question him again but he silences you with a kiss so fierce you barely remember what you were thinking.

There’s something about the way he inhales the scent of your skin, how his tongue darts out to lick certain parts of your body, like he’s cataloguing you, making sure every inch of you is marked as his.

When his mouth dips between your legs you jerk up.

“What are you doing?” you say quickly.

For the briefest second you see Bucky’s trademark smirk cross his face and he’s suddenly the man you knew again, “Hush, doll. Let a guy work.”

Even the Brooklyn accent has returned, noticeably absent when he was previously talking to you and almost tinged with eastern European lilts.

His breath was hot against you as he returned to his work and inexperienced as you still were, this was entirely surprising. You never knew this was a way to be pleasured and goddamn were your hands already twisting in the bedsheets.

It felt like every muscle in your body was coiling, the moans uncontrollable now. Your hands even found their way into his long hair which he seemed to quite like if the growl was anything to go by.

The string of swearing as the knot of tension finally snapped and you came hard made him chuckle as he moved up your spasming body and easily guided himself into you.

“Fuck, this feels….this feels…..” he starts, pushing himself up til the hilt making you automatically wrap around him. “Right. You are mine, aren’t you? They took you away from me.”

“Who, Buck, who?” you manage to recover yourself.

“NO!” he thrusts particularly hard. “Not Buck, not Bucky. Say the other name. That makes me feel something.”

“James,” you correct yourself.

“That one,” he groans. “You are James’.”

Without any warning the switch seems to flip again and instead of taking his time and being gentle, you get the movements of an almost feral animal. He clutches at you for purchase, grip so hard it leaves bruises on your thighs as he ruts with violent need.

Far from being appalled at his savageness, you find you’re meeting it with your own, his actions spurring you to rake your nails at the base of his back. The noises he makes encourages you even more.

“Fuck, doll,” he hisses, lost in his own passion. “God, Missy, you are amazing.”

“James?” you look straight into his eyes at the mention of your nickname. “James, I’ve missed you.”
There’s the old Bucky but it’s blended with the assassin. The mix is seemingly giving him some memory of you but the impulsivity and dominant force of his other persona.

*Why am I drawn to this so much? Goddamn I am messed up.*

“I’ve not gone anywhere, doll,” he groans. “Right here. I’m home.”

He picks up his speed even more and you’re completely at his mercy, reduced to a primal mewling creature beneath him. There’s a hoarse cry as he pushes deep, spilling into you before he rests his head on your chest.

After some time, you feel wetness running down your ribs and you realise he’s crying.

“James? Are you okay?” you ask softly, petting his head.

“Where am I?”

He sounds so lost, so unsure that you hold him tighter.

“You’re with me. It’s Missy. I’ve got you.”

“Missy? Missy you’re alive?” he jerks up, looking at you like he’s finally seeing you. “They told me you’d died. You went down on Schmidt’s plane. I screamed for days.”

“I was frozen,” you explain. “For seventy years. I’ve only recently...come back to life.”

“Doll, goddamn, doll. You’re really here. We really just...you know,” he smiles at you, every inch the old Bucky.

“Sure did,” you laugh. “You really are gonna get me pregnant, you know that?”

“Hey, I ain’t complainin’,” he chuckles, the Brooklyn twang in full force. “War’s over, sweetheart.”

“Bucky?” you chance, hoping he was well enough to have a reasonable reaction.

“Yeah?”

“Who are you working for?”

“What?” he shakes his head. “I mean...oh god...I.....”

The door crashes open and you hurriedly pull the covers over yourself, protecting your modesty. Bucky immediately pushes you against the headboard, shielding you with his body.

“Asset,” the familiar voice of Brock Rumlow croons. “You’ve been a bad boy.”

“No no no no no,” Bucky mutters to himself. “No you’re not taking her from me!”

“Boys,” Rumlow motions to his flunkies who stand forward in readiness. “Grab them both.”

“No, NO!” Bucky starts screaming as he’s bodily yanked away from you.

You’re struck in the head by the butt of a rifle and you see flashing lights, your orientation completely gone. Men wrap you in the covers before one slings you over his shoulder. You don’t have enough co-ordination to fight back and once they jam a bag over your head, you lose all your
senses, just succumbing to darkness.

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“Asset, report,” someone says in the room.

The bag is yanked off your head and you blink in the dazzling spotlight. You make to move but you’re buckled down to a chair by thick heavy straps.

Just across the way from you, Bucky is tied down to some sort of device, looking at you desperately.

“All asset…report,” the man says more forcefully.

“The man on the bridge got away,” he says, mechanically. “Grenades didn’t kill him.”

“Is that all?”

“Yes.”

“All asset, report.”

Tears start streaming down Bucky’s face, “I am….compromised.”

The guy starts leafing through notes and looks directly at you, “Has Captain Liberty compromised you?”

“Captain?” Bucky looks at you.

“Got promoted,” you manage to get out around your dry mouth.

“All asset, has Vera Barnes compromised you?”

“Barnes?” Bucky’s eyes are wide and pleading. “You took my name, doll?”

“I did.”

“ASSET, REPORT!”

Bucky goes ram rod straight in the chair and his expression falls away completely, “I am compromised. I have been compromised by Missy Adler.”

“Oh, Captain,” the man sighs. “You undid years of conditioning you know.”

“What the fuck have you done to him?” you growl.

“Laments might call it brainwashing,” he shrugs.

“WHO ARE YOU?” you yell.

“You didn’t defeat all of us back in the war, Miss Liberty.”

Then you knew. You knew exactly who had compromised S.H.I.E.L.D, who had stolen Bucky from you.
“Hydra,” you whisper.

“Correct. I must say, I’m very disappointed that all it took was a woman opening her legs to destroy years of work.”

“You fucking asshole!” you squirm against your bonds.

“And now I’m going to rectify your meddling.”

“NO!” Bucky roars, struggling desperately.

The man starts up the machine and Bucky is raging now.

“Don’t you dare! Don’t you fucking dare!” Bucky spits.

“Stop it!” you strain against the straps.

“Missy! Missy I love you!” Bucky yells just as electricity surges into his head and he begins screaming, screaming so loudly it bounces around your head.

“BUCKY!” you cry.

“Тоска. Ржавый. Семнадцать. Рассвет. Печь. 9. Доброкачественная. Возвращение домой. Один. Грузовой автомобиль,” the guy speaks as Bucky is weeping openly in agony.

“Don’t take her away from me!” he screeches. “Don’t take her, please! PLEASE!”

One final shock and he goes limp.

“Доброе утро, солдат.,” the man prompts.

Bucky’s head whips up, face completely blank and speaking a language you’ve never heard him use before, “Я готов отвечать.”

“Do you recognise the woman in front of you, Asset?”

“No.”

“Are you lying to me?”

“No.”

“Asset, report.”

“I do not know this woman.”

“Well, Miss Liberty, it appears I have wrested control back from you and that is how it is going to be. The Asset no longer recognises you and your tricks won’t work a second time.”

“You fuckin’ monster,” you hiss, throat hoarse from yelling.

Rumlow casually saunters in, “Back to factory settings?”

“The Asset is back in line,” the man nods.

“Oh Missy,” Rumlow sighs, turning to you. “Missy, Missy, Missy. You just had to have the love to end all loves, huh? Nice rack by the way.”
“Fuck you,” you spit at him.

“I could make your ice pop boyfriend hold you down whilst I do just that,” Rumlow sneers. “Never had a super soldier before.”

“Is there a point to this?” the man says in sheer boredom. “I thought she was to be terminated once the Asset was reclaimed?”

“Oh well I have a conundrum here. See we could just kill her but then there’s the possibility of reprogramming her. Imagine the Asset and her as a team. They would never stop, never tire, never question,” Rumlow grins at you. “What do you say, doc? Shall we widen the legend of the Winter Soldier?”

All you could do was stare past to Bucky’s blank face that looked at you without even a modicum of curiosity.

Anything but this. Don’t take my memories of him away too. Anything but this.
The Asset didn’t know why she fought so hard.

The girl who kept crying out to him, insisting you knew each other. Sure there was some strange sense of familiarity but he might have come across you in training briefly.

James you kept calling him. It did stir something of an emotion but The Asset didn’t know why. He also didn’t know why Rumlow kept encouraging the two of you to spend time together. Usually he was kept far away from everyone, only being used when he was needed. This was practically socialising him.

“James, talk to me,” you say from across the room.

The Asset doesn’t respond. When you don’t get an answer, you stand up, wobbling on your unstable legs before marching over to him with purpose. He could still see the fire firmly in your gaze.

“James,” you say more forcefully as you reach his bunk and tower over him. “Talk. To. Me.”

Still he said nothing.

You drop to your knees, almost in a begging position and stare at him with those plaintiff eyes and he has to avert his gaze. That look always made him feel things, protective emotions and he didn’t like it. It felt like he wasn’t supposed to be having those feelings.
“Please,” you almost whisper, putting your hands on his knees.

Instinctively he jerks up, grabbing your wrists and yanking you to your feet before glaring at you.

“What do you want me to say Virtue?” he says in a deadly tone.

That was the point you obviously flipped because you twisted out of his grip and snarled in a rage like a wounded animal before tearing and bending the metal struts of your bunk to pieces.

“THAT IS NOT MY NAME!” you yell.

“You are The Virtue, we are the The Mastery,” The Asset says to you for the tenth time that day.

“FUCK YOU!” you throw the mattress at him which he effortlessly dodges. “I’m Vera Adler but you always called me Missy and you’re James Barnes but we always called you Bucky. You call me by this bullshit term again and….and….”

“And you’ll what?” The Asset sighs, one eyebrow raised. “You won’t do anything to me if you claim to love me. That is how love works, right?”

“I hate the Asset,” you spit, kicking metal shards into the wall. “I love Bucky Barnes. There’s a difference.”

“Hate me all you want, Virtue. We are a team and you will understand the terms of that soon enough,” he shrugs, sitting back down.

He watches you for a time, working your anger out on the bunk, shredding it to pieces before you broke down crying. The Asset didn’t like that at all. His body felt an overwhelming urge to comfort you but that was inappropriate.

Rumlow opens the door and The Asset stands to attention.

“Well, I guess someone didn’t like the interior décor,” Rumlow snorts, looking at the carnage in the room and your balled up form in the corner. “Asset, you are to be debriefed.”

The Asset just nods before following him out to a small interview room where both men sit down.

“How is The Virtue doing?” Rumlow asks, swirling a cup of coffee and not looking very hopeful.

“You saw,” The Asset replies. “She is not responding to your methods. She still retains rebellion and disobedience. She reacts violently to any mention of her name. She is not ready.”

“Then help her,” Rumlow shrugs. “She believes you’re her long dead lover, right? Use that.”

“Pretend,” The Asset says blankly.

“Sure, why not,” Rumlow laughs. “Pretend you’re Bucky Barnes for her and she may be more receptive.”

“This is not appropriate,” The Asset says without emotion.

“Orders from on high, frosty,” Rumlow reaches into his laptop satchel and throws a confidential file at him.

The Asset reads in silence, taking in everything about the girl in his room. She was in her mid nineties by all accounts, frozen just like he was. She came from Brooklyn and was best friends with
Steve Rogers, aka Captain America, and James Barnes.

He felt nothing reading it until he saw the missive from on high.

_Create The Virtue at any cost. The Asset is permitted time with her as well as physical contact. The Mastery will only work if both soldiers are in tandem, a cohesive unit._

“So there you have it,” Rumlow points at the documents. “Start a fake relationship with her, I don’t care. She just needs to be compliant, alright?”

“I understand,” The Asset nods.

Something unfurls in his chest, like the release of tension. He had permission, he had permission to get close to her. Maybe he could find out why he was drawn to her.

“Return and get started. We’ll be taking her to the Room in an hour,” Rumlow instructs.

As The Asset re-enters his room, you’ve still not moved an inch. He decides to take Rumlow at his word and use some of your information against you to start a dialogue.

“M….Missy?” he tries out and immediately your head snaps up, your eyes wide.

“James?” you scramble to your feet and then stop, almost like you’re afraid to approach him.

“James is that you?”

“Where’s…where’s Steve?” he feigns confusion. “And the Commandos?”

“Oh gee,” you breathe, hands coming over your face in shock. “Do you remember?!”

He gives you a lost look and you cross over, pulling him into a hug and burying your face in his chest. At first the Asset doesn’t know what to do but slowly his arms wrap around you and he feels the tiny purr of contentment travel through your body. He was liking this far too much and the overwhelming emotions were assaulting him too quickly.

Despite all of that, holding you then….felt right.

“I can’t remember a lot,” he says. “I just….I just know you.”

You looked up, sheer joy on your face and in that instant the Asset knew he would die for you. Hydra had selected this team well, you had already entangled yourself in his feelings.

When you suddenly reached up to kiss him, he went rigid before remembering he was supposed to be playing the role of a dead man and he kissed you back.

“Buck, we need to get out of here,” you whisper, stroking his cheek lovingly.

“We can’t right now. We’re too deep behind enemy lines,” The Asset lies. “You just need to trust me that I’m working on a plan, alright? Can you trust me, doll?”

Doll?!

Where had ‘doll’ come from? The Asset had never said that before and he was becoming wary about your influence.

“You know I trust you,” you say with such conviction that The Asset was minutely jealous of this Bucky Barnes for inspiring such loyalty from you. “I’m just afraid. What if they break me the next
time in that chair? What if I’m not me any more?”

“If I can remember, so can you,” The Asset says, pushing your hair back over your ear as if on an automatic mode.

Just who were you? Why was he doing things out of character and why did he feel so fiercely protective of you now? He’d barely known you two days.

The door swings open and Rumlow appears with several burly soldiers.

“Time for your reading,” Rumlow says cheerily, eyes glinting at the close proximity you were in. “Asset, join us.”

“Yes, Sir,” The Asset responded monotonously as you clung even tighter to his vest top.

“Actually guys, I don’t think you’ll be needed,” Rumlow says to the soldiers. “Asset, bring her to the Room.”

The Asset takes your hand and squeezes it covertly and you comply, walking with him willingly. It was frightening how quickly you responded to his lies, his faux comfort. He guessed all it took was the promise of affection to calm you down.

“I don’t want to,” you whisper as you look at the chair, pure fear on your face.

“We’ll get it over with then talk more,” The Asset whispered back. “Be brave, Missy. I know you can.”

That seemed to steel your determination and you confidently marched up to the chair before sitting in it and allowing Rumlow to strap you in without punching him this time.

The doctor sits to the side by the controls, the words written in his book. He flips the switch and the electricity sparks into life, coursing into you. Your body arches, every muscle tensed as an expression of pain grips your features.

“Ready,” the doctor nods and Rumlow stands next to The Asset.

“Amazing progress,” Rumlow congratulates him quietly. “She’ll be ready in no time.”

“Increasing,” the doctor notes before you’re growling in an effort to not scream, the dull guttural sound echoing off the walls.

“Begin,” Rumlow instructs.

“Loss, Tundra, Blaze, Twilight, Eighteen, Dormant, Nine, Reunion, One, Plane,” the doctor reads as you finally start screaming, every vein popping out of your neck.

Your shrieks of agony normally did not bother The Asset but now….now he felt pity, he felt anguish, he felt like he needed this to stop but he couldn’t stop it. He was useless against his orders.

The doctor repeats the words several more times until he finally switches the machine off asking the same thing he always does, “Soldier?”

“Go fuck yourself,” you sob, still full of spirit despite the torture you’d just undergone.

“Wow she really does not want to give in,” Rumlow smirks. “Strong girl. Guess we’ll just have to up the Room sessions. Give her another hours break then we’ll start it again.”
“You goddamn piece a’ shit!” you fight against the straps. “I swear I will end you when I get outta here.”

Rumlow smiles to himself before approaching you and delivering a punch to your cheekbone which rocks your head against the metal back of the chair, dazing you.

The Asset felt himself move to help but stopped before any one could see the motion. He didn’t want to be thought of as compromised.

“I love your dirty talk, Virtue,” Rumlow takes your jaw in his hand. “Gets a guy all fired up. Can’t wait til you have to respond to my orders.”

He holds your head firmly in place, taking advantage of your stunned state before stealing a kiss from you. You pathetically squirmed away whilst Rumlow just chuckled.

“Asset, bring her back to your room for now.”

“Yes, Sir,” The Asset replies, keeping his tone neutral.

The Asset wanted to rip Rumlow apart for doing that to you. He could feel the pure unbridled rage building in him. How dare he lay hands on you when command had told him you were his. You belonged to The Asset, not to Rumlow.

He carefully undid your straps, carrying you out of the room and down to his quarters where he laid you on the bed. You were still out of it, softly crying and….for some reason, The Asset climbed into the bed behind you and just held you gently.

“Don’t make me do that again, James,” you beg quietly. “Please, I can’t take any more.”

“It’s alright sweetheart, I’ll keep you safe.”

He was now speaking with an accent he didn’t remember having, using pet names he’d never spoken. Was he just The Asset? He was starting to question himself now.

You turned over, hiding your face in his chest and your hand traced his metal arm.

“Are you not afraid of it?” he asks without meaning to.

“Of course not,” you murmur. “It’s a part of you and I love you.”

Everyone was usually so scared of looking at his arm, disgusted even but you just treated it like his natural flesh arm. He chanced something more intimate and used his metallic arm to snake under your top and take your waist, bringing you closer to him.

“Sure?”

“I said so, didn’t I, you punk?” you lean into him more. “Would you love me less if I lost a leg and had a replacement?”

The Asset thought about it before answering, “No.”

“There we go then,” you start drawing patterns on his chest with your delicate fingers.

The Asset was starting to answer questions like he was Bucky Barnes now. Could he actually be? Was Hydra keeping this information back from him and utilising his connection with The Virtue for their own benefit?
“Missy, I—”

“James, just hold me,” you say with such a tone of weariness that The Asset reflexively kisses the top of your head. “I’ve not got long before they do it again. Please tell me your plan is forming quickly.”

“It is, I promise,” The Asset replies and he’s stupefied to realise he’s actually half concocting an escape idea at that moment.

You both lay there for a long while, you continuing to touch any part of him you could for comfort and him holding you tightly, burying his face in your hair.

The door opens again and Rumlow is standing there grinning.

“Rise and shine, time for your reading again.”

“No, please,” you draw away from The Asset to hide in the corner of the bed. “Not again.”

“You’ve not responded in the way we want you to yet,” Rumlow shrugs.

“I swear I’ll—”

“Your promise ain’t good enough, babycakes,” Rumlow shakes his head. “Gotta make you nice and pliant. Asset, bring her.”

The Asset delicately coaxes you from the bed, keeping a tight grip on your hand all the way to the Room. You didn’t want to move another inch towards the chair so he had to physically drag you there and strap you in.

“James, please. You said you’d help,” you started shaking with panic.

“Ain’t the time, Vera. Not now,” The Asset says with that strange accent again and your birth name.

Obviously you responded to your birth name like a chide because you fell silent and let him do his work. He felt bad for lying to you but he couldn’t show the doctor or Rumlow that he most definitely was compromised now.

He cared about you.

“Beginning,” the doctor says and The Asset watches your face change from stolidness to torment.

“Loss, Tundra, Blaze, Twilight, Eighteen, Dormant, Nine, Reunion, One, Plane.”

Despite your abject suffering, you started singing. The Asset thought it was a coping mechanism, a grounding tool until he listened to the words a bit more.

“Don’t hold any one on your knee, you better be true to me, you better be true to me, you better be true to me. Don’t hold any one on your knee, you’re gettin’ the third degree, when you come marchin’ home.”

He physically winced, his brain feeling like it was sparking. He knew that song. He’d heard it recently in fact. But where?

“You’re on your own where there is no phone and I can’t keep tabs on you. Be fair to me, I’ll guarantee, this is one thing that I’ll do.”
An image flashed in his mind of you writhing underneath his touch, your half naked body sheened in sweat and sweet moans escaping your flushed lips in some dingy apartment building.

“I won’t sit under the apple tree with any one else but you, til you come marchin’ home.”

More images of you, seemingly a little more innocent as you lay shyly under him in a patch of flowers and grass in the twilight moon, not a stitch on your body.

How the hell could he be imagining such detail?!

“Increase,” Rumlow gives a flippant gesture. “If she can sing, it’s not a high enough voltage.”

“Increasing,” the doctor confirms.

Your song breaks down into tuneless screaming with the activation words being repeated over and over. The Asset couldn’t stand it any longer.

He threw a chair at Rumlow which hit him from behind and he dropped to the floor unconscious. The doctor tried to run but The Asset was too quick and he caught his neck in his metal hand, lifting him up off the floor.

“This is all for your benefit!” the doctor rasps out, swinging from The Asset’s grip. “We’re making her for you! A partner!”

“I like her how she is,” The Asset replies coldly before crushing the doctor’s windpipe to the depth of a sheet of paper.

He casually discarded the body before shutting off the machine and slamming his fist down, shattering the controls. In an instant, he was with you, unshackling you as you lolled with terrifying limpness.

“Missy?” he tries but you don’t respond.

He shakes you a little, “Virtue?”

“Don’t call me that, jackass,” you murmur, groaning as your head came back to a normal position. “What….what happened?”

“We’re getting out,” The Asset says firmly. “Come on.”

He lifts you up, bearing your weight before slinging you over his shoulder. As he moves through the corridors, he puts on that emotionless expression he’s used to hiding behind and nobody questions him as he strides through. You have the sense and smarts to look like a victim, going limp. It really sells the facade The Asset was trying to create.

He got you out to the Jeep after picking up a few rifles and stuffed you in the back. You kept yourself down until The Asset tapped your arm.

“It’s safe,” he says.

“Thank you,” you whisper and it makes the Asset’s chest swell a little.

“Am I really….am I really Bucky?” The Asset says uncertainly. “I can’t remember anything. I just…that song.”

“I sang it before we shipped out to Europe,” you tell him, sitting up and climbing through to the
passenger seat. “Then it was on the jukebox the first time you broke free of Hydra’s control.”

“I broke free once before?”

“Yes, we uh…..”

“Had sex,” The Asset finishes. “I mean I think we did. I just see images, flashes.”

“Yes we did,” you smile a little. “First time after seventy odd years. Didn’t expect it to be in some diner owner’s apartment.”

The Asset found himself laughing a little, the muscle movements feeling foreign, “What did you expect?”

“More stars,” you shrug.

And now the other images made sense. That must have been from so many years ago.

“You really are James Barnes,” you fidget in your seat. “We were friends for twenty years before we went steady.”

“Steady?”

“Dated.”

“Huh,” The Asset processed the information. “Best girl….that’s what they say right?”

“Right,” you beam at him and The Asset feels proud for remembering something although he still can’t connect himself to Bucky Barnes.

“So what now?” The Asset asks, checking the rear view mirror to make sure no alarms had been raised yet.

“Find Steve,” you nod. “Steve will know what to do. He always knew what to do.”

“Then we’ll find, Steve,” The Asset agrees.
You drove in silence for a little while, not really knowing where to go.

Rumlow had taken your back up phone from you so calling Natasha was out of the question. You literally had no leads on where Steve might be. You wished you’d memorised the number in that phone now.

“Is there somewhere they’d hide out?” Bucky asks. “Like a safehouse?”

“All the safehouses are compromised,” you shake your head. “Our apartments are probably under surveillance too. I’m sorry, Bucky. I don’t know what to do.”

Bucky pulls up at the side of a lay-by and sighs. You feel bad that you don’t really have a plan right now and you’re relying on him to just blindly follow you.

“I know somewhere,” he says after a while. “Can’t guarantee Hydra won’t be looking though.”

“It’s the best we have for now,” you nod.

He takes you to a typical New York high rise apartment block where he ushers you up to the mid level and into a place that houses a basic bed, a camping stove and washroom facilities.

“It’s…not much,” Bucky says and you swear he’s a little embarrassed.
“It’s fine. It’s better than…” you end up shivering and Bucky winds his arms around you protectively.

“I hated it,” he speaks into your hair. “When you were in the chair. I hated it. I hated Rumlow kissing you. I wanted to tear his head off.”

“I wish you would have,” you admit. “I can’t believe they’ve done that to you for so long.”

“Did they….” Bucky trails off.

It occurs to you now that either the electroshock torture wipes his memory or he’s so traumatised he represses the memory.

“They tied me up and made me watch,” you murmur. “You were screaming so much. I felt helpless.”

“That’s how I felt with you,” Bucky holds you tighter. “I must…I must be Bucky Barnes. Why else would I be this protective over someone I barely know. But I can’t remember!”

He growls in frustration, his hair falling over his face and you tuck it behind his ears. Looking at him now, you think it kind of suits him, especially the overgrown stubble.

“You will, just give it time,” you stroke your thumb over his cheek. “It’s not an instant process.”

“I just wanna remember you,” he whispers. “The way you look at me….I wanna know why, doll.”

“Well you’re already calling me pet names so that’s a step forward,” you smile wryly.

He lets out something of a breathy laugh before kissing your forehead for the longest time. He holds you like he’s afraid you’ll disappear.

“It just feels like I’m at a loss,” Bucky sighs.

It was like you’d been hit by a train.

The pain that exploded in your head was immense and you collapsed, only Bucky’s strong arms keeping you from smashing into the floor.

“Virtue?!” he panics before correcting himself. “Missy?!”

Even that barely got through to you. The pressure on your brain was getting too much and you briefly forgot the word you wanted so desperately to say, like it was water slipping through your fingers.

“H..hh…hhhalp,” you manage to sound out before you started fitting on the floor, control of your body completely lost.

**

The Asset was frightened.
You’d just been perfectly normal, being very affectionate with him and treating him like a normal person then….then this. He thought back over what was said and it suddenly clicked.

Loss.

He’d said he was at a loss.

Loss was the first word of your trigger words.

Fuck, this was not good. He thought you’d managed to get away without any ill effects but it seemed like they had gotten to you after all. This was a high stress situation like the one the chair was designed to create and with the addition of those words….maybe everything about you that was Missy would vanish.

“Please, come back to me!” he holds your head to stop you smashing it on the floor as you fit uncontrollably. “Missy Barnes, please.”

There was a great gasp from your lungs like you were starving of air and you began clawing at your own throat. The Asset was beyond panic now.

“Missy! Don’t you dare leave me!” he shouts in your face. “Til the end of the line, remember?!”

The Asset had no idea where that phrase had come from. It just felt like he should say it. There was no memory attached, no great meaning, it just flowed from his mouth.

You stopped moving and for one horrible second, The Asset thought you’d died. Then you shuddered before opening your eyes so wide.

“James?” you call out for him.

“I’m here,” he reassures you.

“You remembered something,” you started laughing whilst crying. “You remembered.”

“I don’t know where that came from,” The Asset says truthfully.

“You, me and Stevie,” you gulp, trying to centre yourself again. “We used to say it to each other all the time. Best friends forever.”

So there it was. Proof that he was in fact Bucky Barnes. He couldn’t have possibly known that was a phrase you used to use with Steve Rogers and yet he’d said it anyway from nowhere.

“I really am him,” he mutters out loud. “I’m your guy.”

“You sure are,” you smile at him, even in your condition. “My fiancé in fact. I think it still counts even after seventy plus years. I mean….if you still want to. Ah gee, I’m making myself nervous now.”

The Asset thought your blushing was sweet. He allowed himself a moment just to view you and found more than anything he wanted to be with you always.

“It feels….right,” he says carefully. “I don’t remember a lot but being with you….it’s what I need.”

“Is it what you want though?” you ask, propping yourself up on your elbows.

The Asset had never been asked what he wanted. Never. Having the option to choose his own path
and be selfish for once….now that was something new and exciting.

“I want you,” he says, scooping you up from the floor and placing you reverently on the bed. “That is my choice.”

“Bucky,” you pull him to lie in the bed next to you. “I love you.”

“These feelings that keep overwhelming me,” he says self consciously. “Is that love? I don’t know.”

“Do you feel like you’d do anything for me? That you only wanna be with me? That I make you happy?” you stroke his cheek.

“Yes,” The Asset answers without hesitation. “Then I love you.”

You reach up and softly kiss him and now The Asset gives you his all, no more pretending, no more covert agendas.

“What happened to me, Buck?” you pull away, shivering with cold slightly.

“I accidentally said a trigger word,” he throws the blanket over you both. “The chair must have done more damage than I thought.”

“So I can’t ever hear those words again?” you seem afraid.

“Doll, do you trust me?” The Asset asks you again.

“Yes,” you nod.

“I will keep you safe, no matter what. I ain’t lettin’ anything bad happen to you.”

There was that accent again.

*I’m not The Asset. I’m Bucky Barnes. I’m Bucky Barnes and Hydra stole my life. They stole my girl from me.*

Bucky took one look at your overtired face and pulled you into his chest, making sure not to drape his metal arm over you in case that made you colder.

“Sleep, Missy. I’ll protect you. I’ll always protect you.”

You apparently trusted him that implicitly you drifted off in barely five minutes. Bucky just held you whilst trying to figure out a plan, a plan to get you far away from Hydra.

*I have to find the man called Steve. I have to. For her.*

**

You wake up to an empty bed and you’re gripped by anxiety.
Bucky is nowhere to be seen and he’s not in the bathroom either. You try and rationalise that maybe he’s gone to get some food since there’s absolutely nothing to eat but there’s this niggling feeling that something’s gone wrong.

You spot a note on the door that’s been stuck there with a knife.

Missy,

I’m going to find Steve. Wait here. Don’t go outside.

As Bucky

You loved that he was finally recognising who he was again but for him to go out alone when Hydra was looking for you was a stupid move. He was the more recognisable of you two.

“You goddamn idiot, Buck,” you mutter, taking the knife out of the door and tucking it into your waistband.

You hated waiting. You really hated it. You hated it more when you didn’t have any idea of the passing of time either.

You look around the apartment for something to do and find a discarded book that looked very well read. ‘A Hero of Our Time’ in what looked like Russian. You guessed it belonged to Bucky.

After another half an hour, you wished you spoke Russian so you could actually do something.

Where the hell are you Bucky?

The room vibrates and you hear a massive boom follow soon after and you look out of the window to see smoke curling up from what looks like the Triskelion building with several Helicarriers hovering over it.

That had to be Steve and Natasha. They were taking the fight straight to Hydra.

Were you really going to sit around and still wait for Bucky?

Heck no, I ain’t no bunk lizard. I’m going after Rumlow…the bastard.

**

When you got there, it was chaos.

You found many dead bodies and clad in nothing but the clothes Hydra had provided, you punched and kicked your way through the remaining soldiers to the higher levels.

Fires had broken out upstairs and you had to throw a discarded coat around your face to stop inhaling the smoke. It was stifling moving through but you pushed on, desperate to try and find anyone that you knew.

They had to be here right? There was no way they weren’t involved in this somehow.

You dodged a surprise attack from a Hydra agent, picking them up by the collar like they weighed little and throwing them through the window. You’d learned from the war to leave no one alive. They’d just kill themselves anyway, such was their extreme loyalty.

A creaking sound started in the walls and you were concerned that this building wouldn’t stand much longer. You weren’t giving up though.

You’d be damned if you were going to let your lover and your friends die because you were a little scared.

Another loud creak and there’s a rending sound this time. You’re sure it’s coming from in front of you but an almighty crash of girders falls behind you, the bars knocking you over before the ceiling above directly caves in overhead, pinning you in place. Finally the rest of the beams collapse on top of you, knocking the air from your lungs and crunching your ribs into your body.

“FUCK!” you howl, pain ripping through you.

No matter what you did, you were firmly pinned in place. No amount of super soldier serum was helping, in fact, trying to shift the girder on your torso was making the agony worse and you’re sure two more of your ribs just popped.

The rubble just pressed further in on you, plaster raining down and into your eyes and mouth. You could barely breathe, you could barely see. All around you was pressure, pressure and rising heat as the fire spread further down the office corridor.

You were trapped and you were going to die here.

“Help!” you cry uselessly, feeling like that feeble little girl back in Brooklyn again, the one that Steve and Bucky had to console secretly when life got too much.

The fire was licking closer to you and the hairs on your arms were getting singed. You try one last desperate push but it just makes more things topple onto the pile.

“HELP ME!” you scream at the top of your lungs, inhaling ash.

Claustrophobia kicked in full force and you were wildly lashing out, desperately trying to claw your way through the debris whilst hysterically screaming.

“Well hello Virtue,” the voice of Rumlow comes from nearby. “Imagine my surprise when I thought I was going to save a damsel in distress and it turns out to be you.”

“Just help me,” you plead, all sense of bravery gone in the face of your impending death.

“Oh no, that’s not how this is going to work,” Rumlow chuckles before coming up and stepping on the girder over your torso, creating even more pressure.

The shriek you let out is unholy.

“God I love seeing you like this,” Rumlow grins. “Helpless, at my mercy. Just how it should be. You may be a super soldier but never forget you’re just a little girl at heart.”

“STOP!” you growl.

“I’ll stop if you listen to the next words,” Rumlow eases up the pressure.
“Anything!” you’re babbling through the pain.

“Loss, Tundra, Blaze, Twilight, Eighteen, Dormant, Nine, Reunion, One, Plane,” Rumlow recites.

The high stress, the high pain, those words….it was like everything that was you just slipped away. You stopped feeling pain. You stopped feeling fear. You stopped feeling anything.

“Soldier?”

“Ready to comply,” The Virtue parroted.

“Oh perfect,” Rumlow grins, dragging some of the debris off you. “Now get out of there.”

You didn’t care about the ripping sensation in your limbs, the severe damage you were causing yourself, you just pulled beams and masonry off you before standing up, caked in dust, ash and blood.

“Virtue?”

“Yes.”

“Get on that remaining helicarrier. Stop Steve Rogers. Kill Steve Rogers. Retrieve The Asset too while you’re at it. Understood?”

“Yes.”

“Excellent,” Rumlow grins widely.

The Virtue says nothing but just looks to the carrier in the sky, plotting how to get up there.

Chapter End Notes

Even superheroes get scared
“Listen to me, Steve!” Bucky pleads with the blonde soldier who’s fiddling with the console. “Please! We need you to come with us.”

“Bucky, I need to do this,” Steve says firmly. “The world depends on it.”

“Yeah well she depends on you, you goddamn jerk,” Bucky hisses, pulling Steve backwards. “I thought you were friends. Why won’t you help?!”

“We are friends, Buck but you just told me she’s safe for now. I can deal with her after,” Steve sighs, trying to pull wires out from the machine.

“She is not safe!” Bucky yanks Steve back hard, gripping the man by the throat, defaulting to violence. “They tortured her Steve! They sent so much fucking electricity through her brain that she’s damaged, just like me. They ain’t ever gonna stop until they find her again. She’s broken and I can’t fucking bear to see her like this and I can’t even remember two thirds of the time we spent together.”

“Buck,” Steve says a little softer. “I’ll help her okay? I’ve always helped her. I looked after her when we thought you were dead because I made that promise to you. I don’t know if you remember it but I told you I’d always protect her and I goddamn have so give me ten minutes to
stop Hydra here and then I give my word I will help you and her.”

Bucky relaxes a little, taking his hand away, “Alright. Alright.”

“Give me a hand and we can get to her quicker,” Steve suggests. “Rip that cord out.”

Bucky complies, eager to get this over with. He didn’t like leaving you alone in that apartment. Hydra definitely knew about it and it was only a matter of time before they came looking. This was wasting time.

“Just got this chip to insert and then we can get the heck out,” Steve announces.

He’s suddenly thrown backwards and Bucky catches him before he falls down to the lower balcony. There’s a great strain as he pulls the heavy soldier up before depositing him back on the gangway.

“What was that?!” Steve shakes his head.

There’s a heavy thud of boots and both men turn around to see you, stained in ash, covered in blood, wearing scorched clothes. You were extremely injured, probably should be getting medical attention but you were just standing there like you weren’t phased at all. In fact you didn’t even have any emotion on your face.

“Missy?! Oh my god, are you alright?!?” Steve blusters, looking horribly concerned “Are you…is that one of your ribs?!”

Bucky spots it too. One of your ribs was protruding through the skin, sending a small rivulet of blood running down your clothes every time you breathed in and out.

God you shouldn’t even be upright right now. What was going on?

“Missy?” Steve tries again.

“Who the fuck is that?” you say blankly, all trace of the New York accent gone.

No….

No it couldn’t be.

“Vera!” Bucky calls and Steve jerks in surprise to hear the name.

“Why do you keep calling me things?” you half growl, the pain evident in your voice.

“What’s going on?” Steve almostwhispers, coming to stand directly next to Bucky. “Why doesn’t she know us?”

“She’s not Missy any more,” Bucky replies. “They got her. Hydra got her.”

“She’s like you were?”

“Yeah. Virtue?” Bucky calls, hoping you didn’t answer. “Soldier?”

“I am ready to comply,” you answer monotonously and Bucky’s stomach sinks through the floor.

“Fuck,” he curses. “They took her from me again, Steve.”
“We’ll get her back,” Steve says firmly. “But we need to put that chip in otherwise everyone here dies.”

“Virtue, orders. Relay them,” Bucky puts as much of his experience as The Asset in the tone, hoping it will be enough to fool you.

“Retrieve The Asset. Save the Mastery. Kill Steven Rogers.”

“Wait, what?!” Steve cries before you suddenly launch at him, tearing at his face.

“Missy stop!” Bucky panics, dragging you off before you start punching him hard in the stomach, winding him.

“Get the chip in!” Steve yells.

It’s like something flips in Bucky’s head, like he’s always been used to following Steve. He just moves without even questioning it, dashing past you to go for the console but you just snarl like a tortured demon and take his legs out from under him.

“Vera, stop!” he pleads but it falls on deaf ears.

Hydra really had made sure to take everything away from you. Well not on his watch. He wouldn’t lose the sweet but brash girl who made his world feel at peace.

Steve dives on you, pinning you to the floor where you bellow with agony, the splintered rib piercing through more.

“Oh god, I’m sorry,” Steve apologises as he wrestles your wrangling limbs. “Bucky! Hurry up!”

“Right, right!” Bucky shakes his head, managing to get to the console and sliding the chip into place.

There’s an almighty groan from the helicarrier as it pitches slightly to the left and Bucky has to grab hold of the railings to stop himself from falling.

“What now?!” he yells to Steve.

“Now we figure out how to save her and quickly!” Steve shouts back.

**

God was not giving Steve a break much lately.

Between almost being blown up by an IBM, almost getting a grenade to the face and making the mad dash up two previous helicarriers, he just wanted a rest.

He’d been worried sick about you for days but as Natasha explained, you could take care of yourself. Once he knew the Winter Soldier was Bucky, he was desperately sure you’d be able to bring him back round but it appeared to have come at a cost.
And I can’t say I wasn’t disappointed that you came back, Buck. I know that’s mighty horrible of me but….I still haven’t shaken those feelings.

And now here you were, even more vicious than when Loki had you under his control. You were carrying on fighting him with bones sticking out you, blood running down your body and a slight wheezing where he assumed you’d swallowed some ash.

God, Missy, what the heck does Hydra do to people? Is it true? Did they torture you?

The thought of you in pain drove him crazy, knowing he should’ve come after you after Rumlow had carted you into the SUVs from the diner. He flagellated himself with his own guilt, feeling like he was responsible.

“Missy, goddamn your ass, get it together!” he barks in his best captaincy voice. “You’ve been through this before, you’ve shaken off a god’s control! Don’t give up now! That’s an order!”

You just quickly broke out of his grip, your hands shooting to his neck where you squeezed hard and Steve felt the blood start pooling near his cheeks. He ended up smacking your hands away harder than he meant to, the bruises forming instantly before he slid you away from him whilst he tried to work out what to do.

“What do you mean she’s done this before?!” Bucky comes alongside him.

“Loki. He’s a god. He used the Tesseract to make her mindless, under his control but I broke her out of it,” Steve explains quickly, wary that you’d just prowled back onto your hands and knees, adjusting your back where he heard sickening pops.

“Well just do the same thing you did back then,” Bucky says sharply. “Before we end up accidentally killing her.”

“I can’t,” Steve says flatly.

Anything but that, Buck.

“The fuck you can’t. You help her right now or I’ll hurt you,” Bucky growls, shades of the Winter Soldier baring through.

“You don’t know what you’re asking, Bucky,” Steve reiterates, watching you regarding the two of them, sizing them up.

“Yes I do, I’m asking you to save the woman I love. If you were ever my friend you’ll do that for me,” Bucky presses the point.

“I kissed her, alright!” Steve explodes, losing his temper slightly. “That’s how I broke her out of it. I kissed her.”

Bucky falls completely silent and Steve can already feel the rift forming between them. He didn’t want to ever reveal that he’d once been involved with you because he’d tried to close the memory off to himself anyway.

“You kissed….you kissed my best girl?” Bucky rasps, absolutely furious. “Who gave you the damn right?!”

“No one, okay?” Steve doesn’t even make eye contact. “You were dead as far as we knew and she had no one.”
“Some friend you are,” Bucky spits, fists curling in rage.

“Would you rather she be alone?!“ Steve yells. “Would you rather she never love anyone again for the rest of her days because that’s quite long for us. Would you rather she mourned for decades? She did mourn you Bucky. Your death broke her. All I did was offer her something familiar, something she could rely on.”

By now, Steve was fully turned away from you, so wrapped up in Bucky’s idiotic possessiveness at a time like this that. How could he be so blind to your needs? Years had gone by since you were both unfrozen. It wasn’t fair. Bucky wasn’t being fair.

“More like you just waited til I was out the picture huh? You goddamn punk?” Bucky snarls, grabbing for his gun. “She was my girl. Not yours. You had your chance in Brooklyn but you never took it because you’re a fucking coward.”

Steve mostly dodges the punch Bucky throws his way but he’s not quick enough to duck when you charge at him, tackling him over the gangway and onto the level below, landing with a heavy thud where he hears more things breaking.

He panics that you’ll end up killing yourself before you’ll stop. He couldn’t bear it if that happened.

“Missy stop fighting me!” he kicks you off as you attempt to stab at him with a combat knife that he registers as Rumlow’s.

You just say nothing, coming at him again and again, never tiring, never stopping, not caring that you were bleeding out profusely now.

He leaps to one side as you barrel at him before he spins you into a wall, pinning you by your throat.

“Stop it!” he barks at you as he hears Bucky jump from the top level.

“Virtue, stop,” Bucky adds.

“Mission not over,” you state and Steve could see your teeth were stained red with the blood burbling in your mouth.

“Mission is over,” Steve says firmly. “The mission was over when we sacrificed ourselves to stop New York from being blown up. The mission was over when we stopped the battle with the Chitauri. The mission was over when Fury got shot.”

There was a tiny flare of something in your eyes and Steve was encouraged.

“She’s remembering something,” he says to Bucky without turning around.

“Well shit, keeping going,” Bucky urges, his own accent going in and out of the norm.

*God what a pair you two are. This is why you both needed me.*

“The mission,” you repeat but there’s a tone of uncertainty there.

“Is over, Lieutenant,” he defaults to the title you had in your era.

“No,” you struggle against his grip, a little weaker than you had before. “Not Lieutenant.”
“What then?” Steve challenges. “If you’re not a Lieutenant what are you?”

You punch him in the gut quicker than he could’ve registered but thankfully the padding on the suit absorbs most of the blow and he stands his ground.

“What are you, Vera?!” Steve shouts in your face like the meanest drill sergeant, hoping it would trigger something.

“Hey hey, don’t yell at her!” Bucky comes to his side.

“What are you?!” Steve repeats and he can see the tiny scowl forming that you always did when you were pissed off. “If you’re not my Lieutenant, who are you?”

“I’m the same rank as you, you goddamn asshole!” you snarl. “Don’t be throwing your weight around because it ain’t becomin’.”

Thank God. You weren’t completely lost to him. You’d remembered something and the strange neutral accent had disappeared.

“Say it, Adler,” he presses.

“Captain Barnes to you, you dead hooper,” you struggle still.

“I’ve not heard that phrase for a long time,” Bucky says wistfully, as if it were sparking memories of his own.

You started growling, bashing your head backwards against the metal frame, clearly distressed by what was going on.

“Missy!” Steve moves to cradle you as you fit uncontrollably.

Bucky dives in too and both men hold you tightly between them, trying to calm you down. Steve hadn’t been this frightened even when he was almost nuked. The prospect that even as a super soldier you might actually die in front of him was becoming more and more real the longer you spasmed, the pink foam spilling from the corner of your mouth.

“No no no no!” Bucky starts panicking, half sobbing. “Not like this, doll. Please not like this. Don’t leave me again.”

“Come on Missy,” Steve kisses your hair softly. “Til the end of the line. We said that when we were about to die. I’m still holding you to it. Don’t you dare die and leave us alone.”

“Til the end of the line,” Bucky murmurs in unison as the helicarrier starts exploding around you.
It was like you woke up.

One second you were underneath the rubble of the Triskelion building, Rumlow gloating over you and the next both Bucky and Steve were holding you tightly.

You might have seemingly just come round from a dream were it not for the pain.

Oh god the pain.

Were your ribs meant to be doing that?! You were pretty sure they were all supposed to be *inside* your body. You were also sure that your hand should be responding to the commands your brain sent it.

“Til the end of the line,” Bucky and Steve kept murmuring. “Come on, Missy. Come back.”

Your body stopped twitching, but every breath you took was a shuddering reminder of how close to death you were.

“My boys,” you half choke out, the blood cloying in your throat. “My brave boys.”

“Oh my god, she’s back,” you hear Steve say. “Hang on! I’ll get you out!”
“Stay with me, sweetheart,” Bucky says desperately and you can hear how panicked he is.

He always was so emotional when he thought no one was looking. Steve would often have to be the rock of your little trio.

“Help,” you manage to sound. “It….it hurts…."

“Just stay with me,” Bucky repeats, smoothing back your hair.

The helicarrier lurches out of the sky, dropping enough to make your stomach flip before some guidance system rights it. The little gangway you’re on gives way and Steve and Bucky instinctively grab onto the railings, riding the swing as the gangway collapses but you’re too injured to attempt that.

A hand latches onto your wrist and as you reach your full inertia in the fall, your ribcage is wrenched horribly, sending more bone slicing up through the skin. You might have made a noise but it was swallowed in the creaking and groaning of the helicarrier as it fought to stay airbourne.

“Missy! Grab my other hand!”

It was Bucky who had hold of you, one hand in a vice grip around the railings and the other almost crushing the bones of your wrist, trying to keep you aloft.

“I can’t,” you give up. “It hurts too much.”

“Missy please!” Bucky begs. “Steve, help!”

“I’ll jump across!” Steve suggests, readying himself.

He never gets to make the leap because the helicarrier jerks and you’re so slick with blood you just slide out of Bucky’s hands.

“No no NOOOO!” he screams. “VERA!”

“I don’t blame you,” you reassure him, just the second before you fall.

In that moment all you knew was pain and the inevitability of your death as you crashed through the glass at the bottom of the chamber and slammed into the pool below, the water harsh and solid against your broken body.

You just sank, sank deep into the sparkling azure world, watching your lifesblood wisp away in scarlet tendrils.

**

The soft beep of your heart monitor was so pervasive that you stopped hearing it after a time.

You slipped in and out of dreams, dreams where you were back in Brooklyn, dreams where you were on the front line and burning down Hydra bases, dreams of Bucky, dreams of Steve, dreams of that chair….

“Loss, Tundra…” a voice starts.
You jerk up, half ripping the IV lines out of your skin as you flail, desperate to stop the activation before it began.

“Woah woah!” a nurse tries to calm you. “It’s okay, you can calm down Miss Barnes.”

“Where am I?” you demand, getting deja vu slightly of when you were first unfrozen.

“The hospital, you were brought in by Captain America,” she explains.

“How am I… I thought I was…. ” you murmur.

“You’re a medical miracle, that’s for sure,” she smiles softly. “We’ve never seen a super soldier at work. It’s only been two weeks and you’re almost fully healed again. It should have taken months.”

“Two weeks? I’ve lost two weeks?” you blink. “Goddamn…. ”

You look around yourself to see so many flowers and gifts. They spill out from the nightstands onto separate tables.

“What is all this?” you ask bewildered.

“You’re very popular,” she gives you a wry grin. “Captain Liberty. People tend to get upset when their icons are hurt by the enemy.”

“Is that what I am? An icon?” you laugh to yourself. “I thought I was just a plucky idiot gal.”

The nurse bursts out into good natured chuckling, “Well, Miss Barnes, you certainly were my grandma’s idol. She always used to say she wished she could be like you. Strong, brave, able to fight as well as any guy.”

“There was no reason she couldn’t have,” you blush. “All is said and done, I’m just a girl from Brooklyn, Ma’am.”

“Oh don’t call me Ma’am,” she scoffs. “Call me Sarah.”

“Well thank you for taking care of me Sarah,” you default back to politeness, knowing how hard it must have been to repair your shattered frame.

“Amazing I could get near you at all lately with those two keeping vigil,” she snorts.

“Those two?”

“Oh Captain Am-…Mr Rogers visits during the day and talks to you, then there’s the dark haired man that stays with you all night and reads. I don’t know his name.”

Bucky.

Bucky must be looking after you at night and Steve during the day.

“What time is it now?” you ask.

“A little after six,” she looks at a clock above your bed. “Your brunette should be here soon. Get some rest.”

She fetches you a glass of water for your parched throat and gives you a knowing wink before
leaving.

You just settle into the bed, keen to work out the divot your unconscious body had worn into the mattress. Your back was aching something fierce and the last thing you wanted was to seem like an old lady in front of whoever looked at you tonight.

You drifted off again, though you’re not sure why. You’ve already slept for two weeks by this point.

You hear it though,

“He’ll be coming and going” he had said. “One day you’ll see him and another you won’t. He doesn’t like being tied down—and of course he has other countries to attend to. It’s quite all right. He’ll often drop in. Only you mustn’t press him. He’s wild, you know. Not like a tame lion,” Bucky reads to you.

“Are you a wild lion?” you ask and Bucky physically jumps in the chair, the book dropping to the floor with a soft thud.

“Missy!” he stands up quickly, leaning over you and you see him heavily shadowed in the dim light, a look of utter concern. “Are you….are you alright?”

“Feel like I could sleep more,” you joke.

His hands are insistent as they stroke down your cheeks, “You scared me, doll.”

“I didn’t mean to,” you whisper, not wanting to look at his distraught face in case you broke down. “I just….how did I get to the helicarrier?”

“Rumlow,” Bucky growls, kissing your forehead possessively. “He used your trigger words. You became The Virtue. God I thought I’d lost you forever, just when I was starting to remember.”

“And now?” you ask.

“Some parts I still can’t,” he admits, his hair hanging in curtains around your face as he’s practically on top of you, just wanting to be close. “It’s like trying to hold water. There are times when it’s so clear and there are times I’m just the shell that Hydra turned me into.”

“Give it time,” you nudge his nose with yours.

“Will you give me time?” he asks quietly.

“Of course, I’m not going anywhere apparently,” you quip but he doesn’t laugh.

“Are you sure you want me, Missy?”

He seems uncharacteristically insecure and you can’t help but wonder if something happened whilst you were The Virtue.

“Did I…say something….do something to make you think that way?” you question.

Bucky leans up from you, perching on the edge of the bed. He just stares at the floor.

“You and Steve,” he finally says.

“What about me and Steve?”
“You kissed. He told me.”

“Like a year ago,” you furrow your brow. “If I wanted to be with Steve, Buck, I’d be with Steve right now wouldn’t I?”

“But you have feelings for him?” Bucky presses. “You ain’t got some romantic intentions left?”

“James,” you sigh, looking at how broken he seems. “Stevie is my friend and I realised that after we had that little thing. I just….I can’t allow myself to feel that way. It always felt like I was betraying you, even though I thought you were dead.”

“It was a betrayal,” he says harshly.

Your stomach just drops. That wasn’t a sentence you wanted to hear. You instantly felt sick.

“I…I didn’t mean it to be,” you stammer.

“You were my gal,” he buries his face in his hands. “I just….you hurt me, Vera. All I ever wanted was you.”

“I’m sorry,” the lump in your throat almost quashing the words.

You bolt upright and out of the bed, ripping all the cords and wires off you and out of you before just running. You run in the flimsy nightgown the hospital gave you.

Anywhere but your room.

You couldn’t face looking at his anguished face. But he wasn’t being fair, right? You thought he was dead. Were you supposed to be a sort of widow for the rest of your life?

You end up barrelling out of a fire escape and into the chilly New York air. You didn’t care where you were going. Your feet just couldn’t stop.

You ended up in Bryant Park, feeling the cool grass underneath your toes. Nobody really gives you a second look. New York is known for its peculiar residents after all.

You settle on climbing a tree, wedging yourself in between two branches and staring at the faint stars that you can make out in amongst all the light pollution.

“Doll?” comes a guilt ridden voice from underneath you.

Bucky was standing there, hood over his baseball cap and trying to keep a low profile. You could see him automatically assessing for dangers around himself before he settled.

“I don’t wanna be shouted at any more, Buck,” you warn him. “I’ll run again.”

“Please don’t,” he winces. “I wasn’t ever as fast as you. I just wanna say….sorry. Sorry for being a jerk. I shouldn’t have said that. It was childish. You thought I was gone. I mean….you wouldn’t have if you thought I was still around, right?”

He looks up into your face expectantly and you see a shade of the old Bucky there, the Bucky that was secretly a big ol’ sweetheart behind the ladykiller facade.

“Of course not you dumb mook,” you roll your eyes. “Do you not see the ring on….”

You manage to get a look at your hand and remember that Hydra had taken your engagement ring
from you. It would’ve fried your finger off in the Chair otherwise.

“Oh,” you finish your sentence.

“You mean this?” Bucky produces it from his coat pocket. “You kept it all these years.”

“I did,” you jump down from the branch, going to take it but he pulls back.

“No, Missy. Let’s do this properly,” a ghost of a smile across his face. “Since I kinda… half died before I got the chance.”

He drops to one knee, “Vera Adler, will you do me the honour of being my wife?”

“heck yeah I will,” you laugh.

He springs up, grabbing you in his arms and holding you close to him, kissing you heavily before he slips the ring back into its rightful place.

“Now come on, fiancée. The nurses will never let me visit if they find out you’ve been escaping.”

**

Steve visits you at nine o’ clock, just like he always does.

He’d heard you’d been awake briefly so he had a package under his arm. It was quite bulky but he just shoved it further into place before striding in.

He was a little surprised to see Bucky in the bed with you, curled into your back, his metal arm wound protectively over you. Should he be gone by now? He was risking a lot by still being there.

Some part of Steve still panged to see you and Bucky so close but it was a foregone conclusion the second Bucky was seen alive. You would always love him in that way. Maybe in time, if Bucky had actually been dead there might have been something to deepen between you but Steve made a conscious decision right there to let you go from his heart.

It would be too painful to cling onto ‘what could have beens’.

“Rise and shine, you bunk lizards,” he calls out and Bucky immediately whips up, pistol trained at Steve’s head.

“Fuck!” Bucky swears. “Don’t do that!”

“You need to go, Buck,” Steve nods to the window. “It’s morning and news has got out she’s awake. This place will be crawling with reporters soon.”

“Yeah yeah,” Bucky shakes his head before leaning down and nudging you gently. “Hey Missy, time to get up.”

“Five more minutes,” you groan.
“I gotta go,” Bucky smiles. “Goddamn, doll, you’re such a lazy ass.”

“Take a powder you punk,” you huff before rubbing your eyes and sitting up, your hair askew.

Steve thought you looked mighty sweet like that but he kept that opinion to himself. His relationship with Bucky was still up in the air after the kiss revelation and he didn’t want to make it worse.

“I’ll be back for you tonight,” Bucky cups your face, giving you a soft kiss.

“Bye James,” you reciprocate. “Read to me some more tonight, yeah?”

“Wouldn’t miss it for the world sweetheart.”

And with that, Bucky hopped off the bed and with the grace of a cat, slunk out of the open window and down the drainpipe outside.

“Hey,” you smile at Steve, which makes his heart warm.

“Hey you,” Steve replies, moving to the chair at the side of your bed. “Gee you gave us both such a fright there.”

“I know,” you went a bit quiet. “I didn’t…did I hurt anyone?”

“Oh I can take your punches,” Steve grins. “Been doing that most of my life when you taught me to fight.”

“I’m serious, Stevie,” you look at him with such innocent eyes. “Did I hurt anyone?”

“No, no you didn’t,” Steve reassures you, taking your hand and squeezing it. “You hurt yourself more than you hurt us.”

“Good,” you nod, some of the tension in your body evaporating. “I’d rather it be me than you guys.”

“Such a martyr complex,” Steve rolls his eyes. “That’s my job.”

“Both Captains now,” you smirk. “Can’t out-martyr me this time.”

“Just put this on,” Steve throws the package at you.

“What is it?”

“It’s your Liberty suit,” Steve explains. “Bucky raided the Hydra building to get your things. You’re gonna need it.”

“Why?” you ask.

“Press knows you’re awake so they’re outside. You’ll have to do some PR work since I’m only recently vindicated and all. Rumlow never tarnished your name,” Steve leans back. “People need something to believe in right now and that’s not me this time.”

“So I’m going solo?”

“Well are you a Captain or not?” Steve teases.
“You’re a jerk sometimes, you know that?” you narrow your eyes. “I hate speaking in public.”

“Learn quickly,” Steve smirks.

He turns around, waiting for you to get dressed and handing you various items to make yourself presentable like combs, make up that people had gifted you, perfume etc.

“Okay, how do I look?” you ask.

You were every bit the national icon you should be. You stood proud and tall, no indication that you’d nearly died or nearly bisected yourself and….well goddamn you were mighty pretty.

“Perfect,” he reassures you. “One more thing though.”

He gives you his shield.

“What about the Crown?” you ask.

“Too vicious,” Steve shakes his head. “That shield is a symbol of America and the defence of freedom. Your Crown is the symbol of our defiance.”

“Can’t I just go back to bed?” you shuffle uncomfortably.

“Missy, you’ll be fine,” Steve takes your hand, leading you out to the foyer. “I believe in you so go make sure they believe in you because god knows one of the Avengers needs to be in the public’s good graces.”

“Just so you know, I hate you right now,” you poke your tongue out before taking a deep breath.

Steve watched you walk outside to a chorus of applause and cheering.

It was unclear what would happen from here on out. Bucky wasn’t ready to rejoin society just yet so there was nothing Steve could do there except try and support him. Hydra was defeated and all parties responsible were arrested or had been killed….except Rumlow.

That one really bothered him.

Maybe he would make that his next mission because even though things were peaceful now, Rumlow still held the key to wiping both you and Bucky into a Winter Soldier team.

*I’ll protect you both. I promise. I always will.*

_____

Here is Missy in the suit at that PR stunt in the hospital. Thought it was about time to draw her fully suited up. Templates are a god send
Chapter End Notes

Welcome to the Age of Ultron arc i.e. What was Bucky doing all that time?
You felt like a complete fish out of water as the blare of lights popped off all around you. You’d never gotten used to it, even when you did the USO tour. The sound was just deafening as several
reporters shouted over others trying to get your attention.

_Come on, Missy, put on your big girl braces and be a leader._

“Thank you for coming everyone,” you shush them with your hands, Steve’s shield still clutched in one. “I feel so gosh darn peachy that you all came here to see if I was okay.”

That sent a ripple through the crowd of good natured laughter.

Goddamnit, if you had to speak in public, you’d play as much as you could on being ‘America’s sweetheart’.

“I know some of you want an explanation as to what happened, frankly so do I. The same threat I faced in 1943 had evolved, it had taken root in dark corners of American soil. I was kidnapped a few days ago, tortured, they tried to use me as a weapon. This didn’t happen. I broke free with the help of my lifelong friend Steve Rogers, the same Steve Rogers who was the subject of a propaganda smear campaign. Were it not for his bravery, we could not have brought down the cancer that lies in the heart of the government. So I guess…what I’m saying is, you can trust us. I don’t give two hoots who the top guy is. If you’re corrupt, if you’re not serving the will of the American people, if you’re trying to dismantle our freedom, then you and I have a problem pal.”

There’s a lot of whooping and you catch Bucky out of the corner of your eye, leaning inconspicuously against a street lamp in a grey hoody and jeans. He was smiling slightly at you and that gave you more confidence.

“Captain Liberty!” a woman bustles her way forward. “Does this mean you and Captain America are an item?”

“Oh, no,” you blush. “We’re best friends, Ma'am, Despite what the old posters say, we’ve always been two misfit kids from Brooklyn that always had each other’s backs.”

“Captain Liberty!” a man pipes up. “Can we trust any of the Avengers Initiative after this revelation?”

“Well you can trust me for a start,” you smile at him and he chuckles to himself. “You can trust me and Steve. You can trust everyone who gave their all in the Battle of New York. This rot didn’t start with them. It started higher up and I intend to rip it out, every last piece.”

You must have blinked longer than you thought because you didn’t spot Nick Fury until he was right next to you.

“That will be all the questions for today,” he announces, crossing his hands behind his back. “Captain Liberty is still recovering from having a helicarrier explode around her. Don’t wear her out too much.”

“You can’t tire out America’s darlin’!” one of the crowd shouts.

“Liberty! Liberty! Liberty!” a chant starts and you notice Bucky in the background trying not to laugh.

Even as an amnesiac ex-assassin he still remembered to be a jerk sometimes.

“Thank you, thank you,” you say magnanimously. “I’m gonna get back to the good doctors in this hospital. They told me I may be allowed some ice cream and Jello now. Can’t miss that.”
You wave cordially before walking back inside to see Steve just grinning at you from ear to ear.

“Who knew you were such a comedian, huh?” he laughs.

“Can it, Steve,” you scowl. “You know I ain’t so good with being all ladylike. That was torture.”

“Ahh come on, you were perfect out there,” Steve nudges you. “I bet they’ll want you for those talk show things by the evening.”

“Yeah well, I just want some more rest,” you stretch out, feeling your vertebrae popping. “All this prancing around tires a gal out. Using fancy language and stuff.”

“Get back in the bed,” Steve motions with his head. “Captain’s orders.”

“Oh take a powder! How many times do I have to say-”

“You’re so easy to wind up, Missy,” Steve ruffles your hair. “God love ya.”

He escorts you back to your hospital room, shielding you from the paparazzi that had made it into the building before he hands you some nicer nightwear to use. You’re immensely grateful, the standard issue hospital gown was kinda itchy.

“So Buck was out there huh?” Steve sighs.

“You saw?”

“No but I had an idea he might be. Idiot is gonna get himself caught,” Steve shakes his head, helping you back into the bed. “Why is he risking it?”

“I don’t know,” you shrug. “I just know him smiling at me helped me not sound like a total jackass out there.”

“Ah so he was supporting you,” Steve says knowingly. “Or he just liked you in the suit.”

“Maybe it brought back some memories, I don’t know,” you’re getting a bit curious as to why Steve is so annoyed about it. “What’s getting on your shoulder, Stevie?”

“Nothin’,” he says quickly, fluffing your pillow up. “Don’t think about it.”

“Well I am. What’s the matter? You don’t like talking to me any more since I went all….you know…Hail Hydra?”

“Oh god, no,” Steve waves his hands. “It’s not that I….I’m just not sure how to be around Bucky any more after…..after us.”

“Did you fall out?” you chew your lip. “Because I don’t want that, not because of something I did.”

“I think you’ll find I made the first move,” Steve blushes a little. “That’s why it’s awkward. I told him I kissed you, not that you kissed me.”

“Why would you do that?” you screw up your face in confusion. “I was just as responsible.”

“Bucky….he’s in a difficult place right now,” Steve sighs, perching on the bed with you. “He needs someone on his side. He needs someone familiar. I know you two are…rekindling what you had. I don’t wanna take that away from him when he’s just recovering. If I have to be the villain of his piece then I will be. I’ve been no stranger to that lately.”
“Stevie,” you say softly, taking his hand and squeezing it. “Neither me nor Buck deserve you.”

“Please don’t do that,” Steve hides his face. “I’m not perfect. I just wanna give my best friends a chance to be happy.”

“Even if that means you aren’t?” you press.

“I’ll get over it,” Steve still refuses to look at you. “I’d better go. I need to have a debrief with Director Fury. You looked good up there, Missy.”

“Would’ve looked better with my friend by my side,” you mutter as he gets up to go.

He seems like he wants to say something and stutters for a few seconds, “Give me time, Missy. This has all been a shock. One minute we’re having a normal life, the next Fury was dead, then you disappeared, then Bucky came back from the dead, then you were both captured, then Natasha kissed me, I nearly got nuked, I brought down three helicarriers and the girl I’ve been tryna get over for two years got re-engaged to my best pal. It’s not been a great few weeks.”

“Wait, you kissed Natasha??” you grin. “Damn Stevie, she’s quite the dame. You like your strong gals, huh?”

“Quit it, jerk,” Steve scowls at you, embarrassed.

“I’m sorry, I’m sorry,” you hold up your hands in apology. “I didn’t realise I’d messed with your head so much. I didn’t mean to.”

“It’s alright,” Steve gives you a small smile. “The situation was never perfect and it was never going to be perfect but just know that all I want for you is to be happy. You deserve it. Now I really have to be going.”

He takes a stride back to you, stopping a little uncertainly before doing what he’s always done and kissing your cheek politely before walking out.

You just lay there in the bed feeling like ten tonnes of shit in a nine pound potato sack. You’d never even factored in Steve’s feelings about the whole thing with Bucky. You just thought he’d accepted it since it’d been a while since your small fling.

God you were such a selfish asshole sometimes. You really needed to make it up to Steve sometime.

You may have drifted off sometime in the early afternoon, your mind overworking itself until you were exhausted.

**

Bucky did his usual thing of climbing into the towel supply closet through the rusted extractor fan opening.

No one ever saw him come in, no one ever saw him leave.

Sure he let the nurses see him when he visited you but he didn’t exactly want to sign in at the desk. Too many questions.
He found you dozing in some nightwear that triggered a memory of your teen selves. He’d climbed in through the window of your tenement block, up the fire escape because he’d had a bad day with a gal who’d left him.

You’d been asleep then in an oversized shirt that swallowed up your petite frame as it was back then and Bucky kept thinking how adorable you were and how much his protective instinct kept kicking in. He’d woken you up and spilled his emotional guts out about being afraid of never finding the right person to settle down with and you’d listened like the friend you were, never giving a hint that you liked him as something more and Bucky never showing an iota of the feelings he had for you.

How complicated it’d been in those early days and how simple it had become, all because Steve had intercepted that letter.

Steve.

He felt a pang still of betrayal that the man who was his best friend had made a move on his best gal. Bucky still didn’t remember much about Steve but there were flashes, scraps really, of memory where he’d relentlessly teased his pal about liking you. Maybe he shouldn’t have put the idea in his head.

*What does it matter you fucking idiot, she accepted your ring again. Even though she knows you’re broken.*

He climbed into the tiny bed with you, moulding his lumbersome frame around yours, content just to feel your body heat warming his skin. It felt good. It felt like home.

There had been many nights near the end of his former life when he’d done this with you and it was like muscle memory getting back into the position.

“Hey doll,” he says gently next to your ear and you stir, stretching out in cat like fashion before opening your eyes.

“Hey James,” you smile lazily. “Goddamn, did I sleep that long?”

“Being the nation’s darlin’ will do that to ya,” Bucky laughs softly. “You did so well, sweetheart. I’m proud of you.”

“Well, I had something good to focus on in the back,” you turn over, wrapping yourself around him.

“Tell me his name and I’ll kill him,” Bucky jokes.

For a moment he’s worried you’ve taken him seriously because you don’t respond. Maybe you thought he was still too much in the sway of the Winter Soldier.

“Hmmmm,” you muse. “I think his name was Clark Gable.”

“Doll, I swear I will spank you so hard your Daddy will rise from the grave just to beat my ass for doing it,” Bucky growls in your ear, nipping at the lobe slightly.

“Promises promises,” you laugh.

Bucky wished that didn’t sound so suggestive. If anyone walked in now he’d have a lot of awkward explaining to do.
How did my best gal turn out to be so naughty?” he sighs.

“You’ve always known that, Buck,” you smirk. “Now you’re getting a chance to see it.”

“I can’t wait to get you outta here,” Bucky kisses your forehead. “I wanna try living with you some place. I wanna do the done things we shoulda done the first time around rather than livin’ outta people’s barns and houses. The war was no place for us to be happy.”

“Us being together got me through that war,” you admit. “It was hard and leading the Commandos with Steve…it was not plain sailing.”

“Now we gotta chance for a new life,” Bucky says earnestly. “Missy, would you wanna live with me?”

“Of course I would, you mook,” you tap his chest. “What kinda question even is that?”

“I like to ask,” Bucky shrugs. “Feels right to.”

“Well Hydra didn’t take your chivalry away, huh?” you note.

“Only the best memories of you,” he replies seriously. “There are some events where I’m sure they were important but I only see it like I’m viewing it underwater. There was a night with stars where you were naked in the grass and I feel like that was such a big night but I can’t remember why and it’s driving me crazy.”

You blushed and Bucky suddenly felt bad that he’d made you embarrassed. Maybe it wasn’t a good memory and he’d just put his foot in it.

“Ah….I can tell you why,” you splutter. “That was the night I….became a woman shall we say?”

“Oh doll,” Bucky’s eyes go wide. “I’m so sorry for not remembering that. God I’m a fucking idiot.”

“Hey, no, James,” you take his stubbled chin in your hand. “I don’t blame you for having memory lapses or no memory at all. That’s not your fault. That’s Hydra’s. I mean, gee, I’m damn lucky to have kept all of mine from the sounds of it.”

“And what about the other things?” Bucky asks. “Like how is your body rebuilding?”

You laugh softly, “That’s very clinical, Buck. I’m alright. My waist feels a little stiff when I bend but my ribs have mostly repaired the fractures. I only have minor scarring too. I got lucky considering.”

Bucky can see that faint insecurity across your expression, like you’re afraid to show him so he takes his own initiative and lifts up the night gown, seeing for himself. There really isn’t much there to denote how badly you were injured but he bends his head anyway, kissing up the tiny silvering sliver of raised tissue, letting you know he found you beautiful no matter what.

“James, someone is gonna walk in here any second,” you get skittish.

“Let them,” Bucky shrugs. “I’m taking care of my gal.”

“James,” you say more urgently.

“Alright, sweetheart, alright,” Bucky grins, dipping down lower and placing one cheeky kiss to the inside of your thigh where you squeak with surprise and try to squirm away. “You can right
yourself now but don’t say you wouldn’t have wanted me to continue.”

“That’s not the damn point and you know it,” you snap, your cheeks a crazy shade of pink.

Bucky moves up to lie next to you again, leaning over and kissing your lips gently, “You’re so sweet when you’re shy. This little firecracker of a dame and she goes as red as a rose when I’m near.”

“You arrogant punk, James Barnes!” you open your mouth in mock horror.

“And that’s the way you like me,” Bucky winks.

**

You could almost forget that Bucky had been through any kind of torture the way he was being. Only the heavier muscles and the broader frame gave anything away that he was not the same man you’d loved in the war. Of course the arm too but you didn’t give a rat’s ass about that which he seemed to be very surprised by a lot.

“Oh yeah? And how do you like me then?” you challenge him.

“Just the way you are, doll,” Bucky smiles warmly at you.

You knew in that instant that Steve was right. Not addressing what had happened between you and Steve was better for Bucky, giving him a sense of normality was better. He was responding better than you’d hoped and had recovered more of himself than you’d hoped. Right now you just needed to be the couple you were in the 1940s.

“Charmer,” you frown.

“Hey, I didn’t get my skills at pleasing ladies from being a choir boy,” Bucky cocks an eyebrow. “And I know you enjoy them.”

“Don’t remind me,” you groan. “Your flavours of the week became a running joke.”

“Don’t be like that, Missy,” he tickles your side. “You know it was just a cover up because I didn’t think you’d like me that way.”

“And wasn’t that just a scream when you found out I did?” you stick your tongue out.

“God, I just wanna get you out of here so badly,” Bucky presses his head against yours.

“One more night and I’m all yours,” you smile.

“Amen,” Bucky holds you tightly, almost possessively in how his fingers dug into your skin.

A doctor came in, clipboard at the ready and seemed surprised at the sight of Bucky with you.

“Ah, there shouldn’t be any visitors after eight, sir,” the doctor says a bit sternly.

“Sorry,” Bucky apologises quietly. “I didn’t realise how late it was.”
He gets up and there’s this odd tension between the two that you just can’t figure out why. The doctor stands very stiffly, almost like the coat is too ill fitting to be comfortable. I mean you know lots of people are bodybuilders and such in their spare time these days but for a doctor he was awfully well built.

“I’ll pick you up tomorrow, sweetheart,” Bucky says in almost a murmur as he skirts the doctor before going out of the door.

You know something’s up when the doctor turns around and locks the door.

When you spring up, he produces a gun from his coat, firing quickly at you. You anticipated it coming though, leaping to the side whilst your abdomen growled in protest at the sudden strain.

“Come back Virtue,” the doctor sheds the coat, revealing a tactical vest and combat knives. “Come back or we’ll eliminate you.”

“Your bosses are toast,” you snarl back. “There’s no one left to take orders from, jerkwad.”

“Cut one head off-”

“Yeah yeah, heard it before. Didn’t scare me seventy years ago either,” you lunge at him, taking his legs out but he manages to curl his body to sock you in the jaw.

The door bursts open, flying off the hinge as the sheer force that is Bucky bulldozed through with murder in his eyes. He obviously hadn’t gone very far, the inkling of something being off must’ve made him stay nearby.

What you saw wasn’t Bucky though, what came through the doorway was the Winter Soldier and he was angry.

“There are no orders for you Asset,” the Hydra agent states. “Just her. If she’d just kept her mouth shut and not blabbed all over the news we might have let you live in harmony for a little while before bringing you both back in.”

“Bold to assume you could,” Bucky says in that dangerous tone, the one devoid of emotions.

You thought you were vicious but seeing him at work with the agent when he wasn’t restraining himself….damn he scared you.

The blows that hammered down on the guy’s body, the metal arm breaking bones as it shattered through the skin. The sound was awful. Bucky didn’t let up, hitting again and again to shut him up before he drew further attention to the room until the agent just didn’t….get up again.

The window shatters behind you as a cylindrical object bounces on the cold linoleum for a moment. You know exactly what it is.

“Bucky run!” you urge. “Bomb!”

You sprint with him, him grabbing your hand to pull you along faster. Your legs almost fell out from under you with how quickly you fled down the corridor until…

BOOM!

You’re thrown forward with the impact of the bomb, slamming into a medical gurney and bouncing against the wall before sprawling in a heap with mattresses and towels raining down on
“Missy!” Bucky pulls you from under the pile, his hair slightly singed on the ends.

“I’m okay,” you assure him, wobbling slightly as you stand upright. “God-damn-fuckin’-shit they ain’t quitting.”

“We need to go,” Bucky says seriously, his eyebrows knitting together as he continually scans the long corridor.

“Don’t tell me twice,” you nod. “I’m not having anyone else in this hospital getting hurt. I’ll make a big distraction and go out the front so they follow me. You find us a car or a bike or something. We’re gonna need to run and run fast and far.”

“Yes, Sergeant,” Bucky defaults to your old title, a small reminder that his memories are flooding back further.

“Captain to you, Sergeant,” you manage a wink before you hear the sound of heavy footfall heading your way. “Now go.”

“Be safe,” Bucky growls, kissing you passionately. “Be safe or goddamnit I will kill everyone around me to keep you safe.”

“James, be Bucky Barnes, not the Asset,” you say firmly. “Don’t let them revert you into what they made you.”

He startles for a second before nodding solemnly, “It’s hard to shake it. Killing is the only way I know how to deal with things now.”


You give him a push that becomes more of a shove as he seems reluctant to move until you start shouting loudly as you hare down the central lobby.

“Come get me you fucking bastards! Fuck Hydra!”

You may have underestimated just how many agents there were in the building as you hit the reception where they seem to pour from every hallway.

Well holy hell, they must have been casing you for a long time to manage this many forces.

When you see the nurse that’d taken care of you, letting Steve and Bucky stay as long as they liked in a dark uniform, you got mad. You got so mad.

“Never trust anyone huh?” you hiss as you shoulder barge her with such force that she skids on the floor, smacking her head on the skirting board.

More shots ring out and you have to duck and dodge, skating along the polished ground as someone, who you presume is in charge, screams at the other agents.

“Take her alive, not dead!”

“Good luck with that,” you snarl, grabbing an IV drip and smacking a soldier in the head where you hear the crack.

God, what you wouldn’t give to have the Liberty Crown again, wherever that was….
You just needed a clear line to the door and you made a bolt for it, barging through the glass doors where you feel tiny shards biting at your skin as you stumble into the street. Pedestrians around you shrieked, some scattering.

Good, you needed them to get out of harm’s way.

“Come on, Buck,” you mutter to yourself. “Hurry up!”

You take off down the street the second you see agents pouring out of the hospital doors. You couldn’t just stand there like a sitting duck.

The rev of a motorcycle comes baring down on you and for one second you think Hydra’ll capture you after all. Then you see the glint of stretched out metal and know it’s Bucky.

He pulls alongside you, not stopping as he deftly grabs you by the scruff of the night gown and pulls you onto the bike, the cold breeze hitting the skin that was exposed momentarily.

“Quite a view, darlin’,” Bucky laughs as he gives it more torque, winding down some backalleys to throw off the scent.

“Asshole, James Barnes!” you spit as you wrench the nightdress down. “You just showed my damn ass to half of New York!”

“Ah don’t be such a wet blanket, Missy,” Bucky rests his head on your shoulder as he races along. “They can look but they can’t touch.”

“If I end up on the morning news, I swear….” you grumble.

“Thank you for saving my life, Bucky. You’re my hero Bucky, I’m gonna kiss you all night Bucky,” he says in a mocking voice.

“You think you’re getting any after that?” you sass. “You’ve got another thing com-”

You don’t get the last word out because there’s a volley of gunfire from behind you. You would’ve been hit had Bucky not jerked up his metal arm to stop the bullet. It pinged off with a tiny clank before Bucky sped up, trying to put some distance between the approaching Hydra convoy and yourselves.

“Left pocket, pistol,” Bucky instructs you.

You manage to somehow turn yourself to face him, all thoughts of modesty and elegance out of the window as you searched his pockets, fingers closing on the gun. Then you leaned around Bucky, almost hugging his broad frame as you rested your chin on his shoulder to see behind him better, your arms encircling him for a better grip.

You make your first shot at the pursing vehicle, the bullet punching into the bonnet but seems you didn’t manage to do a lot.

“Come on, Vera. That was poor, even for you,” Bucky tries to make you focus.

“Can it, Buck!” you growl in his ear. “It’s been a mighty long time since I fired one. Gimme some slack.”

The next bullet you concentrate more, sending it into the tyre where the rubber shreds itself to pieces, causing the vehicle to swerve into a fire hydrant.
“More like it!” Bucky crows.

True to his word, he was trying to be more Bucky than the Winter Soldier right now and you were immensely grateful. His encouragement was spurring you on and you managed to flip over one of the SUVs chasing you with two well placed shots.

“Hold on, I’m gonna go down some tight corners and it may get bumpy,” Bucky warns you.

You turn around to see that he was heading straight to a subway station.

“Are you fucking crazy?!” you scream. “We’ll be sitting ducks down there!”

“Trust me,” he half whispers.

You grip onto the back of his hoody as you drive down the stairs, motorcycle bouncing on the steps and people yelling as they jump to the side. When you hit the bottom, Bucky rears it up and skids before pushing off on the floor to give the bike height as you fall onto the tracks, speeding down the tunnel.

“Fuck, James! What are you doing?!” you’re almost carving grooves into his back with how tightly you’re holding on as you can see the train gaining on your little motorcycle.

“Trust meeeeee,” he says in a sing song voice.

He jerks the bike around so you’re horizontal across the tracks before launching it at a door where maintenance work takes place. You end up being dragged off the motorcycle, still wrapped around Bucky as he stands up, placing you gently down.

“Now let’s get up the shaft. I scoped out some more safehouses while you were in hospital so they’re not on Hydra’s radar.”

“I can’t go inconspicuously looking like this,” you gesture to your nightie. “I look like ol’ Mrs Bernstein.”

“Who’s that?” Bucky says puzzled, pulling equipment out of the storage area of the bike.

“She was my neighbour,” you fill in the blanks. “When we were kids. You used to make fun of her nightgowns because they looked like curtains.”

Bucky sighs heavily, “I wish I could remember properly. Feels like you’re telling me about someone else’s life.”

“Let’s just go,” you tug at his arm. “I’ll figure out the clothing problem later.”

“I have cash stored in the place we’re going. We can get you new clothes without leaving a trace,” Bucky informs you, giving you a leg up to grab the ladder back to the surface.

“Sounds good,” you strain, pulling yourself up.

“Although I am gonna miss this view,” Bucky snorts, looking up your dress at your bare flesh underneath.

“Such a gentleman,” you groan, making your way up.

For the most part, you stuck to back alleys and cutting across the rooftops. You didn’t come across a single agent. Maybe they assumed you’d been flattened by the subway train.
“It’s here,” Bucky kicks open the door at the top of a tenement block, leading you down two flights of stairs before using a key to open the door.

It was much more well laid out than the last place and actually looked liveable.

“Waiting for renovation from the landlord,” he explains. “Rest up. I’m going back out to get you something more appropriate to wear.”

“James, just be safe,” you cup his cheek. “Please.”

“Always will do, doll,” Bucky kisses you softly. “No way am I leaving my best gal all alone in the world again.”

“You’d better not,” you tap his nose.

“I’ll even get you that chocolate you like, how about that?” he flashes you one of those Bucky trademark sloppy grins.

“Now you’re just charmin’ a gal,” you laugh. “Get out. I need to have a sit down. My legs are all wobbly again.”

“Be back soon,” Bucky nods before disappearing.

You sit down on the couch, flipping the TV on and see that you were headline news.

Oh shit.

This wasn’t going to do much for your public image.

You were clearly filmed in the hospital lobby punching what seemed like a bunch of nurses and doctors before escaping with Bucky. Hydra had edited the footage so their agents weren’t in combat gear. For all the world, it looked like you’d gone plum dog crazy.

“God-fuckin’-damnit!” you swear, your hands curled around the back of your neck as you watched on.

Bucky was flashed up as a wanted man and now you were terrified he would be spotted on his little clothes mission.

“No no no no….” you mouth as the newscaster was suggesting you were still very much in Hydra’s sway.

“- She’s considered a menace to society. Do not approach. Do not engage. Both individuals are extremely dangerous.”

How the hell could this be happening?!
Bucky was in a street market when he caught a glimpse of a small TV behind a fruit stall.

Ah fuck.

His face was splashed all over the screen and he bowed his head automatically, hoping the hoodie and baseball cap would hide him. Then he saw your face appear and watched the doctored footage of the hospital fight and the hatred that he’d buried of what was done to him rose to the fore as it was mingled with the hatred of what they had done to you.

You needed to leave America. That much was certain.

No matter where you went in the US you were a recognisable figure. Maybe in Europe you would not be so much.

How to get there though….

He still had contacts that weren’t Hydra loyal. He could lean on them for travel arrangements, pretend at being the Winter Soldier again to achieve the goal.
“Hey, you look familiar,” the vendor squints.

“I get that all the time,” Bucky says quickly, giving a fake smile before buying some strawberries and plums which seems to placate the guy.

He walked away quickly, a list in his head of things to get, deftly nipping in and out of stores for the essentials. He paid cash, no trace and kept things in a backpack for ease and to keep his hands free.

When he got three blocks from the hideout, he knew he was being followed. He’d been doing this long enough to develop that sense of someone watching you, matching your pace.

Bucky patted his hoodie, feeling the reassurance of the gun hidden inside before using his experience to fade into a large crowd ahead, blending into a bunch of sports fans before heading into a bar and straight out the back, jumping up the fire escape and climbing to the roof as an extra measure.

After leaping across several buildings, he felt it was safe enough to get to you again. Nobody seemed to have trailed him perfectly. He could actually see the hapless agent a couple of streets away checking an alley.

*No wonder they needed super soldiers. Their only strength is in numbers.*

His arrogance got the better of him when he hit the ground in some narrow and got jumped by one of Rumlow’s ultra keen strike squad.

“You’re getting old and slow, Asset,” the agent smirks.

“Don’t call me that,” Bucky growls, feeling the plates of his arm whirring into place as he tenses.

“It’s what you are. Don’t try to run from it because we will find you. We’ll find your girlfriend too.”

“I don’t think you will,” Bucky draws the gun shooting the agent but the guy ducks in time, the bullet only a grazing shot against the throat.

“It should have been *me* that became the Virtue,” the agent stifles the flow of blood with a quickly wrapped handkerchief square. “But instead your fucking broad gets centre stage as the pride of Hydra. I should just kill you both.”

Bucky snapped, his metal arm shooting out and grabbing the guy by the wrist, crushing the bones to little more than powder before he lifts him up in the air, his other hand coming to snatch around his throat.

“Don’t you ever call Missy a ‘broad’ you pathetic little boot licker,” Bucky snarls. “You never got far because you’re weak. You’re weak and you don’t get the job done. Sure you surprised me but now look at you. Fucking. Useless. I’m gonna take all you Hydra bastards out and I will have a goddamn smile on my face when I do.”

The guy didn’t expect Bucky to switch arms and snap his spine. In fact, Bucky would say it was a few seconds before the agent realised what had happened, the eyes blowing wide, the whisper of protest on his lips before the light dimmed.

He got a ceremonial tossing in the dumpster nearby.
Hydra were never going to take him back. They were never going to take you back either. Bucky would rather die than let that happen.

**

You’d been pacing up and down for an hour, wondering where the heck Bucky was.

Ever since the news report, you’d almost bitten your fingernails down to the quick, debating with yourself whether to go out and look for him or trust that he would be okay. I mean he was an enhanced assassin after all, you should expect that he could take of himself but…

That’s when he was the Winter Soldier. You don’t know how bad his psyche as the recently rediscovered Bucky was. It could mean he wasn’t as deadly, it could mean he had a flashback at the wrong time.

Shit on a cracker, what should you do?

The door opening made you jump and you grabbed a nearby candlestick, ready to take on whatever came through.

“Woah, doll. Just me,” Bucky hesitates before walking in.

“Oh thank god,” you breathe, hugging him tightly so he ends up dropping his backpack. “I was so worried. I saw the news and-”

“Yeah me too. Missy, I’m so sorry you got dragged into this. You didn’t deserve having your name pulled through the mud.”

“My reputation?” you snort. “I don’t give two hoots, Buck. What I care about is everyone staying alive.”

“And we’re gonna do just that,” Bucky nods before bending down and pulling a box from his backpack. “But we’re gonna get outta the country first. Now…Vera....”

“Well gee, it must be bad if you’re calling me Vera,” you quirk up an eyebrow. “What is it?”

“Doll,” he starts, fiddling for what to say. “You’re one a’ the most recognisable dames in the world and one of things that people notice is…the hair.”

“That’s hair dye, ain’t it?” you point. “Is it nice at least? You’re not making me a blonde Barbie are you?”

“I would never dare,” Bucky laughs. “Sides, I ain’t so into blondes. Now Redheads…ah Missy, I’m so sorry to ask this of you but-”

“But I need to,” you nod. “Let’s get it done whilst I still have the nerve.”

**
Thirty minutes later you were a brunette, deep chocolate locks where the red still desperately tried to cling to the strands.

“Ah gee,” you look at your reflection. “What a change, huh?”

“You’re beautiful,” Bucky says immediately. “You got a touch of Ava Gardner now.”

“As if,” you snort. “Don’t stray from charming me to lying to me, James.”

“I swear to God, you are still the most dazzling thing in my life. Cross my heart,” he gives this goofy grin that very much reminds you of the old days. “I’ve never lied to you, darlin’.”

“I just…..it’s all a bit much,” you admit. “Yesterday I was giving a goddamn press conference looking like the American dream and now I don’t even recognise myself in the mirror.”

“And you think I do?” he points out. “While you were recovering I went to the Smithsonian. I saw my exhibits. I mean, I’m not this lithe punk kid any more with the clean cut spats. Now I’m….well I don’t know.”

“Rugged?” you venture. “I kinda like the facial hair.”

“Oh you do, huh?” he smiles shyly. “Well I’ll keep it then. Just know I find you goddamn gorgeous whatever colour your hair is.”

You turn around, wrapping your arms around his neck and kiss him gently. He responds in kind by dipping you like the movies, that cocky grin at the edge of his lips before he brings you back up into a soft embrace.

“I always knew something in my life was missing, when I was the Asset I mean. You make me feel whole, doll. I promise I will protect you.”

“I know you will, Buck,” you nod. “I need to get a message to Steve, tell him what’s going on.”

“No,” comes the growl. “It’ll lead Hydra straight here.”

“We’re leaving anyway right? What does it matter? Let them come here. We’ll be long gone.”

“You’re placing a lot of faith that I’ll get us out.”

“I always place my faith in you,” you wink. “You should know that by now. Start the plans. I’ll call just before we leave.”

**

Bucky had everything set in place although he was nervous about this phone call.

He knew you would never be dissuaded from what you wanted to do. You were pig stubborn about things but he also knew he would have mere minutes to get you out once the call was made. He didn’t like that margin.

“It’s time,” he sighs, everything strapped to his body, his hair swept back into a small ponytail to keep his eyes clear.
“Alrighty,” you nod, clad in regular jeans and some slouchy sweatshirt with pull on boots.

You looked like an average all American girl and that’s exactly what Bucky needed. He might stick out like a sore thumb because of his broadness but you would just blend right in. Maybe you could look like a mismatched couple of the stereotypical Starbucks obsessive with the biker boyfriend.

*Remember those days where -I- was the slick one with my suits and pressed trousers and you were the tomboy with your overalls and hair in twists? My little grease doll.*

More and more of his memories were flooding back, like watching a stuttered film reel. It just further cemented his love for you every time one flashed in his mind but it also made him angry.

It was unfair that all the time you’d had after revealing your feelings for one another was spent on the frontline. It was unfair that for seventy years you were kept apart, you thinking he was dead and him forgetting you existed. It was unfair now that the time you should be spending reconnecting and being a regular couple was being stolen from you again by Hydra, forcing you to go on the run.

Nothing’s fair.

“Steve, look, I don’t have much time,” you began and every muscle in Bucky’s body coiled. “Yes I’m okay. No….no that wasn’t me. It was Hydra. Yeah. Woah, just calm down, Stevie! I have Bucky with me. We’re going away and I don’t know how long for but we’re not safe here. I just didn’t want to leave you in the lurch.”

Bucky motions for you to wrap it up, conscious of how much time has passed.

“I gotta go, Steve. No…Steve, STEVE, I have to go. I’ve spent too much time on the phone. Good bye, stay safe, y’hear?” you finish up before clicking off.

“Let’s go. Now,” Bucky immediately drags you out, almost sprinting down the fire escape outside before leaping the last few levels and landing lightly on his feet.

You followed quickly, getting on the bike he’d arranged, speeding off towards the agreed point. He kept to the speed limit but didn’t take any majorly trafficked streets. Still he caught the SUV out of the corner of his eye, keeping a respectable distance, just following.

Ah shit. They’d tracked him quicker than he would’ve liked. That window of escape was rapidly getting smaller and he needed to do something pretty darn soon.

“We got company again,” he shouts in your ear.

“Goddamnit,” you hiss. “What’s the plan? Like before?”

“Hold on and don’t let go,” Bucky warns you before revving the engine and taking off, pelting down the pavement and causing pedestrians to leap out of the way.

He had to get to the airfield by any means necessary. The second they were in the air, it made it immensely difficult for Hydra to follow. The plane wasn’t on any charter, he’d made sure of it. He and the pilot were the only ones who knew the destination.

Weaving in and out of the parks scattering the blocks, he lost sight of the SUV but he didn’t take that as being safe. He still kept up the erratic driving pattern occasionally stealing glances at your grim expression.
He knew from the way your mouth was turned you felt guilty. Maybe you blamed yourself that they’d found you so quickly.

“Stop overthinking, dollface,” he nudges you with his elbow. “Nearly there.”

You got to the airfield, skidding onto the runway as the cargo plane sat idling. Bucky felt like he could finally relax a little until bullets started spraying from the direction of the hangar.

“It’s a machine gun!” you yell.

They must have worked out where you were headed and sent some scouts ahead. He looks forward, judging the distance before revving the engine again, using the tiny comm system stuck in his ear.

“Start down the runway…..yes I’m sure…we’ll catch up.”

You turn around, a startled look on your face, “Are you wacky?!?”

“Do you trust me, Missy?”

“Oh god,” you groan, gripping the handlebars for dear life. “I swear you and Steve are tryna kill me with heights.”

That was right. You hated heights and here Bucky was making you do a leap into a flying plane. Well you had to face your fears sometime.

The plane was already picking up speed, getting further away but the cargo hold ramp was still down about five inches off the tarmac. Bucky took advantage of the Hydra agents reloading to push the bike to its maximum speed, gaining on the sprinting jet.

Another hail of bullets was trailing behind him, a couple striking him in his metallic arm but he kept it in front of your body at all times, acting as your shield. He didn’t give a fuck if he got hurt. Keeping you alive was all that mattered, even if he didn’t make it.

“Jesus H Christ!” you squeak as the bike levels with the ramp and Bucky rears it up so the wheel lands on it. “Bucky, they have a bazooka!”

He sees it, sees them readying the rocket and he knows if they hit the mark, you’re all dead. He feels you reach into his jacket, pulling out the pistol and dead eye shooting the agent in the head.

“Oh gee,” you blink. “I hit him! I’m getting good at this!”

“I’ll give ya a victory kiss when we get on the plane,” Bucky forces you to look ahead. “Now hang on tight. I’ve never done this before.”

He gives it full power, the front wheel edging further forward as the end of the runway is fast approaching in the distance. With one jerk of his body, the back wheel rises up and drops onto the ramp.

“Lift it up!” he yells into the comm link.

The ramp bucked up, sending the bike hurtling into the cargo hold and scattering you both into it as that familiar heavy sensation in Bucky’s stomach settled, signalling you were in the air. You just both lay there for a while, sprawled on the cold floor before you burst into nervous giggles.

“Wowee, we made it,” you laugh.
“Told you you can trust me,” Bucky winks, panting and trying to regain his breath.

“So…. where’s our lovely vacation destination?”

“Oh… just somewhere quiet, out of the way, we’ve been there once,” he says with a lopsided smirk.

“Tell me, you jerk!” you fake hit him.

“Nitra, Slovakia” he relents. “Back to a lil’ old house, in the country where we saw stars.”
Chapter Summary

You and Bucky are fugitives on the run in Europe. Can you just catch a break for once?

Chapter Notes

Sorry for the delay guys! Been away in Germany for a bit so normal fics have gone by the wayside

Chapter Warnings: Smut, Angst

Happy reading!

- TLP xx
  (Proof reading errors very likely. Not sleeping well lately)

When you touched down in Slovakia, you were half expecting a fight on the other end but all you saw was an empty runway.

“Expecting company?” Bucky says knowingly.

“Yeah.”

“Have more faith in me, doll,” he smirks at you before grabbing some bags from the back of the cargo hold and slinging them over his body. “I can work an escape at short notice.”

“I know, I’m just….Hydra’s been on our ass for so long…”

“You think they’re on every corner, huh? That’s a smart thing to think Missy. They have agents in
every country in the world.”

“I just want maybe a month of peace,” you sigh, pulling on a coat he gives you.

“I know, I know,” he gives you a slightly tortured look. “I hope we’ll be safe for a while. I’m sure Steve will do what he can.”

“You’re remembering?” you ask, knowing he was still patchy on a lot of things about his friendship with Steve.

“No much,” he admits, shaking his shaggy hair out of his eyes. “But he’s a good man, I can tell that much. He won’t let you be a fugitive.”

“You’re right,” you nod. “Nor will he give up on you.”

“I wish I knew what I did that he’s so hell bent on saving me,” Bucky mutters, directing you into a military vehicle and setting off driving.

“You died for him technically,” you murmur quietly as he suddenly pulls over to the side of the road.

“I…..died? Hydra found me though.”

“To us, you died. That was the worst day of my life, Bucky,” you gaze out at the Slovakian landscape.

“I remember a train….” he stiffens in the seat. “I remember…..I remember you. You were screaming for me, you almost fell too.”

“I would’ve done if Steve hadn’t caught me,” you try to push back that memory. “And it wouldn’t have mattered.”

“You can’t say that,” he says harshly. “If you would’ve fallen you might not have survived or we’d both be Hydra agents.”

“Aren’t we already?” you sigh. “All it is gonna take is some words spoken to me and everything that’s me stops. I’m a walking time bomb.”

“I know, doll. Me too,” Bucky leans his head back against the rest. “And it haunts me. To know they stole so much of my life but it was good Steve caught you. I wouldn’t want you to have lost seventy years being a killer like me. I would never want that for you.”

“Did you know what I did after you died? How I got into this year without ageing?”

“You crashed Schmidt’s plane into the ocean and froze,” Bucky parrots, obviously having read your file when he was the Winter Soldier.

“I volunteered for that,” you admit. “I didn’t see much point carrying on without you and I told Steve to go but the stubborn ass didn’t.”

“Oh Missy,” Bucky reaches across and fiercely holds you. “I can’t believe I never knew you loved me like this. I was such a fool.”

“Yes you were,” you smile softly. “But it doesn’t matter now. All these choices, all these things that keep happening to us, they brought us together again in the end.”
He starts the car again, speeding down a country road, “It did but I wish I was the same guy I was then and not…..damaged.”

“I told you, Buck, I don’t care about your damn arm,” you scold. “Although your ass got nicer actually.”

He bursts out laughing, the sound rather hoarse from years of under use as it almost turns into a hacking cough, “You sure are a special dame, you know that right?”

“I like to term it as progressive,” you grin. “They got women’s rights and feminism now. I was just ahead of the curve.”

He says nothing to that but chuckles to himself before he really concentrates on getting you to the safehouse.

**

It hadn’t changed much in seventy odd years.

There were some modern appliances still but seemed the occupants had long since left, a thick layer of dust coating the surfaces and cobwebs spanning the corners of the ceiling. The carpets were worn and faded, the once ornate pattern now trodden in by years and years of wandering feet. The curtains were sun stained, disintegrating into threadbare fabric.

“Looks better without the dead body this time,” you comment.

Bucky goes ram rod straight like something’s flooding back before he turns to you with wide eyes, “That’s right. You killed the last guy in here who sold us out. I remember being worried for you.”

“Both you and Steve yeah,” you nod. “You thought I was too cold in how I did it.”

“Guess that role has reversed,” Bucky says softly. “Now I’m the one you have to pull back from the brink all the time.”

“We help each other out, we support each other. That’s what we do,” you say firmly, lifting his chin where he’d been staring at the floor. “That’s what couples do.”

“Couple,” he repeats the word like it’s foreign. “Think we can kidnap a priest and make it so I can call you wife yet?”

“James,” you admonish, one eyebrow raised. “You can’t kidnap a priest.”

“Why not?” he shrugs.

“Because that’s wrong? I ain’t the most pure gal out there but I know God won’t be too happy if we do that.”

“Missy, there is no God,” Bucky says seriously. “But if that’s the only way I get to call you wife than I will do what I can.”
“You could just *ask* a priest,” you roll your eyes.

“Oh,” he falters. “Yeah….yeah I could.”

It scared you a little that his first instinct was still to go to the violent option but that’s all he’d known for years. You knew you’d literally have to retrain how he thought to bring him back to the man you once knew

“It’s alright,” you assure him. “It’s gonna take a mighty long time to undo what they did to you and to me. I’m a patient woman.”

Bucky snorts heavily, “That’s bullshit, sweetheart and you know it.”

“Fine, I’m patient with you,” you clarify, socking him in the arm. “Jerk.”

“Oh you ain’t getting away with that, young lady,” a mischievous grin spreads across his face, the old accent returning stronger than ever before he grabs you, picking you up and carrying you upstairs.

You were surprised to see the four poster bed was still there, largely intact but for a few holes in the curtains and he placed you on the mattress, the bed bowing under his weight as he climbed in next to you.

“Now?” you question. “Isn’t there some recon you wanna do? Check all the closets for monsters?”

“No,” he answers. “No, I just wanna be with my best gal right now. Is that so bad?”

“Oh heck no,” you pull him on top of you. “We have a lot of catching up to do.”

“I’m such a lucky son of a gun,” he smirks before tugging off your clothing quickly, very eager in his movements.

He strips himself straight after and you see the horrific scarring, shadowed in the faint light from the window. It always broke your heart to see what had happened to him since the fall. You just wanted to make every promise that you’d keep him safe, that you’d love him always.

“Doll, you’re staring,” he gets shy. “Is it that bad?”

“No, Buck, it’s not,” you lean up, kissing across his chest and where the metal arm joins his torso. “I love you.”

“I love you too, Missy,” his eyes flutter closed. “Please don’t ever give up on me, even when I’m not me.”

“I would never,” you say earnestly. “I never have and I never will and you’re two rations short of a tin box if you think I would.”

You draw him into a kiss that’s laden with history, a kiss that’s laced with sorrow and heartbreak and kernels of hope. Here in this place, you could pretend none of the last couple of years had happened, that you were never frozen, that you were just still fighting the war and you’d return to Brooklyn and start a family like he suggested to you.

Guess that could still never happen because Hydra was still after you.

“Doll, stop overthinking,” Bucky strokes your hair. “I can see you doing it. Just relax and let’s enjoy this time, let’s enjoy each other.”
Having him close to you again was magnetic. Your last time was so confusing and full of that kind
of animal raw need but now you could take your time and discover who both of you were again.

He was slow with you, meticulous in how his tongue explored your body, tracing all the scars and
the burns, the silvering skin. He always had a knack of making you feel beautiful, even when you
didn’t see it yourself.

“I need you,” he whispers against your ear. “God I have needed you, Missy. Ever since I started
remembering, all I wanna do is be close to you.”

“Then hurry up, you punk,” you laugh softly. “Before we get swamped by Hydra again or
something. I ain’t facing them in my birthday suit.”

He chuckles and you can feel the brush of his overgrown stubble as he does so. Bucky attempts to
delve his hand in between your thighs but you brush him off.

“Just make love to me, James. That’s all I want,” you look into his eyes, so full of expression.

“How can I refuse an order from my captain?” the familiar Barnes smirk crosses his lips.

He settles himself in between your legs, slowly easing into you so you can get used to him. Since
being made into the Winter Soldier, his muscles weren’t the only thing that had enhanced and it
took you a while before the stuttered gasps became open moans.

“Shit, Missy,” he hisses, fully seated in you. “This is my home, right here with you, no matter
where we are.”

That was Bucky for you. Romantic to a fault.

“Buck, please,” you urge him.

The languid roll of his hips all but has you clawing at his arms for stability. Bucky may have been
brainwashed into an assassin but he hadn’t forgotten any of his old skills.

“Come on, doll, let a guy hear your appreciation,” he grins, nipping at your neck as you groan
loudly.

No one was around for miles so why not?

“Show off,” you manage to get out.

“Gotta impress my gal,” he grunts, driving deep into you and you’re almost shouting now. “But not
that loud, huh? Don’t wanna alert any neighbours”

“Shut me up then,” you challenge him and he happily obliges by giving you a sloppy kiss as he
continues to just rock slow and deep.

You can tell he’s getting close when his speed picks up, when he grips under your thighs to hike
them higher, when the movements get more primal. The raw need is taking over again, a need to
claim each other as just James and Vera, Bucky and Missy….the Barnes’.

You feel the twitch as he pushes as hard as he can go, muscles coiled, forehead pressed against
yours as he finds release.

“I love you,” he whispers. “I’m sorry, I got carried away. Shit, a baby right now would be the
worst thing.”

“Hey,” Bucky holds your face in his hands. “I won’t let Hydra achieve that goal. I promise you.”

“They got little pills that stop that kind of thing now,” you stroke his hair back. “If I get one tomorrow then everything will be fine.”

“I’ll get it,” Bucky scowls, moving off you and drawing you into his chest. “You don’t need to get spotted.”

“I’m the least recognisable one right now,” you roll your eyes.

“No arguments, Missy,” he holds you tighter. “I’d die if I lost you.”

“And I just what…would be peachy?”

“You’ve got Steve.”

“Don’t bring that back up again,” you wince.

“It ain’t like that, don’t mistake me, doll,” Bucky kisses your hair. “I was mad at first but I understand and I understand if I died, he’d take care of you like he has been doing and you got my full permission. Just don’t date some low rent jerk off from Queens or somethin’.”

“This is a wacky conversation,” you bury your face into his chest.

“I just want you to be prepared,” he says seriously. “We weren’t prepared the last time.”

“Nothing could’ve prepared us for that,” you murmur. “Bullets, bombs, landmines sure…not that and for the record, if I die, you’re not allowed to date anyone ever again.”

He looks down at your face before you can’t keep the laughter in any more and he finally breaks his serious disposition.

“Fine,” you acquiesce. “But you’ll have to get me some of those Godiva chocolates if they got them.”

“You and chocolate,” he rolls his eyes. “Not like I can steal more off Pinkerton.”

“You remembered,” you smile.

“Yeah I remember that night,” he muses. “I miss those guys.”

“Me too,” you nod.

“Let’s get some rest, darlin’,” he shakes the dust out of the cover and throws it over you both. “We’ll figure out what to do with our lives tomorrow.”

**

Bucky felt silly buying a morning after pill at the pharmacy, getting a reproachful look from the chemist as he carried on in his broken Slovak. In fact, the chemist started rebuking him, throwing a bunch of condoms his way and making him swear never to be so reckless again.
Yeah well…maybe some part of me wanted to have a kid…wanted to have the life I was promised with her but we never can. Our family will always be two unless Hydra is eradicated.

He gives his thanks, stowing the items away before moving on to the grocery store because he was sure you’d give him an earful if he forgot your chocolate. Not that it wouldn’t be sweet to see because when you got angry you were adorable.

When he’s paying, he catches shifting movement from the corner of his eye and automatically the baseball cap gets pulled down further, all his hair swept up into it to give the illusion of short hair. Maybe he was being paranoid and seeing things but he wanted to be on guard in case his gut instinct was right.

Bucky ducked into an off licence, under the pretence of choosing some vodka but he saw the same build, the same figure at the edge of his vision. He walked out and quickly made for the treeline in the park, scampering up the rocks and up into the branches, just waiting.

He heard the heavy footsteps, the unsure pursuit, the crunch of twigs. Evidently this was not a well practised tracker. Whoever it was was clumsy.

Then Bucky saw him, the hooded figure, tall and broad but not as broad as him. Military for sure but not as hardy and not as reckless as a Hydra agent. Maybe he was a S.H.I.E.L.D operative who’d been corrupted. The clothes were definitely American.

He dropped down, boots striking the guy in the head where the guy scrambles away and Bucky just darts for the safehouse. The safehouse was a battleground he could use, he knew the layout, the entrances and exits. It was familiar ground and he would have the advantage.

He could hear the guy running behind him and smiled to himself. He was taking the bait.

Bucky just sprinted, pelting along through the fields before slamming through the door where he heard you shout from another room.

There he went towards where he heard your voice, finding you in the kitchen, trying to pull together what looked like vegetable soup. He took a millisecond to appreciate how sweet that was before shoving you into the hidden pantry and getting in there himself.

“What the-” you manage to get out before he clamps his hand over your mouth, shushing you.

The footsteps come soon after, coming to a dead halt before there’s methodical sweeping of the rooms. Bucky readies his combat knife, fingers curling around the grip before he knows that the guy is in the perfect spot and bursts out, leaping on him.

The ensuing struggle is more than Bucky expects. Usually these agent types go down pretty quickly but this one was holding his own. He managed to slash the guy in the bicep but it was a sloppy slice.

“Bucky stop!” he hears you call out.

“Can’t right now sweetheart,” Bucky grunts, still struggling.

“It’s Sam! It’s Sam Wilson!” you go to separate the two. “He’s friendly!”

“Missy?! Is that you?” Sam shouts. “Geez I didn’t recognise you as a brunette.”

“Told you it was a good disguise,” Bucky says backing off although he still kept a wary grip on
the knife.

“Woah, okay, I’m friendly,” Sam holds his hands up. “I was just trying to find you guys.”

“Why?” Bucky says acidly.

“Because Steve told me to,” Sam shrugs. “He heard your phone call and wanted to keep an eye on you because he couldn’t do it himself. He’s under surveillance in case you both show up.”

“How did you find us?” you say confused. “No one knew where we were going.”

“Your ring,” Sam points. “It has a micro tracker on it that Steve installed, had it embedded into the metal after recovering it from the Hydra base. I just came across Bucky by accident.”

“Shit,” you hiss, taking the ring off immediately. “What if Hydra can hack that? You might have just led them straight to us?!”

“Oh,” Sam’s face falls. “I didn’t think about that. I just thought with most of their top tech guys gone they wouldn’t have many resources.”

“What is the motto of Hydra?” you sigh.

“Many heads, yeah yeah, I realise now,” Sam rubs his head. “Damn. You’re gonna have to get rid of the ring and we need to move.”

“I can’t believe Steve fucked this up for us,” Bucky growls. “It was going so perfectly. I had everything planned.”

“No time for that now, we gotta move,” Sam urges. “Pack what you can. I know another place we can stay.”

Bucky just gritted his jaw. He knew Steve meant well but you’d both just lost your home advantage. You knew this place. He knew what was around it. It was defensible against ambushes. Now you had to start from scratch and worst of all….you had to leave the ring behind, the last relic of your wartime days.

“It’s alright, Buck,” you say softly, giving a small sad smile before taking the ring and holding it over the kitchen sink. “I’d rather us be safe than be dead and have pretty jewellery.”

“I know doll but…I chose that for you,” Bucky frowns. “I got teased mercilessly for taking so long over it. There’s so many memories attached…”

“We’ll make new ones,” you take a deep breath before dropping it down the pipe. “And this new Bucky can get me another ring.”

“But I can’t remember what you like.”

“Just guess,” you smile at him. “Whatever you pick I’ll wear. I love you after all.”

“I love you too,” Bucky replies, feeling downtrodden.

“Yeah as cute as this is, we really have to go,” Sam interrupts. “The more distance we can get, the better.”

“Alright,” you nod, gathering items into the rucksacks before taking the pill surreptitiously from Bucky, swallowing it dry and pulling a face before he waves the bar of chocolate at you and
watches your eyes light up.

“Later,” Bucky whispers. “Let’s get outta here first.”

“You bad man,” you scowl.

“I’m your bad man,” Bucky laughs quietly before ushering you out of the front door after strapping his guns to his side. “Now get that perky lil’ ass moving.”

Just before he leaves, he glances one last time at the sink drain, already grieving for the ring before looking forward towards the garden where you’d both made love for the first time. So many memories he’d just regained and he had to give them all up.

Would he ever just be Bucky again or he was constantly doomed to run from the shadow of the Winter Soldier?

“Come on, slow poke,” you call and he shakes himself out of his thoughts, following you and Sam into the Slovakian woods.
Chapter Summary

Steve has sent Sam Wilson to help you but Bucky’s issues start to surface in a bad way.

Chapter Notes

Chapter warnings: Angst, dark thoughts.

I honestly thought at this point I would've run out of propaganda posters for chapter titles but it's quite telling that I'm still going with it....

Happy reading

- TLP xx

(Proof reading errors likely)

After two hours of walking, you’re wondering where in the Sam heck you’re going.

“Tell me Steve didn’t pick the new safehouse?” you ask Sam, who’s leading your little group.

“Aw come on,” Sam turns and gives you a bitchface look. “What do you guys think I actually did before you showed up in my life and dropped helicarriers around my home?”

“Um…..ran?” you quip.
“You may be my superior officer but I will hit you,” Sam mock scowls.

“Try it,” Bucky cuts in with a very dangerous edge to his voice.

“Woah, calm down metalhead,” Sam holds up his hands. “It was a joke. Missy understands that.”

“It’s fine, Buck. You don’t need to be so protective,” you assure Bucky, taking his hand and squeezing it.

“Sorry,” Bucky looks to the floor. “I’m… I’m on edge and I can feel myself slipping into old habits. Just… just bear with me alright? I’m not fully the man I was.”

“I get it, man,” Sam offers. “But I’m on your side. Just remember that before I wake up with a rifle jammed down my throat.”

“So this safehouse,” you cut back in, derailing the conversation again.

You could tell Bucky was embarrassed. Whenever he slipping back into the Winter Soldier persona you knew he was mortified. He was trying his best to hide it and reclaim his life as James Barnes but he was expecting far too much of himself for the length of time he’d freed his mind from Hydra. Healing mental damage takes time.

“Yeah, it’s an old Cold War bunker,” Sam explains. “Plenty a’ food still there, electricity, running water, bunks. It’s a good place to lie low for a while before making a more permanent decision.”

He took you into a clearing, staring at a GPS device on his arm before brushing some leaves aside with his foot where it clanked on the handle of a trapdoor in the earth.

“Got it. Here we go. Home away from home,” Sam twists the handle before yanking it up and using a torch to descend the ladder.

Just before you start to follow, Bucky grabs your arm, “Are we sure he can be trusted?”

“Yeah I’m sure. He disobeyed a direct order from S.H.I.E.L.D to stand down so he could help Steve.”

“If he does one wrong move, I’ll kill him,” Bucky growls before going in first, presumably to check what Sam was doing.

You just sigh heavily before putting your foot on the third rung and scouting the treeline to make sure you weren’t being watched until finally you descended into the bunker. At least Sam had gotten the lights on now.

The bunker was very plain looking, stark grey walls and bare naked fluorescent strips above. It had six rooms in total, one living quarters, two bunk rooms, one bathroom, a kitchen, a storage facility and a small armoury. Although you’d caught up in brief on what the Cold War was, it was still a shock to see how the mindset of those fighting it was from the layout of this place. Even down to the cheery propaganda posters on the walls, humanity never changed.

“Nice guns,” Bucky remarks, staring at the wall of the armoury. “Handy.”

“Don’t get any ideas, Tex,” Sam warns. “We’re just here to lay low for a while.”

“Tell you what, I’ll cook us some food given we ain’t had much of a feast since getting here,” you volunteer. “An army marches on its stomach.”
“Oh this isn’t an army,” Sam gestures. “This is babysitting.”

“If it’s that bad then fuck off,” Bucky growls. “We didn’t ask for your help.”

“Wow…..Steve failed to mention what a dick you are now,” Sam looks skyward. “I’m not doing this for you, Hydra boy. I’m doing it for Steve and for Missy.”

“Play nice, boys,” you warn. “If I have to break up a catfight I’ll be mighty pissed. Now settle down whilst I make food or I’ll kick both your asses into next week.”

“Sorry, Missy,” Bucky apologises to you but you note he says nothing to Sam. “Sam, a word?”

Sam bristles for a second, psyching himself up before following Bucky out into the living quarters without another word, leaving you just hoping they’d behave themselves.

**

Once Bucky knew you were out of earshot, he grabbed Sam by the scruff of his shirt, his metal arm whirring with the movement as he pinned him high above the ground.

“What the hell, man?!?” Sam kicks out.

“Why are you doing this for Missy?” Bucky questions. “Steve I get but why her? You’re not close. I watched her for months.”

“Maybe I think she’s just a good person, Jesus!” Sam twists trying to get out of his grip. “She’s always been nice to me and never treated me like I was less than her. Will you put me down?!”

“Do you like her?”

“What?!” Sam blinks in bemusement. “What the hell are you talking about?”

“Are you sweet on her? I can’t think why you’d do this otherwise.”

“Goddamn it, man, I’m a friend! I don’t want your girl. Get that through your damaged brain!”

Bucky lets him drop to the floor but doesn’t unhand him completely, “And you’re not working for Hydra?”

“Hell no!” Sam slams his fist into Bucky’s wrist, breaking his grip before pushing him away. “You’re crazy, I swear.”

“What the heck is going on?!” you pop your head around the corner and Bucky immediately steps back.

“Nothing,” he answers quickly.

“Sam?” you ask.

“Your boy toy just assaulted me,” Sam scowls. “Seems to think I wanna get in your pants or that
I’m with Hydra.”

“James,” you sigh.

Bucky hated hearing that tone in your voice. It was a tone that said you were disappointed with him. He didn’t want to disappoint you, he just wanted to keep you safe. He just wanted to keep you for himself.

“I’m sorry, doll. I just had to know.”

“Well now you do, so apologise,” you fold your arms.

A memory hit Bucky just then. You were chiding him because he’d ditched a girl at the theatre without even telling her he just didn’t fancy her that much. You were telling him he was selfish and a cad and demanded he call her to say sorry. Bucky couldn’t have told you at the time but he left the girl there because she’d shown up in a pair of overalls that reminded him too much of you. That’d freaked him out and he’d scooted out of the theatre bathroom as quickly as possible.

She just wasn’t you.

“Sam, I’m sorry,” Bucky addresses the man directly, knowing he’s fucked up really badly here. “And yes, I am damaged.”

Sam’s expression softens and he claps a hand on his shoulder, “Hey hey, I didn’t mean it like that. What you went through was horrible. It just takes time to adjust back and Missy is doing a great job at helping you so far.”

“Good, now kiss and make up,” you gestured between the two.

“Are you serious?!” Bucky’s head span wildly as he looked at you but then saw you were smirking. “Damn it, doll, you got a real wicked sense of humour.”

“Food’ll be done in ten minutes,” you laugh. “No more fighting or I’ll use the big voice.”

“Yes Ma’am,” Sam nods. “This meal better be good now.”

You just gave a little indignant huff and put your hands on your hips which Bucky found adorable, “I used to cook for an entire platoon whilst avoiding Hydra agents, son. Don’t insult me.”

“Wouldn’t dream of it,” Sam smirks at you before walking into the kitchen, leaving Bucky alone with you.

“Now will you stop being so….so overprotective and scary with it?” you ask him, taking his hands. “I’m a big girl, Buck. Even if he was sweet on me, so what? I’m your gal. I ain’t loose. I wanna be with you til I grow old or, more likely, go out in a blaze of glory.”

Bucky just pulls you into a hug, his inner emotions conflicted. He desperately wants to get back to how he was during the war, that easy confidence and flirtatious personality. In the wake of the Winter Soldier, he just felt confused, insecure and on a hair trigger with his moods. The only thing that ever stopped that feeling was you.

“Come on, sweetheart, let’s eat,” Bucky kisses your head. “I promise I’ll try to be better.”

“You don’t need to be better, you just need to trust me,” you traced the line of his jaw with delicate fingers. “Trust that I love you.”
“Alright,” Bucky nods.

He could trust that for sure. You’d given up so much for him already and never left his side, enduring torture just to bring him back. Bucky could never doubt that you loved him.

**

“So how are things at home when you left?” you prompt, putting down your fork. “I bet everyone thinks I’ve gone real whacky huh?”

“Steve is trying to smooth things over but yeah, yeah it wasn’t good. The government is after you and Bucky,” Sam stops eating, staring at his plate. “Steve had to do a grovelling press release about remaining Hydra members but it’s gonna take time to clear your name. There’s some stuff going on with Tony that was most pressing.”

“What do you mean stuff?”

“Like….a robot attacking the headquarters kind of stuff…that Tony created.”

“What?” you blurt out, standing up. “Do I need to go back?”

“No, Steve was very insistent that you stay hidden. He has the rest of the Avengers to help on the home turf.”

“But I am an Avenger,” you frown. “I’m supposed to stop disasters from happening, not hiding in a bunker in god knows where.”

“Steve knows what’s best,” Bucky says quietly. “I’m sure he can handle it. Your name isn’t fully cleared yet, doll. They might arrest us on sight.”

“Us? No Buck, I’d go handle this alone. You’re too at risk to be seen around Stark Tower.”

“You’d leave me here?” Bucky gives you such a lost look. “You’d abandon me to go back to Steve?”

“James, it’s not like that,” you sigh, holding your head. “I just want you to be safe but I can’t leave the Avengers to fight something that big on their own.”

“You’d abandon me,” Bucky pushes away from the table, barely keeping himself together as he walks out to the bedrooms.

“Buck, wait! Buck! Ah Jesus-fuckin’-Christ…..,” you groan.

“Tough crowd,” Sam remarks, uncomfortably shoving a potato in his mouth. “He’s hard work, huh?”

“I don’t know what to do, Sam,” you put your head on the table. “I can’t just sit here.”

“Look, maybe there’s something we can do,” Sam offers. “There’s a Hydra facility still active nearby. They were doing experiments mainly. Maybe you could take one of those down to take your mind off stuff?”

“Maybe,” you nod. “I guess that’s something. I just feel useless here.”
“I know, Missy but it’s necessary. Keeping you hidden here means you can get back into the fight again later.”

“I’d better check on Bucky,” you mutter, rising from the table. “Sorry about all this.”

“I get it. Dude’s got issues,” Sam holds up his hands. “You have a lot of patience. Good night.”

You just give him a weak smile before walking into the bedroom and seeing Bucky lying on his side away from you, staring at the wall.

“James?” you say softly. “James are you mad at me?”

“Just go away, Vera.”

Wow, he had to be mighty annoyed if he was using your Christian name.

“Talk to me.”

He turns over, obviously a bit teary eyed, “You didn’t even factor me into your idea, did you? You said ‘I’, not ‘we’.”

“I’m trying to keep you safe.”

“No, you’re just leaving me because I’m too much work,” Bucky looks away from you. “Because I’m broken.”

“I would never leave you Buck, I love you,” you try to make him understand. “I don’t care that you think you’re broken. The man I love is still there.”

“I’m violent, I’m changeable, I can’t remember shit,” Bucky pulls the covers over his head. “I’m no good for you, Vera. Just leave me alone.”

“And what about what I want? I want you.”

“JUST GO!” Bucky yells, the sound bouncing off the walls.

“You’re a world class chicken shit, James Barnes,” you keep your voice from betraying how you really feel before storming out.

You take Sam’s bag, finding his computer tablet and using that to get the location of the Hydra base before dragging the black stealth Liberty suit out of the rucksack Bucky had packed for you. The armoury was raided and you ended up with a short sword at your hip. You were more used to bladed weapons than explosive ones.

You take one last look at Bucky’s door before crawling up the ladder and out into the crisp night.

Fine, if Bucky wanted to be an ass and push you away, you’d fall back on what you were trained to do. You were a soldier, first and foremost. The Hydra facility would be shut down.

**

Bucky heard a lot of noise outside but didn’t even get up. He was too busy wallowing in his own self misery.
Since his awakening, you were the one thing he could cling to, could rely on. You were the only thing keeping him from being alone and insane.

And now he’d just pushed you away because of his own anxiousness.

*What the hell have I done? She’s right, I am a chicken shit. Too scared to let her be the hero she is. I’ve fought side by side with her, I know she’d kick my ass into next week and I still try and keep her caged. She told me she loves me and I still didn’t accept that. Maybe it would have been better if I’d died in the snow all those years ago. Maybe Steve would’ve taken better care of her. He’s more stable than I am.*

It went silent outside and Bucky strained his ears, trying to get any hint of what you were up to. He really needed to suck it up and apologise.

*Geez, all I do lately is apologise. I need to get better, for her and for me.*

He threw off the covers, getting up and padding out to the living quarters where he saw your clothes haphazardly tossed onto the couch. Then he searched all the other rooms and found weapons missing from the armoury.

“Sam?!” he calls out, bursting into the bedroom where Sam shot up, a knife clutched in his hand.

“What the hell?!”

“Missy, she’s gone. I can’t find her and there’s stuff missing from the armoury.”

“Wait…” Sam murmurs, going out into the living quarters and rooting through his bag. “Shit, she took my tablet. She’s going after the base.”

“Base? What base?”

“I told her about a Hydra base. I thought it would be a good way to keep her mind off the situation at Stark Tower. I was gonna suggest we hit it in a couple of days. Damn it, she must be going there now.”

“Do you remember where it was?” Bucky asks quickly.

“I think so? Yeah, yeah, I think I remember.”

“Well come on, we need to go help her,” Bucky pulls on his jacket.

“You mean save her?” Sam questions, pulling a boot on and hopping on the spot to keep his balance.

“No, I mean help,” Bucky says. “I’m starting to realise she’s not a dame in distress.”

“Hmm, progress,” Sam nods. “Now let’s do this thing.”

The two of them, fully armed up, stepped out into the frosty twilight, purpose clear.

They’d take the Hydra base down, then Bucky would apologise to you. He just hoped life didn’t throw him another curveball in the mean time.
Chapter Summary

After your fight with Bucky, you decide to take on the Hydra base alone but is that a mistake?

Chapter Notes

Chapter warnings: Mentions of torture

Happy reading guys!
- TLP xx

(Proof reading errors likely)

You followed Sam’s tablet directions until you started to see the telltale signs of a military base, the razorwire, the fencing, the milling guards.

You sat in the bushes for a time, studying the comings and goings of the personnel, still astonished that people would wear the old red and black Hydra uniform in this day and age. Surely it was far too blatant?

You scouted for an opening, just hunched onto your knees and peeking through foliage until you saw a side door that was out of the way. You could jump up a tree and leap across the barbed fence before barrelling into that door. That way you’d avoid the several dozen men patrolling the front.

You may be a supersoldier but you didn’t fancy those odds.

As you scramble up the tree and dart across the branch, you start readying yourself for the perfect moment. Unfortunately, two guards seemed to want to chat incessantly outside the door and you’re getting frustrated.
You spot a cluster of acorns and grab them before pelting them at the far side of the compound. Immediately the guards rush to the noise and you take the opportunity to jump across and enter through the door, quietly pulling it shut behind you.

Now the hard part.

A compact mirror was your greatest friend in looking around the corners and creeping through, getting deeper and deeper in, deeper and deeper down as you hurried down flights of stairs. Whatever the payload of this place was, it was right at the bottom, you were certain of it.

Screams started to fill your ears, screams and ravings. The hallway planed out into off shoot rooms and you just had the worst gut feeling that you knew what they were.

*Holy cow, they're experimenting on people. You sick bastards.*

As you approached one of the doors, you saw it had a sliding panel and your curiosity got the better of you. Sliding it back, you were assailed by grasping hands that reached through the bars on the other side, desperately trying to touch you.

“Help me!” came the desperately broken English cry of what looked like a man in his thirties.

He was badly malnourished, his skin an almost translucent grey and his teeth starting to crumble with misuse. His eyes though….his eyes were electric purple, brimming with vivacity.

“What did they do to you?” you whisper.

“Torture,” he searches for the word. “I….I am….netvor.”

You got the gist of what he meant even if you didn’t understand the word. The disgusted look told you everything you needed to know.

“They’re trying to start the supersoldier program again, aren’t they?”

“Yes. Help me.”

“I will. I’m going to take out the leader and then I’m setting you all free,” you grasp his hand, squeezing it and he reciprocates like he’s afraid he’ll never know a kind human touch again.

“Your name,” he manages to get out.

“Missy,” you say softly. “Yours?”

“Vlastimil.”

“I’m coming back for you, Vlastimil,” you nod.

He eventually lets go and you start making your way further into the bowels of the compound, a quiet rage stirring in your soul.

This felt different. This felt more like being in the war again and destroying the Hydra bases. Some of the sights you saw in them continued to haunt your dreams on occasion. One particular base with different gas strains and their effects on humans had never left your memories.

*This place is burning to the ground the second I am done. You won’t get another soul, you hear?*

You entered, what seemed like, a meeting room. A long rectangular table adorned the centre and
behind that was a blackboard covered in plans, various medical diagrams and research notes. You take pictures with Sam’s tablet, barely remembering how to use the electronic mail before sending it to Tony Stark.

You figured he’d be the best person to send it to since S.H.I.E.L.D was still rebuilding.

A noise from the corridor sets you on edge and you end up diving into a nearby cabinet, pulling the door closed and spying through the keyhole.

Six men entered, high rankers from the look of them, and casually started discussing things, pointing to the board. You didn’t understand a word of it unfortunately. Maybe you’d ask Tony to build you a device to translate things in real time if you ever got your name cleared.

Your legs were beginning to cramp from the sheer awkwardness of the pose you were in and you desperately tried to keep your discomfort to a quiet level. It was only by sheer luck that they started leaving just as you were about to go insane from the claustrophobia.

You snuck out, silently stalking the straggling official before jamming your blade into the back of his neck, severing the spinal column. Clamping a hand over his mouth to stifle the noise of surprise, you pull him back into the room and stuff him in that same cabinet you’d just hidden in.

You just wished you’d been a bit more conscious of your surroundings because as you were doing this, someone crept up behind you and you turned to see Vlastimil, the whites of his eyes completely taken over by that sparkling purple colour.

“You escaped?”

Vlastimil just cocks his head before some strange bolt of energy comes shooting out of his eyes and throws you headfirst into the blackboard where it cracks down the middle. You’re barely on the edge of consciousness, the blow that vicious.

You can just about make out of the sounds of people talking as you struggle to right yourself.

“So this is the infamous Captain Liberty?” they switch to English.

“Quite pathetic,” another voice chimes in.

“Taken down by our experiment. That bodes well at least,” a third offers.

“Yes but he’s becoming uncontrollable. The power is causing the synapses in his brain to misfire. I don’t think he can contain it.”

And just like that you saw a flash of purple and heard a heavy thump on the floor. Vlastimil was sprawled on the carpet, very much dead.

“Disappointing. What great promise he showed.”

“But we still have Missy Adler. The Virtue tests, by Rumlow’s account, were successful.”

Rumlow? Rumlow was still alive?!

“And if Missy Adler is here, the Asset will not be too far behind.”

“She came alone. The cameras showed that much.”

“You underestimate the Asset’s love for her in that case. Detain her in the chamber. He will come
to us.”

With guns pointed at you and your head still ringing from the assault, you have no choice but to be dragged along crassly to wherever your new lodgings were to be.

*For hell’s sake, Buck. Don’t follow me. Please.*

**

“Are you lost?” Bucky spat out, not bothering to hide his disdain.

“You try remembering a location you saw for five minutes,” Sam grumbles. “I think it’s that way.”

“Oh you think?”

“Hey, lay off man!” Sam rounds on him. “I get it, your girl is in trouble but if I know Missy, she’ll be doing just fine. Now quit being up my ass about this and let me concentrate.”

“Fine,” Bucky growls to himself.

He didn’t like this at all. He knew you could fight just as well as he could but there was something in his gut that was telling him you weren’t okay, that you’d walked into something bad.

He’d never forgive himself if his last words to you were shouting ‘go away’. Bucky would rather end his own life if that happened, than live with it, live without you.

“Just chill,” Sam seems to note his expression. “It’ll be alright. Hydra’s not got the teeth that it used to. Hopefully she’s just sittin’ on the roof waiting to call us dumbasses for missing the fun.”

“More like she’d call me a plum dog jackass with spam for brains,” Bucky chuckles to himself. “If she’s feeling ladylike.”

“I’ve never known Missy to be ladylike,” Sam snorts.

“Me neither,” Bucky nods to himself before his eyes spot a glint through the tree line.

It takes him a while to piece together what he’s seeing, the assassin training still hardwired into his system to notice such things like this.

*It’s a rifle, that’s a Hydra pin. We’ve found it.*

“It’s over there,” Bucky points. “I can see guards.”

“For real?” Sam squints to the spot. “I need to get my eyes checked out.”

“Come on,” Bucky practically drags Sam along until they’re hiding in the bushes.

“Damn, that’s a lot of them,” Sam murmurs.

“Give me a distraction and I can take them out from here. Do your bird thing.”

“Falcon,” Sam frowns before he sneaks away from Bucky so as not to draw attention to his position.

Then he unleashes the wings and flies straight into the huddle of guards who fall back in shock.
The resulting chaos gives Bucky enough time to start picking them off with his rifle.

He’s methodical, going for the head each time as Sam continues to wildly fly around them, herding the guards into the wall. It was almost like a firing squad line up.

How easy it was to slip back into this persona, uncaring, unfeeling. Their deaths no more affected him than an insect would crossing his path.

The Winter Soldier eliminated all hostile targets until only Sam was left.

“Woah, get that look outta your eye,” Sam holds up his hands, walking over to him. “I’m friendly, remember?”

“Yeah,” Bucky mutters, embarrassed. “I just…”

“Went to your dark place, I get it,” Sam nods. “Come on, we can get inside now.”

Bucky lead the group, moving down towards the centre of the compound. He didn’t see a trace of you so far. If you’d gotten in, you’d been incredibly stealthy about it. Maybe Natasha had taught you a few things.

“Where the hell is she?” Sam hisses.

“Further down,” Bucky waves, pointing to the stairs. “She’d take out the leader if she’s here.”

The two men move in a perfect unit, covering each other’s backs as they descend into the facility.


He’d seen rooms like these a few times. Always Hydra trying to create the perfectly evolved human using whatever tech they had scavenged. They didn’t care that they drove the subject insane in the process.

He squatted down, almost crawling along the corridor until he came to an open door which seemed to lead into another hallway. Bucky took a glance down towards the meeting room and decided since no one was clearly there, to ignore it.

The hall got darker but at least they could stand up fully now, carefully stepping forward. There was a faint voice, a woman or a child.

Bucky looked around the corner cautiously to see a huge glass prison containing a bed, facilities, book shelves and training equipment. Then his mouth gritted into a hard line.

The faint voice was you.

You were talking to yourself and pacing up and down inside the glass cage.

“Goddamn stupid, buck private, no good dumb-fuckin’ Jane,” you were cussing yourself out.

“What do I do? What the heck do I do?”

“She’s here,” Bucky whispers to Sam before pointing upwards. “Cameras around.”

Sam pulls out a strange device before the blinking lights of the CCTV just shut off. Bucky gives a thumbs up before moving in, his rifle pressed into his shoulder with tension as he swung around, scanning all the exits.
“Buck?!” you say before lowering your volume. “Shit, Bucky, Sam. Get out.”

“Nice to see you too, doll,” Bucky quips.

“You don’t understand, you need to go. They knew you were coming.”

“I don’t care. I don’t care if this is a trap. I’m not leaving you here.”

“James, please.”

The desperation on your face is enough for him to take notice but his heart is overriding his head and he can’t help but pick open the lock and step inside. The door closes behind him, the motion automatic as bars slide across where the lock is, jamming it shut.

He tries shoulder barging it but it’s no good. He really did just walk into a trap like an idiot.

“Sam, get out,” you press your hands on the glass. “Tell Steve.”

“I can’t leave you both here, no way!”

“Look at me!” you bang on the glass, startling both him and Bucky. “They’re going to try and break us again. If you don’t leave now, we may end up killing you because we don’t know any better. Get a message to Steve, please.”

There’s a small hissing noise and Bucky immediately looks up, smelling the telltale scent of gas and seeing greenish grey wisps smoking downwards. Were they really going to try and murder them both? That didn’t make sense.

“GO!” you scream at Sam who just seems horrified until he snaps to his senses.

“I’ll come back for you, I promise.”

Then he bolts off down the corridor.

The jets increase and soon all Bucky can see is his immediate line of vision. You’re somewhere in the smoke, coughing wildly.

“Missy?!” Bucky calls for you, flailing blindly until his hands touch your shoulders and he draws you closer to him.

He pulls you to the floor, trying to keep you both from inhaling the gas so quickly.

“I can’t do this,” you start shaking. “Not again, I can’t lose us again.”

“We always come back to each other, doll. You know this,” Bucky tries to calm you down, even though he’s terrified at the thought of losing all memory of you and himself. “We got our song after all. That’ll never go away.”

“Promise me, James.”

“I promise.”

His lungs felt so heavy, like he was breathing through soup. Hydra was killing you but why?

He got his answer over the tannoy.
“Loss, Tundra, Blaze, Twilight, Eighteen, Dormant, Nine, Reunion, One, Plane. Soldier?”

“Ready to comply,” comes your emotionless voice.

Stress. That had to be it. They didn’t have the chair so they were putting your bodies under high stress, near death scenarios to achieve the same goals.

*Oh god, Missy. No. My sweetheart, please say you’ll still remember me? I’ll try my hardest to remember you, I swear it. They won’t ever rip you outta my head.*

“Тоска. Ржавый. Семнадцать. Рассвет. Печь. 9. Доброкаачественная. Возвращение домой. Один. Грузовой автомобиль. Доброе утро, солдат?”

“Я готов отвечать,” the Asset answers.
“Steve, we’ve got a problem.”

Those are not the words that Steve wanted to hear when he was just preparing for the final assault on Ultron. He had enough on his plate trying to make sure everyone was ready for the journey.

“What’s wrong, Sam?” he says into his comms piece warily.

“It’s Missy and Bucky.”

Steve felt his stomach drop. If Sam was contacting him now then it had to be bad. Maybe Bucky had gone off the rails again, maybe you’d fallen out, maybe…. 

*God, I hope they’re not dead.*

“Spit it out, soldier,” Steve barks, losing his patience. He didn’t like waiting for bad news, never had.

“Hydra got them. They’re not Bucky and Missy any more. I’m sorry, I tried to help but Missy told me to go before she could hurt me and…I kinda believe her when she says that.”

“No, you did the right thing,” Steve sighs. “The last time Missy was made into a Hydra agent she just kept comin’, even when she had ribs sticking out of her.”
“That’s some Frankenstein shit, dude,” Sam breathes hard. “What do you want me to do?”

“I have a situation here. Ultron is planning on causing an extinction level event. I need you to babysit. Babysit but do not engage. They’re both highly dangerous on their own so god knows what they’re gonna be like together. Give me regular updates until I can get to you.”

“Aye aye Captain.”

Then the link cut off.

Steve had to get his head in the game. He couldn’t afford to think about you two when the fate of the world was at stake.

*Look after them Sam, I’m counting on you.*

Then he got onto the Quinjet with the rest of the Avengers following suit.

**

The Virtue was being debriefed by Rumlow…or what was left of Rumlow.

When he’d been in the Triskelion building, he’d not managed to get out before the structure collapsed and his face had suffered badly. The Virtue found it rather indifferent. She wasn’t there to assess attractiveness.

Rumlow told her about the mission, about how she came to lose her memory of being The Virtue, about who Hydra’s enemies were and about her partnership with The Asset. All of this felt foreign but The Virtue nodded anyway.

“Time to see The Asset. He’s been debriefed earlier,” Rumlow motions for her to stand up.

The Virtue is taken into the glass cell again where the door is closed and locked behind her. She catches a brief glimpse of black as The Asset is training in the corner of the room.

“Play nice you two,” Rumlow sniggers to himself before walking out.

“Virtue,” The Asset grunts as he gets back up to his feet, arms glistening with sweat and his hair hanging in beaded curtains around his face.

“Asset,” she parrots back.

Rumlow was right, there was an undeniable partnership she sensed already but it went deeper than colleagues. Instinctively The Virtue knew they had had something between them, something romantic. She couldn’t stop staring at his physique, even though it was inappropriate.

“We are The Mastery,” The Asset approaches and she watches his eyes flick down her body, doing exactly what she was doing to him…appreciating. “Mission report.”

“Destabilise the Avengers.”

“Correct,” then The Asset is smirking at her.
“What?” she challenges.

“I wish they’d put more operatives in leather,” The Asset’s icy blue eyes flash with mischief.

“Incorrect,” The Virtue laughs to herself. “You wish I was entirely in leather and only me.”

“So you feel it too? Rumlow told me about our partnership but this feels….more. I don’t understand it.”

“I don’t understand it, there’s just-”

“A pull,” The Asset has come closer, taking her waist in his arm and it feels natural, it feels right.

“Is it physical attraction or something else?” The Virtue looks up to his intense gaze.

“Well, let’s be pragmatic. If we fuck and the pull is still there, we had something deeper before we lost our memories.”

“Asset, we’re being monitored,” she reminds him but the idea thrills her nonetheless.

“And? I received no orders that we weren’t to fraternise. I believe it was encouraged to spend time together otherwise we would not be in the same cell.”

“Asset-”

“Now I remember, you’re a worrier,” The Asset smirks.

“And you’re a bastard.”

“You like me this way,” The Asset drags her close to him so their bodies are touching. “I can see it.”

“You have too much arrogance, Asset.”

There’s something uncertain that settles in his features before he runs his metal hand up her back, leaving chilled swathes in his wake. Then he leans down towards her neck and just seems to breathe in the essence of her, like he’s trying to reawaken some instinct.

“We are a partnership, aren’t we?”

It’s more of a statement than a fact.

There’s just this knowledge between them of the connection they share. She wonders how she ever managed to forget The Asset but she’s glad they both survived the attack at the Triskelion.

“We are. We’re the Mastery,” The Virtue confirms.

He holds her face in his other hand and kisses her, a harsh kiss, a kiss that’s meant to confirm his own feelings she suspects. It’s messy but there’s a lot of lust behind it and she feels the urge to press her body so completely against him, desperate to feel contact.

She’s pressed against the glass of the viewing screen, both of them fighting for dominance. She won’t let him win so she whirs him around and now he’s being pressed against the glass.

Hands wander everywhere and the moans they’re both uttering get more and more guttural.
“No,” the Virtue breaks away, yanking him back by his hair. “They’re watching.”

“Fuck ‘em,” a sort a strange accent breaks through.

Until now the Asset had spoke with a slight Eastern European lilt but she caught a cadence of an American accent bleeding through. It sounded more right to her than his normal voice but she didn’t know why.

“Asset-”

The words are cut off by his desperate mouth and the Virtue forgets her protests. There’s this aching need that’s overriding her sense of protocol and standing. She should be training, she should be researching the mission but instead, all she wants to do is confirm this yearning that she has for the Asset, to know whether it was entirely true.

The urge becomes stronger and stronger until it’s feral, a singular purpose and a singular desire. She wrenches his tank top to pieces, hands falling over his chest, fingers digging into the flesh, roving across the join with his metallic arm.

“You’re eager, Virtue,” The Asset laughs breathily. “Maybe that’s not the right name for you.”

“Maybe Asset is not the right word for you either depending on what’s in your pants right now,” she challenges.

A dark cloud descends across his features as he takes the bait, the plates in his arm whirring as he tears into her clothing until she’s bare to him, goosebumps littering her skin as she waits…..

There’s a hesitant hand that cups underneath her breast, the pad of his thumb lightly stroking over the skin. He seems lost in thought, the drive gone.

“Asset?”

“This is….familiar,” he almost whispers. “So familiar. I’ve done this before.”

“Don’t leave me waiting,” she almost growls.

“And I remember you’re impatient,” he looks up at her, a glint of mischief in his eyes. “What if I just…backed away?”

He let go of her, moving towards the bed and deliberately stretching so his back muscles ripple, knowing The Virtue was watching. Then he lazily lay on the bed, his arms crooked behind his head.

“Soldiers need to learn patience,” The Asset laughs, seeing her frustrated face before closing his eyes.

“The fuck they do,” she snarls, stalking over to him.

“Stand down, Virtue,” he still doesn’t open his eyes.

“No.”

“I’m your superior.”

“No.”
Then she dives on him, hands keeping his still as she mounts him. He doesn’t push her away, he
doesn’t make any move whatsoever.

“I know you want this as badly as I do, Asset,” she ghosts her tongue along his cheek. “I can feel
it.”

“I would be made of stone if I didn’t want you,” he opens his eyes a fraction. “But we’re being
monitored.”

His blatant playfulness and arrogance riles her up. She rips his training pants away and he just
gives her a look like he’s well aware he’s winning this game.

She moves her body backwards until she’s straddling the prominent bulge in his underwear before
rocking back and forth. That makes him take notice.

A small growl rumbles in his throat and she can feel his body vibrating with the effort to keep
himself still. She catches the micro-movements of his face, the lust that’s overtaking him.

On and on she plays his game, letting small moans and mewls fall from her lips. He’s struggling
not to act and it makes her glow with confidence.

With a guttural growl, he sits up, taking her thighs in his hands, squeezing, “Any man would be a
fool not to want you, Virtue. Your seduction skills are obviously unparalleled. I hope I killed every
person you used them on.”

“I don’t remember if I did use them on anyone,” she continues her movements. “Maybe you’re the
only person.”

“I would like to think that was true but I’m not idiotic,” he flips her under him. “We do what we’re
told to get the mission done.”

“Asset,” she wraps her legs around his back. “I don’t think there’s been anyone else. It’s just….it’s
something in the back of my brain. It feels….it feels true.”

“Then I am lucky,” he props himself on his elbows, tracing a line down her breastbone. “It feels
like a true statement to me too. The mission can wait. I need you now.”

Then his demeanour switches. No longer was the teasing agent beneath her, denying her the
pleasure of his reactions, now here was the Asset bearing down above her with hunger in his eyes.

His mouth finds hers and he’s hiking her legs up further around him. He continues her movements,
grinding slowly against her and it’s maddening.

“Stop fucking around, Asset,” she snarls.

“But I enjoy tormenting you,” he chuckles darkly. “You’re so responsive.”

“Asset-”

His metal hand presses one leg back to the bed, leaving her exposed and he runs it up her thigh,
delight in the shiver that runs through her. Then he’s tracing down in between her legs before
cold fingers sink into her and she lets out a contented whimper.

“But you’re more responsive when I do this,” The Asset continues.

He knows her to work her, like it’s almost instinctual. He knows every spot that makes her keen,
the exact pace that draws loud moans from her.

Her body is coiling, every muscle tense as she can feel that familiar wave building and as she
finally finds release, he shushes her with a searing kiss. She’s twitching in his arms, the warmth
spreading throughout her body as he withdraws his fingers and she feels the press of his cock
against her instead.

“Yes,” is the one lone word she’s capable of saying.

The Asset slides into her effortlessly before starting a punishingly slow pace. She tries to
encourage him by bucking her hips to meet his but he just uses one of his hands to keep her still.

“No. You’re mine, Virtue. I say what happens.”

He may but strong but she’s equally as strong. She uses her legs to wind around him before
flipping him back under.

“No. You’re mine,” she parrots back, grinding deeply on him.

His eyes roll back and he groans softly, “Think you can boss me around, Virtue?”

“I know I can,” she leans down, catching his bottom lip in her teeth, moving harshly against him.

“Show me.”

Her pace quickens and her fingers lodge in his chest for purchase, his own hands clasped on her
hips, helping her ride against him. Her head lolls back as she moves, chasing her own gratification
more than his.

“More,” he demands roughly, hands gripping harder. “I need…”

He trails off as she twists her hips in a way that steals his words. He’s getting close now and she
can see that, feel his muscles screaming beneath her, begging for release.

“Tell me what you need, Asset.”

“You.”

He sits up, hand fisting in her hair as he holds her legs in place, pushing as deep as he can go,
grunting heavily as he spills into her.

“Fuck, doll,” he groans.

Doll? Something resonated in The Virtue and there was a moment she remembered a star strewn
sky in a lush garden. As quickly as she tried to grasp the memory, it slipped from her thoughts, the
grains of images scattered.

“There is definitely more than just attraction,” The Asset laughs, trying to regain his breath. “I can
still stand to be around you.”

“High praise coming from you,” she quirks up an eyebrow. “Do you say that to all the ladies?”

“Because there’s such a queue,” The Asset gestures around himself. “You know you’re the only
one I’m allowed to fraternise with.”

“And clearly you can’t take a joke, James,” the words tumble out.
“James….” he furrows his brow, staring intensely downwards. “Ja….why? Why is that familiar?”

In truth, she doesn’t know why either, “Maybe it was a name you adopted to get close to a target once. I don’t know, it just sort of came out.”

“Maybe,” he’s still staring downwards, like he thinks he can piece things together if he concentrates long enough. “Do you enjoy that? Is that a name you gave me?”

“I don’t know, Asset, I told you,” she tucks his hair behind his ear. “I don’t remember what I don’t remember. Things will come to me as they come.”

The Asset leans in to whisper in her ear, “I like it. Do not let Rumlown hear you say it. Do not let anyone but me hear you say it. Understand?”

“I understand,” she nods. “And for what it’s worth, I can still stand to be around you too.”

She gets off him, moving to the wash basin to clean up. For a moment she could swear The Asset was sad she’d left, that they were no longer skin to skin. Then the expression is replaced with his default one as he grabs the missive from next to the bed.

“Now we can concentrate….” he starts, flicking through the pages. “We ship out in an hour.”

“Do we have targets?” she grabs the hanging suit Hydra had provided her, along with the rebreather mask.

“Two,” he notes. “We’re not to engage the Avengers directly this time. We need them fractured before we can pick them off. Our targets are Hydra experiments gone AWOL. They need to be eliminated before the Avengers can draw them into their program.”

“Names.”

“Pietro and Wanda Maximoff.”

**

Steve was trying hard to keep it together.

Ultron’s army was never ending it seemed. Robot after robot kept coming at him and he was tiring. His mind was half on the battle and half worrying about you two.

He was guarding a group of civilians, fending off enemy fire as he escorted them to the helicarrier lifecrafts, ushering them in as quickly as he could before he set off to find more. He needed to save as many people as he could before the levitating chunk of Sokovia was slammed into the ground.

How long had he been fighting? It felt like the better part of a day. Even supersoldiers tire eventually.

“There are not many left,” Thor notes, landing beside him. “There are people in the far reaches to the west but I could not see any more.”

“I’ll take care of them, you get back to whatever Tony has planned,” Steve nods, watching as Thor spins his hammer and lifts off into the air.
“Thanks Capsicle,” Tony’s voice came through his ear. “You know, your star spangled not-girlfriend sent me a message not so long ago about a Hydra base. If we survive this we should help her out.”

“Yeah, sounds good Tony,” Steve says as levelly as he could.

He couldn’t tell him about what had happened, about what you and Bucky had become. He wanted to keep the Avengers from knowing you might be damaged goods because he was damn sure he could save you.

“See you on the other side, I guess,” Tony clicks out.

Steve starts running full sprint towards the west side, dodging more robots and ducking under falling buildings. He spots Clint picking up a child and hiding behind an upturned car as a barrage of gunfire spews towards them.

During the lull that follows, Clint tries to make a run for it with the kid but the guns start up again and Steve is sure he’s lost his friend before a whoosh of grey and blue deposits them all safely out of range.

“Didn’t see that coming,” Pietro smirks and Steve runs over.

“Is everybody out now?” he asks.

“Apart from this one,” Clint nods to the boy in his arms.

“Get him to the lifecrafts, then we need to regroup with the others,” Steve nods. “Pietro, you go with him.”

Pietro gives a goofy salute, “You got it, Mr Captain.”

Steve spots a glint of metal and looks up to see the faintest trace of a laser sight before there’s an almost silent pop and a bullet exits Pietro’s forehead, splattering blood on the nearby office block.

The kid doesn’t even have time to be surprised before he collapses, instantly gone.

“What the hell is that?!” Clint scans the upper levels of the buildings opposite. “Did Ultron create snipers?!”

“I don’t think so or we’d all be dead,” Steve murmurs. “This is something else.”

“There are two people on the apartment block there,” Clint points. “One has an assault rifle, one has a sniper rifle. Wearing black. One has something metallic on their arm.”

Steve’s stomach dropped. He hadn’t considered the possibility that you might come here. He would’ve thought Hydra would move against the reformed S.H.I.E.L.D rather than be here.

Oh god, what have you two done?

“I’ll go after them. Get him on the lifecraft too. Don’t leave him here,” Steve looks down at Pietro’s lifeless crumpled form, feeling guilty.

He should’ve done something more although he’s not sure how he could’ve saved the kid.

“Don’t die, Cap,” Clint nods, picking up Pietro and taking the boy’s hand before running off.
Steve hared up to the apartment block, racing up the stairs. His lungs were burning by the twentieth floor but he pressed on until he stumbled through the door at the top to the roof.

He just caught a glimpse of two figures. One the Winter Soldier, the other….

The other was a woman in leather, combat knives strapped to thigh holsters, a long sniper rifle on her back, a severe looking short braid of dark brown hair and eyes smeared with Kohl. She wore a mask like the Winter Soldier but he’d know those eyes anywhere…he’d spent enough time looking at them as a young boy and pining.

“Missy,” he says in disbelief.

He knew you’d been made The Virtue but it didn’t prepare him for seeing you in full Hydra clothing. It looked wrong. Everything looked wrong.

You look at Bucky before looking back to Steve and dismiss him with a gaze before firing a grappling gun and rappelling to the next building. Bucky joins you shortly afterwards.

You’re heading for the centre, Steve can see that. You’re moving fast and if you’re being selective with your targets, he knows Wanda is next.

He sizes up the jump before moving back to the opposite edge before running as fast as he could, leaping high into the air and landing with a heavy thud and a roll on the next building. He keeps this up, gaining on you two steadily.

You’re waiting for him when he hits the next roof and you strike him with the butt of the rifle, almost pitching him off the edge. He keeps his balance but only just.

Steve assesses the situation. Both you and Bucky seem to have parachutes and that gives him an idea.

“Uh, Steve, you’re still on the floating rock,” Tony’s voice comes through the comms.

“Got business, Tony,” Steve says quickly.

Then it feels like the world starts falling.

The mechanisms levitating the chunk of the city stop and it’s now in freefall. Wind is rushing past his head and he makes the decision to lunge at both you and Bucky, pulling the rip cords and watching as the parachutes deploy, yanking you backwards and away from the city.

You wouldn’t be able to re-land and get to Wanda before the city crashes into the ground.

“Business can wait, Steve,” Tony grunts, sounding like he’s putting a lot of effort into stuff. “Hey Thor, pick the star spangled idiot up when you fly away.”

“I’ll stay right here then,” Steve sighs, watching your parachutes getting smaller and smaller.

He can hear the singing sound Mjolnir makes and braces himself. Not moments later, Thor knocks into him, grasping him and Steve watches as the city disintegrates into dust.

“Don’t worry, I have you,” Thor smiles broadly. “You’re not as heavy as I anticipated.”

“Not sure if that’s a compliment or an insult,” Steve jokes but in truth, he’s still looking at the tiny black specks in the distance.
I’ll find you. I’ll save you. I won’t let you have another death on your conscience. I can’t let you….I can’t.
“Useless!” Rumlow roars, slamming the mission documentation on the table. “I ask you to take out two people and what do you manage?”

“One, Sir,” The Asset responds monotonously.

“One!” Rumlow throws up his hands. “And not even the most dangerous one! Was I wrong to think such a crack team of assassins could get this done? Huh?”

“We didn’t expect such interference,” The Virtue adds. “Ultron-”

“I don’t give a shit about Tony Stark’s pet robot project,” Rumlow hisses. “You had a job to do and you failed.”

“Sir, I-”

Rumlow backhands her and she staggers a little, not expecting the blow. The Asset tenses up incredibly next to her and she knows he wants to kill Rumlow more than anything right now.

“Speak when you’re spoken to,” Rumlow snarls. “I have a new mission for you both but I’m splitting you up for now. Asset, you’ll take out the Wakandan king, T’Chaka at this new fangled
meeting they’re setting up called the Sokovia Accords. I need maximum disruption because this will destabilise The Avengers. Got it?”

“Understood,” The Asset says, a little more pissily than normal.

“Virtue, you’re to get close to Steve Rogers. Pretend to be his long time friend, Missy Adler. Seduce him if you have to. He needs to not interfere in the plan ahead. Keep him away from the meeting.”

“Understood,” The Virtue parrots, feeling a sense of dread.

“Pull this off and we can strike at the very heart of the Avengers and obliterate them for good. I’ll oversee the first steps.”

From the way Rumlow kept clenching his jaw, The Virtue knew something was amiss. He was shaking slightly, agitated or maybe frightened.

“You’re going on a suicide mission,” she notes.

“I said speak when you’re spoken to,” Rumlow hits her around the face again. “What are you good for if you can’t follow orders? Do you need more time in the Chair?”

“No, Sir,” she looks straight ahead.

“Report to your quarters. You both ship out tomorrow morning.”

The Asset and Virtue leave, heading back to their glass room and the second they get inside, The Asset spins her around to check her face.

“Are you alright, Virtue?” he seems distressed.

“I’m fine. He’s not strong enough to do major damage,” she shakes her head.

“I’ll kill him,” he growls.

“You know you can’t,” she says warningly.

“He hit you. He hit you and now he’s telling you to seduce Captain America,” The Asset is angrier than you’ve seen him before. “I don’t like it at all, Virtue.”

“Me neither but we have our orders.”

“Fuck our orders,” he snarls.

“Shhhh!” she panics, putting a hand over his mouth. “We’re being monitored. Don’t say stuff like that. They’ll take us to the Chair.”

“I don’t care,” he pulls her into a fierce hug. “You’re mine. I don’t want anyone to touch you.”

“That’s our mission, Asset. I have no choice. I don’t want to but I have no choice.”

“Then I’ll kill Captain America afterwards,” the Asset declares. “But for now, we have tonight. Get in the bed.”

“Asset-“
He picks her up, throwing her over his shoulder as he strides to the bed, dropping her down gently and just covering her with his form. She tries to squirm out but he won’t let her go.

“Do you know what that bastard said to me?” he whispers in her ear. “Just before he debriefed us?”

“No?”

“He said we have another mission. We’re two supersoldiers and Hydra wants us to have children so they can study them, see if we can produce the next step in the evolutionary chain. I’m not doing it, Virtue. I’m not getting you pregnant for them. I’m not getting you pregnant just for them to take our child away and experiment on it.”

“Asset, I-”

“Call me that name,” he orders. “That name that slipped out.”

“James….I don’t want to be bred for their curiosity.”

“I won’t let you. I refuse. If we bear a child, it’s on our terms.”

“Are you suggesting we defect?” she whispers, under the pretence of being seductive for the cameras around.

“As soon as we can. I’m getting you outta here, doll.”

There was that pet name again. The Asset had gone from being this arrogant, mysterious assassin to this overprotective, chivalrous partner. Is this how they had always been? Had they planned to defect before? The Virtue found the idea of Hydra chasing them forever a horrifying prospect but being made to be apart from the Asset was a worse one. If Rumlow got his way, she thinks, he would only keep them in the same room for sex purposes before throwing them back out on separate missions.

The Mastery was too volatile together. She’d seen that on Rumlow’s report, his write up. She was good at reading upside down. He’d also written that the Asset was too compromised by his feelings for her and she would be his priority in a mission. Hydra was never planning to let them do a mission together again.

“Let’s do it,” she nods against him. “Now pretend we’re fucking for the cameras. I don’t trust them not to do something.”

“I’ll just fuck you for real,” the Asset smirks. “I’ll just finish a different way. No reason to deny our fun, right?”

Then he dives on her, harshly kissing any part of her he can, like he’s staking a claim….probably was. The Virtue gets the feeling he’s imprinting as much of himself as he can onto her before she has to play the part of Missy Adler to Captain America.

Not that she was complaining.

**
Steve was carefully making his way around the Hydra base you’d sent the photos from. Tony, Natasha, Wanda and Sam were bringing up the rear, scanning the rooms.

“Captain Pin Up gone AWOL?” Tony asks. “Not seeing any life forms in here.”

“Maybe she got them all?” Natasha offers.

Steve and Sam just exchange looks. He’d sworn his friend to secrecy over the fact you were no longer Missy. He couldn’t face telling the others you were a Hydra pawn, not when he still had the chance to save you. No one but him knew your involvement with Pietro’s death. He could still fix this.

“Try the lower floor,” Steve motions. “This one’s clean.”

They stalk down the stairs, noting the experimentation cells and wincing at the remaining smell of urine and blood. Whatever had been in there had been cleansed, that’s for sure. Some bodies still remained but they were twisted, unnatural. Possibly they were more experiments like Wanda was but they hadn’t gone as well.

“There’s a light over there,” Natasha points.

A corridor branches off the cells, winding down and down through the facility until it opens out into a room and Steve stops dead.

“Missy?” he breathes.

You’re sitting in a glass cell, beat black and blue with only scraps of clothing to cover yourself. You’re just on the floor, rocking back and forth.

“Jesus,” Tony mutters.

You looked up sharply before Steve sees a sense of relief on your face and you stood up, hand pressed on the glass. Was it really you though? You actually had some expression to your features.

“Steve? Guys? Oh God, thank God,” you laugh to yourself. “I thought I’d be stuck here forever.”

“We got your back,” Tony moves to the door of the cell, using his Iron Man gauntlet to blast the lock to pieces. “Say, dark hair kinda suits you, kid. Miss the red though.”

“And I miss clothes,” you quip.

It had to be you. The Virtue wouldn’t be making wisecracks. If you were still a Hydra agent you’d be trying to kill them…right?

“We’ll find you some,” Natasha comes in, bundling you into an embrace. “Come on, you look terrible.”

“Uh gee, thanks,” you shake your head. “You try going toe to toe with your supersoldier ex and see how you do.”

“Ex?” Steve says puzzled. “What’s going on?”

“Yeah, I heard Barnes was around,” Tony folds his arms. “Guessing the lover’s reunion didn’t go so well?”
You come out of the cell, standing in front of them all, catching Sam’s eye before looking shyly to the floor, “I managed to keep my sanity. Bucky didn’t. Bucky he…I tried to reason with him but….he just didn’t know me any more. Then he said some stuff about a supersoldier breeding program and locked me in here.”

“My god. Schmidt’s wish,” Steve breathes. “Are you alright?”

“No,” you draw your arms around yourself. “Buck and I….we got in a big fight, a really big fight before we came here. I think it’s done. I think it was over before he ever turned back into The Winter Soldier.”

“I’m sorry, Missy.”

This was definitely you. A Hydra assassin couldn’t fake this level of emotion and he could see you were doing the old thing of trying your hardest not to cry.

“Hey, if it makes you feel better, we got Rumlow once and for all,” Natasha offers.

“You did?” you seem surprised. “He said he had some mission or other…after he punched me in the face twice.”

“Yeah yeah, touching as this is, we need to get out,” Tony starts waving everyone to the exits. “Avengers meeting tomorrow. Barnes is clearly in the wind so there’s no point waiting around.”

“Alright Tony. Come on, Missy, let’s go,” Steve walks towards you, trying to help you forward but you just collapse a little, grabbing onto his suit for stability.

“Stevie?” you whisper. “Steve, did I kill someone when I….when I wasn’t me?”

“No here,” he murmurs back, scooping you up in his arms to carry you out of the facility.

He couldn’t bear to tell you what had happened and he most definitely was not going to discuss it with Wanda so close. Who knows what might happen?

Then he bundles you onto the Quinjet, firmly grasped in his lap before you seem to settle there to sleep.

Steve was immensely conflicted right now. He wanted to know what happened to Bucky, whether he was okay, but he also wanted to punch him for being a colossal ass and causing a fight. Were you two really over?

The way you were nuzzling into him right now, fingers curled in the collar of his suit, it felt intimate. This was more like during the Battle of New York and it was spinning his head. His mind was full of overprotectiveness, anger and that old deep pull in his gut that he used to have whenever you were around.

Ah geez, I’m back to being sweet on her. I have the worst timing. I need to be professional.

But he couldn’t be, not when you were practically curling yourself around him like this. It was like a dream he’d once had.

What the hell did you do Buck? Why is she broken right now?

He decided he’d just figure it out later. Right now, you needed a friend, you needed comfort and he’d give that to you happily. He’d go after Bucky later. The Winter Soldier was always bound to
turn up after all.

**

The Virtue couldn’t believe how easily Steve Rogers had believed the lie. It was sad in a way. Clearly he missed this Missy girl so much he was willing to accept anything told to him.

The Virtue had done extensive research on the role, even looked at old war propaganda films to get the right cadence, the mannerisms, the vocabulary. She read every letter this Missy had ever sent or received just to get a feel for how she would talk. She even managed to get hold of the dossiers from S.H.I.E.L.D regarding a very brief courtship between Missy and Steve.

The man still had feelings for her, that was certain. How terrible to bury them away in favour of your best friend.

“Missy, I’m glad you’re safe,” Steve whispers to her.

“Me too,” she murmurs back, putting on a wavering voice. “I was so scared. I sound like such a damn girl right now but I was scared.”

“Bucky, did he….he hurt you,” Steve is checking over her bruises.

That had probably been the hardest thing to pull off. The Virtue had run her plan by The Asset who begrudgingly commended her on the fight angle but steadfastly refused to hit her. She needed it though, she needed to sell the interaction. Nobody was as strong as The Asset to even scuff up her skin slightly. He had to do it.

After a lot of shouting and screaming, The Asset finally helped, hitting her only hard enough to cause the bruises and he cried through the entire ordeal. The Virtue could never doubt that the Asset was hers and hers alone.

“This was after the fight,” The Virtue recounts. “When he wasn’t Bucky any more. I couldn’t say anything to snap him outta it. I still had to try, even though he said godawful things about me before.”

“What like?”

The Virtue thinks, giving herself time to come up with the lie by sighing long and hard. She thinks to the Asset and his possessive behaviour. Perhaps Bucky was the same with this Missy girl.

“Said I was cheatin’. Said I was leadin’ men on.”

“Ah Buck,” Steve groans, rolling his eyes. “He never understood you only had eyes for him.”

“He called me easy because I laughed at something Sam said,” she looks to the floor. “Can’t a gal be friendly?”

“I’m sorry, Missy. Look, you get some rest. I’ll be right here and then we can talk more when we get back to the US.”
“Can I stay here and fall asleep?” The Virtue uses her best innocent voice.

“Sure. Just no drooling on me this time. I remember what you were like,” Steve jokes.

The Virtue feels odd as she sits there, closing her eyes and curling up on his lap. There was the vaguest feeling like she’d done this before. The way this Steve Rogers was with her, it was comforting in a way….but why? Why was this familiar and why was she so relaxed about it?

Something wasn’t right…but the mission came first. The mission always came first. Distract Steve Rogers, seduce him if you have to. Keep him away from the Sokovia Accords meeting in Vienna.

She didn’t mean to fall asleep on her target though.

**

Steve carried you silently off the Quinjet, the rest of the Avengers keeping their noise to a minimum. Even Tony seemed unusually respectful as he set you down in your new room in the Avengers Tower.

“Hey Cap, she gonna be okay? Looks like she took a pretty rough beating,” Tony asks quietly as Steve comes out of the room again. “I know you’re all big on Barnes being alive again but if he can do that to a supersoldier…”

“I don’t know, Tony,” Steve answers honestly. “I’ve never seen her like this. She’s reserved. Whatever happened must have been pretty huge. I just hope…I just hope…”

He couldn’t say the words. He hoped to god a beating was the worst thing that had happened to you in there.

“Whatever she needs,” Tony places a hand on his shoulder. “She’s a pain in my ass but I like the old girl. She sasses back and she looks good in tights.”

“Thanks,” Steve laughs a little. “I’ll let you know how she is. I think she’ll just be smartin’ from the break up more than anything, if I know her.”

“Can’t be easy having your dead boyfriend come back to life then go all Hydra psycho on you,” Tony nods wisely. “Hell, if all my ex’s came back for me, I’d be in so much trouble that not even the Iron Man suits could help me out.”

“Try dating them rather than sleeping with them,” Steve raises an eyebrow. “You’re less likely to rack up numbers then.”

“Gee, thanks grandpa,” Tony rolls his eyes. “Welcome to the 21st century where you don’t have to date the girl down the street. You know there are more women out there than descendants of Peggy Carter and Missy, right?”

Steve shoves Tony a little and the billionaire just sniggers to himself before walking away. Steve walks back into the room to find you awake and staring at your surroundings.
“Good sleep?” Steve asks.

“I’m really free, aren’t I?”

God you sound so small. Steve can’t help but come next to you and wrap you in his arms. You stiffened for a second but then you fully relaxed into him, making soft little noises as he petted your hair.

“Yeah, you’re free. You’re safe. I promise you.”

“Will you stay with me tonight?”

“Like we used to when we were first unfrozen? Yeah, yeah I’ll stay. Get in the bed.”

And he held you from dusk to dawn, spooning into the back of you as you intertwined your fingers with his. Just like the old days, before Bucky came back.

**

“Mr Rogers, Miss Barnes, you’re requested in the penthouse,” Friday’s voice comes through the speakers.

The Virtue stirs, realising she’s wrapped in a pair of heavy arms and she gently grinds her hips backwards, not remembering the Asset was not behind her.

“Uh…Missy? What are you doing?” Steve’s voice says in confusion and embarrassment.

“Oh god, I’m sorry,” the Virtue corrects herself. “I….forget it.”

“It’s alright,” Steve gets up quickly, flushing red. “Come on, Tony’s waiting.”

She dresses herself in typical clothing, picking out a set of overalls from the closet, inexplicably drawn to them. The way it hangs on her….even that was familiar. The Virtue thought she was going crazy. Why else would she be having deja vu with her enemy?

“Wow, haven’t seen you in those for years,” Steve chuckles softly when you meet him on the top floor. “Last time was probably before we went after Schmidt.”

“I just wanted to,” she shrugs. “They’re comfortable.”

“That’s what you always used to say, along with ‘I’ll dance on my ma’s grave before I wear a dress. It’s not practical’.”

“Well it isn’t,” The Virtue agrees, she agrees wholeheartedly with Missy’s attitude towards clothing. Practical was best.

“Same old Missy,” Steve shakes his head, smiling warmly.

They get into the penthouse, pulling up a chair on the table and are joined by the rest of the Avengers bar Thor and Dr Banner. The Virtue is relieved at that at least. If this mission didn’t
work, the last thing she wanted was to fight a god and a raging monster. The others she could take
down easily.

“So….the UN saw what happened in Lagos with Rumlow. They want to put in place something
called the Sokovia Accords,” Tony starts. “It means the government has oversight on our missions.
It means we’re accountable for what we do. After everything that happened with Ultron…I think
we should sign. Our actions have consequences, sometimes fatal ones. I would like everyone to
join me on this.”

“I agree,” Natasha nods.

“I’ve not decided,” Wanda stares at the table.

The Virtue wonders if the plans to take her out are still active. It would be too much of a disruption
to the current mission to break off and do that though.

“I’m signing,” Rhody agrees.

It seems like most were in favour so far but she couldn’t let Steve say yes and go to Vienna. She
needed to argue the case against.

“I’m not,” The Virtue says stubbornly.

“Scuse me?” Tony blinks. “After we had to save your ass from a Hydra bunker, you don’t want to
be told the safe missions to do?”

“No,” you stare him out. “Give the government autonomy on our missions and it won’t be long
before they’re telling us who the bad guys are. We work that out for ourselves, not some jerk in a
pinstripe suit who wants war. I thought you dismantled your weapons division to stop new tech
being used in the battlefield? We’re the new tech, Tony. Imagine a government with unlimited
access to metahumans.”

“She’s right,” Steve nods.

“Oh you’re just agreeing with your star spangled girlfriend,” Tony rolls his eyes.

“I’m not. She’s right,” Steve stands up. “This serum was given to us on the basis that we stay good
people and we fight for what is right. We can’t do that if someone is telling us where the line
stands.”

“People have died, Cap, because of us,” Tony’s face turns a little red as he gets more frustrated.

“There’s always collateral in any war,” Steve says firmly. “You can’t use that as an excuse to hide
away and have someone else make the hard decisions. You’ve not experienced enough of battle,
son.”

“Don’t you ‘son’ me!” Tony gets angry. “We’re dangerous! Vision, talk some sense into them.”

The Virtue has never seen something like Vision before and it fascinates her. Vision was the AI
Jarvis mixed with the Mind Stone in a vibranium body. It was a combination that shouldn’t have
worked but yet, here he was, calmly explaining his theory.

“There’s a correlation between the amount of metahumans announcing themselves and world
ending catastrophes,” Vision surmises. “They’re driving each other.”
“Or you could say that these events would happen anyway and we’re goddamn lucky to be so prepared,” you counter.

“Yes, that’s also valid,” Vision acquiesces. “I’m merely presenting the data.”

“You know what, you two don’t wanna sign, fine,” Tony folds his arms.

“I’m not signing either,” Sam stands up in solidarity.

“All three of you, get out. We’ll do this ourselves,” Tony hisses.

“Wait, just-”

“Out!” Tony points to the door.

“You’re an ass, Stark,” The Virtue adds, remembering Missy’s penchant for insults.

“And you’re too wrapped up in your white knight complex, Barnes…or should I say Adler now,” Tony narrows his eyes.

The Virtue didn’t have to fake the rage that built up in her and she stalked towards Tony, fists balled. Steve had to physically pull her back.

“You’re a coward!” you yell. “Your daddy would be rollin’ in his grave!”

Where had that come from? The Virtue hadn’t meant to say it. She just wanted to insult Tony but instead it had gone personal, like she knew some backstory instinctively.

“Talk about my dad one more time and I’ll fry your head off,” Tony warns.

“Come on, Missy,” Steve drags her away to the lift. “He won’t see sense.”

When you get to the quarters again, Steve tells Sam to pack everything he can. They wouldn’t be staying anymore.

“I’m sorry this turned out like this,” Steve sighs, his hands on his hips. “Not the homecoming I bet you wanted.”

“I’m already on the shitlist for Hydra faking the news footage,” she reminds him.

“I took care of that,” Steve does a short laugh. “I proved it was fake. If you hadn’t charged into taking out that base, you could’ve come home the next day.”

“Since when do I ever do anything that’s sensible though,” The Virtue shrugs.

“That’s true. Guess we’ll be on the run again soon. They’ll declare us war criminals.”

“Now you’ll know what my life has been like.”

“Missy?”

“Yeah?”

“Let’s find Bucky, bring him back to us and try and carry on as a team again. Maybe we can make a new Howling Commandos.”

“But we’re not on the best of terms,” she pushes. “I doubt he’d wanna work with me again and…”
“I know,” Steve pulls her into a hug. “It’s complicated, huh? We’ll figure it out. We’ve been friends since we could walk, all of us. Even if you’re not going steady, maybe we can salvage the friendship.”

“Maybe. I just…I’m sorry, Stevie, for everything.”

The Virtue gives her best batting eyelashes and Steve seems to lap it up. He gazes at her like she’s the best thing in the world. Steve really was a poor bastard to be in a love triangle with his two friends.

“You don’t have anything to be sorry for. You were following your heart, Missy. Sometimes it doesn’t work out,” Steve assures her.

“You’re amazing sometimes Steve Rogers,” she goes for flattery and sees him turn bright pink. “Please keep me safe, promise me.”

“I’ll never let them get you again, I swear,” Steve says earnestly.

The Virtue has him hook, line and sinker.

“Promise me,” she says more urgently.

“I promise.”

Then she leans up and kisses him gently. The trick was to not go full on, to leave them wanting more. She pulled away quickly and is surprised to realise she’s not able to stop a blush from creeping into her cheeks.

“Missy, this is not a good idea, I-”

But she does it again and his protests only last a few seconds before his arms are winding around her back, keeping her close.

“No,” he leans away suddenly. “You’ve only just left Bucky. It’s not right, it’s-”

“Oh…Oh I’m sorry,” the Virtue babbles. “I thought…oh god, I need to go.”

She spins on her heels, walking quickly to the door before she feels a tug at her shirt and she turns round to see a conflicted Steve Rogers bearing down upon her. He wanted her, that was certain but he was being kept back by a sense of code, a sense of honour.

“It’s alright, shhh, it’s alright,” he says softly. “I was just surprised. Are you sure you want this? I…I don’t want you to change your mind or regret anything.”

“I don’t want you too either,” she says quietly.

“We’ve always had something between us, right?” Steve’s eyes travel from hers to her lips. “When the Battle of New York happened.”

“I think… I think what’s been holding me back has been this…this sense of loyalty, loyalty to Bucky but he only seems to want me when it suits him. I can’t live like that, Stevie. I need someone to love me completely, for who I am, someone who gets excited to spend their life with me.”

“I know, sweetheart,” Steve strokes her cheek lightly. “I told you Bucky might break your heart back in Brooklyn.”
“I’m sorry I didn’t listen and I’m sorry I kissed you just now. That was wrong of me. You-”

It was like a switch flipped and Steve felt like he had permission. He pushed her back against the door and gave her a kiss that would rival The Asset’s with its level of passion. It was easy to get caught up in it, to let it overwhelm her.

His hands caught in her hair, pulling her to him as the kiss got messier and her body was just naturally responding to his surprisingly dominating presence. He reminded her a lot of the Asset but where the Asset was territorial and needy, Steve was domineering with an edge of gentleness. There was no bruising finger marks but his sheer size made The Virtue feel tiny as she was pressed up against him.


“I missed you too,” she parrots and the two meet in another bruising kiss and she’s letting her hands wander up his shirt, feeling the hard muscle underneath. “I need you Steve.”

“You know I’ve never…” he trails off. “Does that bother you?”

The Virtue balked for a second. Seducing someone was all well and good but Steve was a virgin and the Virtue could tell he was a good man too. She was starting to feel uneasy about this whole thing. Maybe The Asset was right, they should’ve defected before the mission started.

“I’ve not got a whole heap of experience myself,” she finally says.

Was she really going to deflower Captain America of all people?

“If you’re sure,” he says, searching her eyes.

“If you’re sure,” she answers back.

He kisses her long and hard, “I am. I want you, Missy.”

Then he picks her up, her thighs supported by his strong hands and leads her to the bed, setting her down gently there. Then he’s leaning over her, continuing the increasingly heated kiss.

_Forgive me, Asset. I shouldn’t be doing this. I should be with you. This was a mistake. Forgive me Steve, this shouldn’t be your first time. I’ll try my best to make it memorable for you._

She didn’t think Steve was capable of being so sure of things, given he was inexperienced but he was actually teasing her, soft little bites to her bottom lip, butterfly kisses to her neck. It was driving her mad.

“Steven Grant Rogers, you stop that at once,” The Virtue blurts out.

She didn’t remember ever seeing a middle name for him. Where had that come from? Why was she spouting information she shouldn’t know?

“I think you like it, Vera,” Steve laughs, his hands skipping down her ribcage.

Vera…that sparked something in the Virtue’s brain. Could…could she actually be Missy? It would make sense with the names she kept coming out with, it would make sense why she felt such a pull towards Steve Rogers.

_But does that then mean the Asset is Bucky Barnes? No, wait! James Buchanan Barnes…JAMES!_
But she had no time to dwell on this internal puzzle solving. Steve was already back against her, unclipping the buckles of her overalls and then slipping his hand up her shirt.

_Oh god, am I the one in the love triangle? Am I Missy? Does that mean...does that mean I’m ruining a friendship right now?_

The Virtue couldn’t think any more without sparking pain in her skull so she opted to file it away, to think on it later. She couldn’t ruin the moment. She had to go through with this. For the mission.

For the mission.
Stay On The Job And Get It Over!

Chapter Summary

The Virtue has to keep Steve away from the Sokovia Accords signing at all costs.

Chapter Notes

Chapter Warnings: Smut, ANGST (Oh the angst!)

(Proof reading errors likely, switching between second and third person a lot)

Happy reading!
- TLP xx

Steve couldn't believe this was happening.

Sure he may have dreamed of this when you both had that little fling a couple of years ago but he never expected you to actually want him. You'd always been so hung up on Bucky, even Bucky's memory when you thought he was dead.

Now you were in his arms, kissing him with a kind of passion he didn't think you'd ever have for him. Did you like him all along? Was Bucky just a flash in the pan and you'd realised Steve had always been waiting for you?

God your skin was so warm and soft. He couldn't stop running his hands over you, feeling you arch into his touch. The noises you made....Steve would never forget them. He locked them in his memories, afraid this was all going to be some horrible dream and he'd wake up any second.

He has your overalls unclipped and your shirt rucked up over your bra, just mouthing at you in a line down your torso. A soft contented sigh comes from your lips and the muttering of his name.

*Oh Missy, you have no idea what I feel for you darlin'.*

You sit up slightly, dragging the shirt off completely and tugging at the hem of his. Steve is extremely clumsy taking it off, his fingers fumbling in his nervousness and excitement.
Your fingers are tracing across his muscles, making him shudder slightly under your touch. There's this kind of intenseness to your gaze and he's not sure why but he takes it as you being very interested in his body.

“Take these off me,” you say, indicating the overalls which were pooled at your waist.

Steve wastes no time in doing so, leaving you in just some white cotton underwear. For some reason the sweetness of it drives him wild. You even have white tiny socks on and he just thinks it's the hottest thing ever.

“What's wrong?” you ask, looking uncharacteristically shy and insecure.

“Nothing, I'm just admiring,” he reassures you. “You are beautiful.”

He moves back up your body, feeling the heat from your blush as he nudges your cheek, his lips finding yours again as he moves with instinct in between your legs.

“Are you really sure?” you break away.

“Missy, are you scared I'm gonna run away?”

“Everyone else does.”

“Sweetheart, I'm going nowhere. Let's get you out of the rest of those clothes.”

With a lot more confidence than he was actually feeling, he managed to undo your bra without being a bumbling idiot. You looked a lot different than the times Steve had seen you pre-serum. The shape of your chest was definitely womanly but you still had that slight burn mark from where you were fixing up a plane and the engine sparked.

Then the both of you were naked and Steve was trying so hard to control his breathing. If he was the same skinny kid he used to be, he was sure he'd be having an asthma attack right now looking at your, frankly, statuesque body.

“Don't keep a gal waiting, you mook,” you prompt him.

God, you were so shy. Steve got to see this side of you more than anyone else had ever done but he never expected you'd be timid when it came to sex. He always thought you'd be one of those aggressive dames who took control. You always liked to fight bigger men than yourself so to see you here, now, it just stirred that sense of protectiveness in him...and a little bit of aggression of his own.

Why should he not show you how much he wanted you? I mean, gee, Bucky was incredibly forward and you seemed to like that at the time.

He made a decision in his head and acted.

**

The Virtue was getting anxious.
She kept assessing Steve's expression over and over. It felt like he didn't want her, that he somehow instinctively knew she wasn't Missy. Was this plan even going to work? Did she want it to work?

Then he dived on her and she realised he did want her and he wanted her badly. Pent up lust was behind every movement of his broad body as he teased her with harsh grabs and then gentle touches.

Then his tongue was swirling around her nipple, languid strokes with tiny flicks and she was completely astonished. She was even more astonished when his hand came between her legs, finding the surprising wetness and using that to ease crooked fingers into her, the pad of his thumb pressed firmly on her clit as he found a rhythm, drawing a loud moan from her.

“Fuck, Steve!” the words tumble out. “Holy shit, how do you know how to do this?!”

He looks up for a second, a mixture of shyness and stroked ego, “The internet. So helpful.”

Steve Rogers was a fast learner. With every thrust of his fingers, he was zoning in on what made her keen, what made her grip the sheets. His confidence grew exponentially until he lowered himself down her body, face hovering between her legs.

“Look at me, Missy.”

That was the voice he used when giving orders and The Virtue instantly looked up, snapping to attention. But...how had she known about that voice, the tone of it? Why had she responded so automatically?

“My god, you are radiant,” he drinks in your rumpled state before he lowers his mouth, hot breath making you squirm before his tongue finds you, lapping with broad strokes. “I had no idea how you'd taste but I need more.”

Then he's burying his tongue inside you before dragging it back up to your clit, moaning obscenely and the Virtue is wondering how the hell America's golden boy turned out to be so bawdy. She wasn't expecting to enjoy this.

That conflicted greatly in her head as she wondered what The Asset would make of this. He had already stated he'd kill Steve after this mission for touching her but if he knew she actually liked this...

The feeling of the band of pressure tightening in her abdomen brought her thoughts back to the now and she tensed up against him, Steve wrapping his hands around her thighs to keep her close as she came hard, writhing against his face.

“Fuck, oh God, fuck, Steve,” she pants. “I had no idea-”

“You think I wouldn't research how?” he shyly grins. “I wanted to be prepared in case someone came along. A guy like me didn't get any chances back in Brooklyn but now, I don't want to disappoint someone.”

“And you didn't,” she runs her fingers through his hair. “That was amazing, Stevie.”

“I loved seeing you that way,” he murmurs, crawling back up your body. “I've dreamt of it for years.”

The Virtue's emotions broke a little. She wasn't supposed to have any. She was supposed to be faking this and she just felt immense pity for the man who believed he was finally getting the girl
of his dreams. She couldn't let the moment be ruined for him.

“Well then come get the whole show,” she grins. “Make love to me, Steve.”

She went for the old fashioned term, knowing it would resonate with him.

“Darlin', with pleasure,” he smiles warmly, kissing her softly.

There's the sound of a wrapper being torn and then the press of his body against hers as he slowly eases himself in until he's buried up to the hilt. He stays like that for a time, just looking at her with such adoration in his eyes before kissing her on the forehead gently and starting to thrust.

“I've wanted this for so long, Missy,” he rasps before he surprises her by picking his pace up.

She was expecting him to make love but Steve was not doing that. He was fucking her, hard. He was fucking her like The Asset fucks her, as if he's staking a claim. Granted, Steve was not as heavy on the marking but his stamina was incredible as he relentlessly pounded his cock into her, making her grip his biceps just to keep herself centred.

“Steve, yes! More!”

She shouts words of encouragement and loudly. The more she praises him, the more he doubles his efforts and The Virtue has never seen someone so keen to please. He mouths at her neck as he moves, changing to more of a grinding move that has her moaning noisily and she's bucking her hips to meet his, just for more friction.

“That's my babygirl,” he groans. “God, I wanna see you cum again. Think you can do that for me, sweetheart?”

“Uh huh,” is all she gets out, harshly picking up her pace until she's on the edge again and then she's screaming, certain one of the Avengers is going to notice what's going on now.

“Good girl,” Steve praises, kissing her cheeks.

He lasts a few thrusts more before burying himself so deep that she clenches around him as he comes, the aftershocks of her orgasm extending, making the pleasure last longer.

He's resting on his forearms now, forehead touched to hers.

“God...oh god....that was.....”

“I hope that was okay for your first time,” she says and it's an honest statement.

Whatever she is, Hydra assassin or no, she knew Steve was a good man and deserved more.

“Are you kidding?” he laughs. “That was perfect. Thank you.”

He's still for a while, just content to be until she feels him crease his forehead up and move off her, rolling her into an embrace on your sides.

“Any regrets?”

“No. You?”

“No.”
Steve felt like he'd had his wishes granted.

He'd just made love to you, to *you*, the girl who he'd wanted for such a long time but never got the courage to ask until it was too late. It still felt like a dream.

He pulled the blankets up, covering your body so you'd stay warm and just stroked your hair. It was still odd to see you as a brunette but you looked beautiful no matter what colour your hair was.

There was a knock at the door followed by someone trying the handle a few seconds later.

“Busy!” he shouts, hoping whoever it was would go away.

Then there's the sound of something being jammed into the lock before a soft click happens and the door swings open revealing Natasha on the other side who launches into a monologue.

“Hey so, I know you're not agreeing to the Sokovia accords and I just wanted to run something by......oh my god. Oh my god! Are you two....did you just fuck?!”

“Romanoff, language,” Steve barks to hide his furious blush.


“Did you have a point or do you just go around randomly picking locks?” you sass whilst pulling the covers up higher over you.

“Keeps the skills sharp,” she shrugs. “And my point is I'm going to Vienna to head up the talks and I want you two to come because I want you to see why we're agreeing.”

“I know why you're agreeing but I don't *agree* with it,” you shake your head.

“Steve?” Natasha asks. “Not even for moral support?”

“It *is* the last sighting they had of Buck in Vienna,” Steve sighs.

You go incredibly tense next to him but he brushes it off as a natural reaction considering what had happened between you and Bucky.

“You can't be suggesting we go for Bucky?” you look up at him with such fearful eyes.

“Missy, it's okay. We can go to see if things go smoothly and we may get our friend back.”

“Natasha, can you give us a minute?” you ask.

“Sure, oh and next time, invite me in, okay?” she winks before leaving.

Steve is sure she's just saying that to make him embarrassed. She often brought up that kiss during the fall of S.H.I.E.L.D just to torment him.

“What's up, Missy?” he pulls you closer.
“What if I don't want him back?” you say in a wavering voice. “What if I want it to just be us?”

“Sweetheart, he's our friend. He's been our friend for decades. You're gonna have to face him sometime.”

“I guess but promise me you'll keep me safe from him. I don't want to be part of the Hydra breeding program.”

“I swear I will not let that happen,” Steve says earnestly.

“Alright, we can go to Vienna but only if we stay in a hotel and don't interfere and if we see Bucky, I...I'll just have to put on my big girl britches and suck it up.”

“There's my girl,” Steve kisses the tip of your nose. “Are you sure you don't want to see the Accords meeting?”

“No,” you shake your head. “I've had enough of bureaucrats for one life time. Plus we can do more of this in the hotel whilst we wait for them to be done.”

“You liked it that much, huh?” Steve laughs.

He was so happy to hear that. Honestly, he was damn near terrified of how he'd performed but your reactions seemed so genuine that he felt a bit better about his prowess. Knowing you wanted more only gave him further confidence.

“I did,” you smirk. “God bless the internet.”

**

The Virtue was in Vienna, trying her best to keep Steve away from the Sokovia Accords meeting.

It was hard at first. Natasha Romanoff seemed to be doing her best to sway Steve's opinion at every opportunity on the journey over and it'd taken several well placed arguments to keep the Captain on side. Once The Virtue was in the hotel, however...

She discovered there was this pent up sexual appetite within Steve Rogers that surprised her immensely. She barely had to do any work in keeping him in the bed rather than letting him wander to the meeting.

It ate away at her though, knowing she was making him happy, making his dreams come true of thinking she was now his lover. The Virtue thought she'd never had to do this line of distraction before and that's why it was affecting her so much. She was much better at killing things. This...this was confusing.

She found herself becoming more and more comfortable around Steve and there were moments where she caught herself not thinking about The Asset at all. Knowing she would shortly be destroying Steve's life only made it worse.

“Dime for your thoughts?” Steve asks, pulling her to lie on his broad chest, gently stroking her
newly dyed red hair.

“Just seems a mighty big change from last year,” she murmurs.

“I know,” he says kindly. “But I'm not going to question how we ended up here. I'm just happy we did.”

There was some part of the Virtue that was fighting to want to spill the entire mission, to rip the band aid off and let Steve know before it was too late and he got his feelings annihilated. There was barely hours left before The Asset was supposed to make his move.

“Missy, I wanna say something and don't feel pressured to say a response, okay?”

Oh no. She knew what was coming. This had gotten too deep.

“Sure,” she says hesitantly.

“I just wanted you to know that....ah gee, I'm not very good at this. I just wanted to say I...I love you and I know you don't feel the same way but I hope in time you could.”

“Steve I-”

“It's alright, sweetheart. I'm not an idiot. I know I'm your fall back guy,” he smiles a little sadly. “I just promised myself I wouldn't keep my feelings bottled up any more so now it's out in the open.”

There was a pull in The Virtue's gut. Poor poor Steve. He knew on some level that this was very one sided. She wished it didn't have to be like this.

She knew she was growing fond of him and this was dangerous territory. When The Asset made his move, she needed to run and run fast before this all got too messy to deal with.

“Thank you for telling me,” she responds after a time. “I just...I need time to sort my head out.”

“I know,” he kissed her forehead. “There's no rush.”

The bed slightly moved and there was a minor vibration through the walls. On instinct, The Asset sprung up from the bed and ran to the window of the hotel room, peering through the curtains to see a fireball curling up from the building where the meeting was taking place.

The Asset was early. She'd need to move. Now.

“Steve, something's happened,” she says, running to put on the unfamiliar Captain Liberty suit.

Then Steve is at the window, his face falling, “My god. Oh my god. We need to help.”

“Get your suit on,” she barks, pulling the last zipper up.

Steve dressed fast for a guy and in no time at all he was in his Captain America suit, the shield tucked into the holster on his back. He bends down into a suitcase, retrieving something and hands it to her.

“Thought you might like that back sometime,” he nods.

It was an almost circular disk with a grip handle, spikes radiating out from the central point in a kind of metal that seemed fluid yet stable. A searing pain shot through The Virtue's brain as a flash of a scene echoed in her mind.
Looking at the weapon in her hand, she just seemed to know the name for it instantly. The Liberty Crown. The Virtue's mind bent even more trying to process why she was having these flashbacks, these memories, the intuition.

“Yeah I know,” Steve says, mistaking her expression for reverence. “I couldn't let them keep it in a museum, could I? My gal needs her crown.”

“I've missed this.”

The Virtue felt like those words weren't even her own. They were said automatically like someone else had taken over.

“Come on, we need to go,” Steve snaps her out of it and both of them race out into the streets of Vienna.

**

There was carnage at the blast site. Injured parties ran here and there, screams and wails sounded out against the chorus of the sirens, bodies lay on the floor where they'd been pulled out.

The Virtue took advantage of the chaos to slip away from Steve, who was helping the paramedics before moving to a payphone some three streets away and dialling the number she'd memorised.

“Yes?” comes the terse voice on the line.


“High rise off the main street. Level twelve.”

Then The Asset hung up.

She made her way to the building, climbing up the fire escape rather than use the main entrance before she slipped into the open window. She'd barely gone five steps before The Asset was on her, pinning her to the wall.

“Mission report,” he snarls, his blue eyes boring into hers.

“Mission successful. Captain Rogers kept away from the meeting.”

“Virtue. Report all.”

“Don't ask me that,” she stares him out. “You know you don't want to hear it.”

A wounded growl starts in his chest as he kisses her harshly and it feels like her thoughts are becoming easier to process now. This was familiar. There was no confusion about feelings. The magnetism with The Asset was far too great.

“Was he better than me?” he asks, looking almost demented with jealousy.
“No. Just different.”

“I will break his fucking neck,” The Asset hisses. “You're mine, Virtue.”

“Don't kill him.”

The Asset looks positively murderous, “Why the fuck not? Are you sentimental over him?”

“He's a good man. He doesn't deserve it.”

“Then go back and be Steve Roger's apple pie soldier if you're so sweet on him,” out comes the American accent again.

“That's not what I'm saying-”

The noise of The Asset slamming his metal arm through the wall next to her makes her respond by pushing him away so violently that he falls onto the floor.

“Listen to me!” she shouts, pinning him down and sitting on his chest. “If I wanted Steve Rogers I'd be with Steve Rogers. I came back to you, you fucking moron.”

“This is it Virtue. This is our last mission ever. Fuck Hydra, fuck their agenda. I can't sit aside and know you're with another man again. We're going rogue.”

“They'll kill us,” she whispers.

“I'll keep you safe,” he says earnestly. “I just...we're the Mastery, we're a team, we're partners. Nobody is going to separate us again.”

“Do you hate me, Asset?” she asks quietly.

“No,” he shakes his head, breaking out of her grip and sitting up to hold her. “I hate what Hydra made you do. I know you didn't have a choice and I know everything must have been confusing. I'm just...I love you. I think that's the right words. I love you and I was scared you would leave me.”

“I'm here, James,” the name slips out again.

“Please don't leave me,” he murmurs, tucking his face into your chest. “I won't kill the Captain, just don't leave me, Vera.”

Vera?

“Why did you call me that?” she looks down in alarm.

“I don't know,” he screws his face up, trying to remember something. “I just said it. It came out.”

“Vera is the real first name of Missy Adler,” she grabs his face. “James is the real first name of Bucky Barnes. Asset...Asset are you sure this is all we've ever been? There are times you speak with a different accent.”

“And you hum tunes you shouldn't know if we've lived in Hydra all our lives,” The Asset adds. “There are things that don't make sense to me either.”

“Are we them?”
“I don't know, Virtue. Would you like to figure it out with me?”

“Yes, I-”

But she doesn't get a chance to finish that sentence. There's a hammering at the door and she jumps up, ready for a fight. The Asset retrieves his bag, slinging it over his neck before Steve kicks the door down.

“Bucky?” he seems incredibly confused. “What did you do? They said you blew up the Sokovia Accords meetings. That you killed the King of Wakanda.”

The Asset says nothing. He's just got this strange expression on his face.

“Missy? How did you find him?” Steve looks at the Virtue.

“I know his tactics as The Winter Soldier,” she lies. “Just stay back. He's delicate.”

“We've not got time,” Steve shakes his head. “They're coming. They-”

The windows get shot out and The Virtue barrels past Steve at the same time as The Asset does, launching themselves down the staircase and jumping down several flights before setting off down a corridor. They fling themselves through a window, falling down to the roof of the adjacent building and rolling as they hit the rough surface.

“I have a bike nearby,” The Asset tells her as they're running. “Hold on to me.”

They reach the edge of the roof and she grabs around his neck as he jumps, using his metal arm to dig into the side of the building to slow the progress until they hit the street and jump on a motorbike.

The Virtue sits on the back, facing away from the Asset as she takes guns out of his bag, prepping them.

“We've got a live one,” The Asset looks into the rear view mirrors.

She looks up to see something that startles her. A man. A man in what appeared to be a black...cat costume? He was almost running on all fours across the tops of the cars behind them.

“Virtue, focus!” The Asset barks and she raises her gun, putting two bullets neatly into the area of the heart.

It does nothing though. It doesn't even knock him back. There's this strange purple corona that seems to skitter across his black suit before settling down. She tries again, this time in the head but the same thing happens.

“He won't go down! Got some kind of bullet proof suit,” she yells above the noise of the traffic.

“Hang on!”

She spots Steve in the distance, riding the top of a van and he seems to be catching up to the attacker, knocking him off a car with his shield.

“Step on it!” she orders, using a bullet to set a jeep's engine on fire before it explodes, blasting the man into the side of the tunnel they'd driven into.

The Asset weaved in and out of the traffic at high speed but she could see Steve was gaining and
the cat costumed guy was recovering already, sprinting at full pelt towards the bike.

He leaped from an SUV, claws extending from his fingers before he slashed the tyres of the bike, rolling off to the side as the vehicle kicked and threw both The Virtue and The Asset off. She bounces off the road, skidding until she feels hands picking her up.

It's Steve.

“What the heck was that?!” he yells. “You blew up a civilian!”

The game was up. The mission was over. The Virtue didn't need to keep up the Missy pretence...well...if it was a pretence.

She shucks out of his grip, running for the fight ahead of her where The Asset was getting punched hard. She tackles the man, trying to rip his helmet off. If she could expose his face, he'd be weak there.

Shots are fired nearby and she looks up to see James Rhodes in the War Machine suit, hovering above.

“Enough!” he shouts. “Missy, get off him. Barnes, get on the ground. You're under arrest.”

Knowing this was not the time to continue, she slides off before backing away towards The Asset. Police sirens were getting closer and she knew S.H.I.E.L.D would be here soon. If they got caught now, they'd be sent to the Raft.

From above her, Sam Wilson descends in his Falcon suit.

“Get outta here,” Rhodey says, frowning. “This doesn't concern you. This is about Barnes.”

“Hey, I go where Cap goes,” Sam folds his arms.

“солдат, стоячая труба,” The Virtue addresses The Asset who nods.

She may not be highly proficient at Russian but it got her point across. They were standing on a sewer grate.

“What did you say?” Steve looks at her suspiciously. “Was that...was that Russian?”

“Uh...Steve,” Sam looks at her expression and her body which was coiling in preparation. “Hate to break it to you but I don't think this is Missy if she's speaking Russian.”

The Asset drops quickly, just as the police arrive, wrenching the grate up and throwing it at Rhodey's face where he flips over in the air. The Virtue jumps down, followed by The Asset and they sprint down the network of tunnels as quickly as possible. If they got caught, there was no escaping a bullet or a blast. It was too narrow.

“Up here,” The Asset says after navigating the maze.

He climbs up a ladder, kicking the top open and pulling her up and out before securing the grate, smashing the metal around it so it would buckle and become difficult to open.

“Guess your American hero knows,” The Asset remarks, smoothing his errant hair behind his ears.

“Had to sometime,” she sighs. “Who was the man chasing us?”
“No clue,” The Asset shakes his head. “That was tech I've never seen before.”

“We need to move,” she looks around herself at the warehouse they're in. “They'll be searching for us.”

“Where do you wanna go?”

“There's an empty Hydra safehouse in Norway.”

“Then we'll go there. Borders aren't too clever around the Scandinavian countries.”

There's a small tinkling of something like metal dropping before they both turn around to spot a device on the floor. There's no time to react before it blasts open and knocks The Virtue back hard into the wall where she slams her head so hard, she mercifully blacks out.

**

“Are they gonna wake up sometime or did I kill them?” comes a worried voice.

“They're fine. They're tougher than you think,” comes another.

“Oh my god,” you groan, trying to sit up and feeling like your head is swimming. “Whoever hit me, I'm gonna knock 'em into next Sunday. Goddamn.”

“What did I do?” you hear another voice.

You open your eyes, blinking against the harsh fluorescent strips above you and find you're handcuffed to a pipe. Steve and Sam are sitting nearby, watching you warily. Bucky is behind you, chained up as well.

“I think the safer question would be, what didn't you do,” Sam sighs.

Steve just looks incredibly tense, staring at you with an expression you're not sure how to read. It keeps changing between concern, fury and sadness.

“Stevie?” you ask. “Why in the Sam Heck am I chained up? Where the hell are we? Why...hey, my hair is red again?!”

“Doll, don't you remember?” Bucky cuts in softly. “The base. We had that fight and you went to the base and got caught by Hydra. They used gas on us.”

“Gas I....” you trail off.

Bits and pieces flooded back. The memory of your argument, the experimentation victims. Screaming at Sam to leave.

“Oh no,” you mutter, feeling horrified. “How many days?”

“Don't ask that, Missy,” Sam tries to calm you down.

“How many god-fucking-damn days?! How long was I not me?” you yell, feeling a little hysterical.
“A week or so,” Steve answers quietly.

“Did I hurt people?” the words are so soft you don't even know if they heard you.

“Missy, stop asking,” Sam cuts in when Steve just silently stares at you. “We need to check if it's you guys. Obviously as The Virtue you researched the fuck out of yourself to impersonate yourself and—”

“This is melting my brain,” you shake your head. “I pretended to be myself?”

“I think you were supposed to split the team up,” Sam shrugs. “The Avengers are kind of...on different sides now. So yeah, you researched yourself even down to the mannerisms. Steve? Anything you wanna ask her?”

Whatever you did, it had severely affected Steve because he didn't even seem able to smile at you any more. He looked grim, maudlin even.

“That time we sat on the roof together because Bucky was too ill to join us and I made us a fort out of crates and sheets,” Steve starts, taking a deep breath. “We talked about the people we'd like to marry someday and I asked you if you wanted a wealthy guy or a drop dead handsome guy. What did you say back to me?”

“That I didn't give a rat's ass about money and no one would ever wanna marry me anyway because I'm too boyish,” you look at the floor, feeling embarrassed to say this out loud.

“And what did I say?”

“That I'm too hard on myself and if I ain't married by thirty you'd take a hit for the team.”

“Punk,” Bucky interjects and it's not in a threatening way. He's even smiling slightly.

“Hey, you two were not making a move,” Steve finally relaxes his face. “And she's a handful. I would've been doing you a favour, jerk.”

“Your mom's name was Sarah,” Bucky starts. “She used to bake cherry pie once a month and she'd always invite me over that day because she knew my family never fed me right.”

“It's them,” Steve nods to Sam. “Can you remember anything about your time as The Mastery?”

You try really hard but nothing comes to mind, “Nothing.”

“I remember something about Rumlow,” Bucky's face is screwed up. “I remember...I remember crying about something, something I didn't want to do. That's all. It's just emotions, not memories.”

“Well alright,” Steve stands up, coming over and unlocking both your cuffs. “I guess we're all on the run now. Rhodey had us all pinned down and Tony came after you ended up in here. We're uh...we're not on good terms now.”

“Tell us everything,” you stand up. “Please, I have to know.”
But how could Steve tell you everything? How could Steve tell you that you were the catalyst for
the division in the Avengers? How could he tell you that you'd murdered Pietro Maximoff? How
could he tell you that he'd made love to you?

His heart was breaking in two knowing none of it was real. He'd gotten to experience a sham of a
love affair and now he'd have to look at you as you went back to Bucky. It wasn't fair. None of this
was fair.

He just wanted to scream, to hate Bucky but he couldn't. Not really. Neither of you had known
what you were doing. It was Hydra's fault.

He played over the memory of his first time and how genuine it had felt. How had you faked that
level of emotion? And then he'd told you he loved you like a prize idiot and he saw something in
your eyes that was confusion but not rejection.

Were there feelings for him there? Apparently you had had a fight with Bucky before going to the
Hydra base but was it true things were over?

He didn't know what to do. Should he leave his best friend to try and make it up to you or should
he cling to the possibility that you actually might have deeper feelings for him than you'd ever
c vocalised?

What a mess.
“Why are you looking at me like that?” you ask, noting Steve’s very grim jaw.

“No reason, come on. We need to move,” he turns away from you but you get the impression he’s hiding a secret.

You must have done something. That’s the only reason he could be giving you such a look like that. You did something awful.

“No,” you say firmly.

“We’ve not got time for this, Missy,” Steve takes your arm, pulling you along.

“Hey!” Bucky yells. “Quit manhandling my gal!”

“I’m not doing this,” you yank your hand free before pointing at Bucky. “You told me to go away and leave you alone and you….you’re hiding something from me, Stevie. Great friends you are, huh? Both of you can take a powder. I’m outta here…wherever here is.”

“I’m with her,” Sam stands up. “You two need to talk.”

“I don’t think-” Steve starts.
“Talk,” Sam almost snarls and that clues you in that he knows something too. “Come on, Missy. Let’s scout the area and see if we can cook up an escape plan. We need to get out of the country before Stark roasts us all.”

“Wait what?” you blink.

“I’ll tell you on the way,” Sam sighs before bodily pushing you out and the last thing you see is Bucky and Steve squaring off with each other.

**

“What exactly does flyboy mean by that?” Bucky goes oddly quiet, like the calm before the storm. “That we need to talk?”

“Things happened whilst you were the Winter Soldier and the Virtue,” Steve stands his ground. “Things you’re not gonna like, Buck.”

“Like why you’re overly familiar with Missy now?”

“Not just that. You did something, Bucky. You blew up the Sokovia Accords meeting and killed the King of Wakanda.”

Better to get the news over with right? Like ripping a band aid off?

“I…I what?” Bucky stammers. “Oh my god.”

“That’s not all,” Steve continues quietly, retrieving Sam’s computer tablet. “When we found Missy in the Hydra base, Sam found a drive that contained this.”

He plays the footage from December 16th 1991 which clearly shows the Winter Soldier assassinating Howard and Maria Stark. Steve just watches Bucky’s face fall faster and faster.

“What does this mean?” Bucky asks eventually.

“It means Tony is going to try and kill you if he ever finds out about this and someone was trying to put that footage in plain sight. Your mission was to break up the Avengers.”

“And I guess we succeeded huh?” Bucky runs his hands through his hair. “What the fuck do I do, Steve?”

“I’m getting you out of the country. I have Sam working on that. We’ll hide you until the Sokovia Accords issue stops.”

“Yeah, yeah alright,” Bucky’s eyes widen before he blows air out of his mouth hard. “It’s like waking up from a nightmare.”

“There’s….there’s more,” Steve starts, dreading the inevitable explosion. “It’s about Missy.”

“I know, I know. She hates me now. I was too possessive,” Bucky hangs his head, ashamed. “I was awful to her, Stevie. I’m surprised she stayed with me this long. I’m too broken to ever be of any use to her.”
Oh god this was getting worse. Steve felt himself get more and more nauseous by the second as he tried to work up the courage to blurt it out.

“No, listen to me Buck. Missy had a different mission to you. She was told to keep me away from the Sokovia Accords meeting, to divide the Avengers from the inside.”

“What are you saying?” Bucky goes quiet again before realisation dawns. “The reason you’re familiar with her now….did you?”

Steve loses his nerve. This was worse than he ever imagined. He couldn’t get the words out.

Bucky just advanced on him, the plates in his arm whirring as he gripped Steve by the front of the uniform and he was forced to look into those furious blue eyes. There was no escaping it now.

“DID YOU?!” Bucky roars. “Did you touch my best gal?!”

“She wasn’t your anything then,” Steve replies acidly, pushing him back. “And yes. We were together.”

“Did you fuck her? If you did, I’ll kill you,” Bucky growls, hunkering down as if ready to charge.

“What does it matter?!” Steve cries. “She came to me. She told me you were through and I believed her and yeah, we were intimate.”

“Oh and you thought you’d just take advantage of her?! She wasn’t in her right mind for god’s sake! Even if she was just Missy then, you still preyed on her grief!” Bucky’s almost hysterical now. “How could you do that to her?! To me?!”

“I didn’t,” Steve gets angry now. “I was not the instigator.”

“But you let it happen. You didn’t even try and stop her. Fuck, I knew you were sweet on her back in Brooklyn but I never thought you’d betray me like this.”

“You weren’t even together!” Steve yells, balling his fists. “All you’ve done for Missy is cause her pain since you came back! You get hostile when any guy comes near her, you belittle her, you shove her away. You told me that night before you shipped out that I should try and make a move because you knew I’d take care of her so don’t you dare try and say I betrayed you because you betrayed her and what’s best for her.”

The moment his stream of thought had stopped he knew the damage was done. All of his inner most opinions on how Bucky had ever treated you were laid bare and the divisions of the friendship had cracked beyond repair.

Bucky launched himself at Steve, fist slamming into his cheek and Steve rocked backwards, catching the next punch before headbutting Bucky in response. The two grappled, viciously getting their anger out on each other, blood starting to pour from cuts and wounded mouths.

You and Sam came back in the room just as Steve socked Bucky in the gut.

“What the Sam heck is going on?!” you shout loudly and they both stop mid struggle. “Why are you beating the living tar outta each other?!”

“I don’t blame you, Missy,” Bucky’s demeanour changes to something more soft. “I blame this bastard here for taking advantage.”
“Advantage of what? What are you talking about?” you say in confusion.

“Oh you don’t know?” Bucky’s eyes glint and Steve feels his stomach drop.

“Know what?”

“Tell her Steve,” Bucky says viciously. “Tell her all about what you did.”

“Steve?” you question, moving forward into the room.

“I’m not getting involved in this love triangle. This is too heavy for me,” Sam holds up his hands and backs out towards the street level. “Sorry guys. I’ll catch up later.”

“Love triangle?” you repeat. “Someone please tell me what’s happening before I get mighty mad.”

“How much has Sam told you?” Steve asks.

“That Buck and I were supposed to destabilise the Avengers. Bucky was meant to compound the Sokovia Accords opinion split and I was supposed to make you the defacto leader of the other party that didn’t want government control.”

“That’s correct but you were also told to keep me away from changing my mind at any cost and you did that by…..by…..”

“Say it you coward!” Bucky barks.

“By starting a relationship with me.”

The silence that hangs in the air is unbearable. Steve watches your face change from confusion to disbelief to horror and then to uncertainty.

“You….you and I?” you stammer. “How far? How far did this relationship go?”

When Steve doesn’t answer right away, Bucky cuts in.

“You fucked each other. Many times apparently.”

“What?!” you blink. “Is this true?”

“Yes,” Steve murmurs quietly. “I’m sorry, I thought your feelings were real. I didn’t know you were the Virtue.”

“I don’t remember anything,” you cross your arms behind your neck. “Oh my god. What the hell have I done?”

“It’s not your fault, doll,” Bucky quickly steps in. “None of this is your fault. He shouldn’t have taken advantage.”

“Oh stop it, Buck. You know full well when I want something ain’t nothin’ stopping me. Steve stood no chance if I was told to seduce him. It’s not his fault either.”

“Why are you defending him?” Bucky looks upset. “Are you choosing him over me? Is that what’s happening here?”

“James! Not everything is about you! I’m defending him because Steve and I have history and he couldn’t possibly have known I wasn’t me.”
“And he doesn’t think I deserve you,” Bucky glares at Steve. “Told me as much just now. He was just waiting for an opportunity.”

“Keep talking like that and you’ll be talkin’ outta the side of your goddamn mouth,” you move towards Bucky, poking him in the chest. “That’s your friend there.”

“Some friend.”

“I don’t need to listen to this,” Steve shakes his head. “You’re too far up your own ass to see the bigger picture.”

“Choose,” Bucky says simply.

“What?” you frown. “What do you mean?”

“Choose. Him or me.”

“I’m not doing that.”

“Choose Vera.”

“This is exactly why I left the safehouse, Bucky. You’re letting your possessiveness take over. You’re obsessed with keeping me away from everyone.”

“How about that, huh?” Bucky looks at you both. “You’re so in sync you just told me the same thing. Guess you’ve made your choice, doll. Enjoy.”

He starts walking out.

“Where the hell are you going?!” you yell after him.

“To see Tony.”

“You can’t!” Steve calls.

“The hell I can’t!” Bucky roars back. “I’m not being on any team that has you in it, Steve. Fuck you both.”

He leaves and Sam comes down shortly afterwards, “Everything alright?”

“No,” you shake your head. “I think we just lost a member of the team to the other side.”

“I’m sorry,” Sam says genuinely. “This whole thing is a mess. Hydra really did a number on us.”

“It’s all my fault,” you put your head in your hands. “If I’da just stayed in the safehouse, everything would be fine.”

“No it wouldn’t. You know as well as I do, Rumlow wanted revenge and he woulda taken it in a different way without you and Bucky. There was no escaping this.”

“Nice of you to say,” you sigh.

“Well hang tight. I’m gathering the others and we’re meeting at the airport. We still need to get you outta here before the giant kitty cat comes back,” Sam pulls out his cell before disappearing again.
“Kitty cat?” you question.

“The prince of Wakanda,” Steve fills you in. “He has the mantle of the Black Panther. He holds you and Bucky responsible for his dad’s death so I need to hide you….and well…I guess Sam and I are fugitives now too with these Accords.”

“I really am sorry,” you bite your lip. “I know I must’ve screwed you up with what happened. This is why I didn’t want to mess you around the first time.”

“You weren’t you,” Steve says gently. “I can accept that.”

He could accept it because he knew you and Bucky were done, just like he and Bucky were done. He could still have a chance because surely The Virtue was still you at the core and you did have feelings for him.

“You’re too good, Stevie,” you nudge his arm. “I’m still mighty mortified that you saw my birthday suit though.”

“You were beautiful,” he says without thinking and he can feel your gaze locking on his face. “Sorry. I should be quiet.”

“Was….was it really that real? Like…I enjoyed it?” you ask in barely more than a whisper.

“You seemed to. I truly thought you did anyway.”

“God this is so confusing,” you screw up your face. “This is going to take me a long while to process.”

“I know, sweetheart and I know Bucky isn’t helping but I hope he comes round sometime.”

“He wasn’t this way in the war. I don’t know why he’s been so controlling.”

“Because he was scared of losing you,” Steve sighs. “And the more he tried to control you, the more it pushed you away. He never realised it.”

“Come on, let’s get out of here,” you stretch your shoulders back. “The sooner I can have downtime to think, the better. So many damn emotions in my head.”

“I know the feeling. Let’s get to that plane.”

**

You were introduced to a few new people in the parking lot of the airport after the situation had been explained.

Wanda was the other female on Steve’s side, a product of the Mind Stone with extraordinary abilities. She was a little down but you’d been told she’d lost her brother recently and had been kept under house arrest because Tony was afraid of her going AWOL in public.

Scott was the other newbie and you took an instant liking to him. He was cheery in a kind of
hapless way and a little drunk because he practically fawned over Steve before he turned his eyes to you.

“Oh my god, Lady Libert- I’m so sorry, Captain now, right? My dad used to collect the posters and wow, it is such an honour. I should probably stop talking, huh?”

“It’s alright,” you smile. “Nice to have you with us.”

“You’re much cuter in person,” Scott lets slip out before giggling a little and looking at Steve. “And so is he. Like it’s unfair how attractive you two are.”

“Sober up, soldier,” you pat him on the shoulder. “We have a fight ahead. What can you do?”

“I can get really really small. It’s much more useful than it sounds,” he smiles sloppily. “I kicked Falcon’s ass a while back.”

“Lucky win,” Sam grimaces.

Then another person gets out of the van and you smile a little broader.

“Hey Missy,” Clint tips a lazy salute to you before winking. “Can you not go five minutes without getting mind controlled? You’re making me feel embarrassed that I’ve only done it once.”

“Keep up, Robin Hood,” you sass back. “Or are you too busy sticking glitter on your arrows lately?”

“Can a guy not be deadly and sparkling at the same time?” he smirks.

“Good to see you,” you move forward, hugging him and he returns it warmly.

“You too, Missy. So I guess we got our work cut out, huh?”

“Seems like it. Sorry for dragging you all out for this.”

“We want to help,” Wanda nods. “It’s the right thing to do. I know what it’s like to be controlled and lied to and you’re not to blame for what happened.”

“A chance to help Captain Liberty? Hell yeah,” Scott grins.

“I just had nothing to do today,” Clint shrugs with a smirk. “My wife didn’t give me any errands.”

“Alright, simmer down.” Steve starts. “We need to get Missy to the hanger deck and on a plane. I’ve got charters to get to Australia. That oughta be far enough away until everything calms down. I’m not saying people might not get hurt and I’m not saying there won’t be the potential for consequences so if you wanna leave, do it now.”

Nobody did though. You felt a little humbled that this many people would believe in you after what your brainwashed self had done.

“Let’s go then.”

You walked with the others onto the tarmac after changing into the Captain Liberty black stealth suit, the Liberty Crown hanging from your hip and the weight felt foreign after all this time. It had been so long since it was in your possession.

As you walked forward, you slowly saw another party coming towards you and you automatically
unsheathed the Crown before Steve stopped your procession and allowed the approaching people
to draw level.

Then you saw them.

Tony leading Rhodey, Natasha and two others you didn’t recognise. One who was presumably the
Prince of Wakanda and the other, likely the Vision that Steve had told you about. Then right at the
end….

“Bucky,” you murmur.

Bucky in his Winter Soldier uniform striding with confidence, hatred in his eyes as he looked at
Steve.

“Hey Missy,” Tony calls. “Barnes told me you were a little hijacked the last time we spoke so I’m
gonna make you an offer. Sign the Accords, join us and this doesn’t need to happen.”

“No,” you say firmly. “Steve explained everything to me and I don’t agree with them, even as
myself.”

“For God’s sake,” Tony hisses. “This doesn’t need to be this way. Stop being stubborn. I can get
you a pardon.”

“I’ve done nothing wrong,” you fire back. “I’m being criminalised for having an opinion. That’s
on you, Stark. As for you, T’Challa, we had nothing to do with your father’s death.”

T’Challa briefly takes off his helmet, “Sergeant Barnes has told me he was not responsible but I
have heard nothing of your innocence, Captain Adler.”

You stare wildly at Bucky who just gives you a stonewall expression back. Did he really sell you
out like this? Did he make you the scapegoat for the explosion in Vienna?

“How convenient,” you snarl at Bucky.

“Missy, give me an answer here. Please,” Tony’s almost begging you. “Talk some sense into
Steve.”

“Yeah, she’s real good at convincing Steve to do things,” Bucky adds bitterly. “Barely takes any
persuasion.”

“You fucking jackass!” you growl.

Any hope of reconciliation died with Bucky’s last barb as all hell broke loose and the fractured
remnants of the Avengers went to war.
You want to make a beeline straight for Bucky, to knock some sense into him but T'Challa seems to be racing towards you and you barely have time to duck before his claws swipe at your head.

“Listen to me!” you say in a panic, blocking the next few blows. “I didn’t kill your father! I was brainwashed at the time! I wasn’t at the building!”

“There is video evidence of you at the scene,” T’Challa replies and you make a quick glance to Bucky, wondering if he’d tampered with the CCTV.

“What in the Sam hell?!?” you cry to him but Bucky doesn’t look in your direction.

He’s launched himself at Steve and the two are grappling, the sound of Bucky’s metallic arm thudding off Steve’s shield. Your lifelong friends were trying to tear each other apart and it was all because of you.

Maybe you needed to leave them both. Maybe that was the only way they’d stop trying to kill one another.

Razor sharp pain made you yelp as you got caught over the eyebrow by T’Challa’s claws and you lashed out, slashing at him but only making a strange purple corona skitter around his suit. The
more you tried to do damage, the more the purple became stronger and you knew this wasn’t doing anything.

You went for the helmet instead, dodging around and trying to wrench it from his head. He got what you were trying to do, protecting the neck seal at all costs until he got booted from behind by Sam who was flying overhead.

“Thanks!” you call out as you drag the helmet off, throwing it away and making a display of being about to cut the prince of Wakanda’s head off before stopping dead and looking him straight in the eye. “I didn’t do it. Alright? I don’t care what you think of me but I’m not evil. I don’t want this fight. I just want to have a goddamn week off from all this horseshit and… I don’t know, bake a cake or something.”

T’Challa gives a puzzled expression before he lowers his hands that were about to spear your neck, “You are one weary of war. I see it in your eyes. I believe there has been deception here. Let me up.”

You hold out your hand on trust and he accepts it, getting pulled to his feet before meeting your gaze head on.

“Captain Adler, you are truly innocent, yes?”

“Yeah I am,” you nod. “This is all a falling out between friends and exactly what Hydra wanted.”

“Go,” T’Challa motions towards the hangar. “I will not stop you.”

“Thank you and I’m really sorry about your Pa. I know how it feels to be ripped away from your Daddy before you wanted to be.”

“In different circumstances, I would like to know you better,” T’Challa puts his hand on your shoulder. “Now go.”

You nod, looking at the sheer carnage everyone was creating as friends beat the living tar outta each other. All of this would stop if you just went. You were sure of it.

You started running towards the hangar, jumping past Tony who tried to knock you off your course. The run was turning into a sprint, the sides of your vision blurring as you put your full strength into it.

“Stop her kid!” you hear behind you and something grabs your legs, pulling you off your feet and you skid on the ground, scuffing your hands.

“Oh my gosh, I’m so sorry!” a young voice on your left as you look up and see…

“Who the hell are you supposed to be?” you ask in bewilderment at the red and blue costumed… teenager?

“Oh I’m Spider-man,” he waves a hand. “I’m new here. Sorry for tripping you but Mr Stark said to-”

“Yeah, I heard,” you slash at the sticky string like substance on your legs with the Crown, freeing them. “How old are you?”

“Old enough,” comes the squeaky-ish response. “Gotta say it’s kinda awesome to meet you and all.”
“Enough flirting, kid,” Tony’s exasperated voice catches up. “Missy, stop this, okay? Stop this and we can resolve it peacefully.”

“Sure looks peaceful,” you gesture sarcastically at the mass brawl.

“Watch your tone, Captain Pin Up,” the face plate peels back and you can see his angry face. “This is because of you and your brain damaged booty call over there.”

“Sure, blame me why don’t ya?” you hiss. “Totally my fault I got tortured by Hydra. Totally my fault they put high voltage through my goddamn brain until I almost broke my teeth. You have no goddamn clue, Tony. You can’t possibly know what either me or Bucky have been through. And guess what? Steve still would’ve opposed these Accords so no, Tony, this is not just my fault.”

“You’re right. It’s this ridiculous love triangle you have going on,” Tony spits. “Put a stop to it now, Missy. Get everyone back on side and we can work this out.”

“You didn’t listen to a word I just said, did you?” you shake your head. “Sorry Tony. I really did like you, you know.”

You step on the shattered piece of a baggage cart before you and kick it full force at Tony’s head. Immediately his face plate slams down and he only has time to react as it careens into him, knocking him backwards. You turn to Spider-man.

“And no more from you, young man. I have a plane to catch.”

“Oh gee, I can’t really do that,” Spider-man stands up.

“Son, I have an adamantium set of spikes here. Be smart,” you warn before setting off again.

You can hear him catching up behind you and you put even more speed in, reaching the outer limit of the hangar before there’s a clang and you’re floored by a piece of wing from a propeller plane. As you hit the tarmac, you turn to see Bucky bearing down on you, followed by Steve with Wanda hovering above.

“You’re not getting on that plane, Missy,” Bucky growls.

“The hell I’m not!” you fire back. “I get on that plane and I get away from the both of you and just maybe I’ll salvage our friendships outta this.”

“Buck, listen to her,” Steve tries, pulling level. “Give her space, we all need to heal.”

“I can’t,” Bucky grabs his hair, yanking at the strands. “I can’t because every time I close my eyes, I’m imagining you two together.”

“Let me help you,” Wanda approaches, red light floating around her hand. “I can take that away.”

“No,” Bucky moves back, alarmed. “No, and you shouldn’t be helping her.”

“Why not?” Wanda asks.

“Bucky, what are you playing at?” Steve seems agitated.

“She murdered your brother you know,” Bucky looks at Steve with loathing. “When we were The Mastery. She killed him.”

“No, you’re lying,” Wanda’s voice cracks.
“What are you talking about?” you say in confusion. “My mission was about Steve?”

“I found the files from that base,” Bucky’s gaze turns to yours. “We were to kill the Maximoff twins. You actually did it though. You shot Pietro”

“What?” you feel your legs stumble out from under you and your ass hits the floor. “I…I….”

“And you kept that from her Steve. You kept it from Wanda too,” Bucky points accusatorially. “Some friend, huh?”

“Steve?” you ask but you can see from his ashamed expression it’s true. “Who the hell isn’t lying to me right now?!”

“You killed my brother,” Wanda has tears on her face as she looks at you.

“I didn’t-”

“I know,” she says sharply with a snarl. “Get on that plane and don’t come back. This is the mercy I am giving you.”

“Thank you. I’m sorry for what it’s worth,” you mumble before getting up to your feet, just as Scott Lang erupts into a giant version of himself.

That causes enough of a distraction for you to jump towards the jet. Steve tries to follow but Wanda knocks him back fiercely towards the melee still ongoing on the tarmac.

“Go!” she screams at you, her irises turning red.

You get into the cockpit quickly, flipping the engine on and getting ready to turn about. There’s a clunk somewhere on the wing but you don’t have time to check. Once you start depressing the pedal, you’re moving forward and you only have a small window to get out of the hangar safely.

Scott is providing a welcome distraction to keep the rest of the Avengers off your tail but several of them can fly and you needed to haul ass pretty quick. When you reached a stretch of runway, you floored it, pulling the lever back smoothly until the wheels retracted and you were starting to leave the ground.

There was a wrenching sound from behind you and you felt the cockpit bounce as someone entered, dropping down behind you.

“I swear to God I will crash this plane if you don’t leave me the hell alone, whoever you are,” you growl. “I just wanna be left in peace. I’m tired of everyone being at each other’s throats.”

“Doll, let me explain,” Bucky says softly.

“Oh Jesus Christ,” you snarl. “Get off right now. I have nothing to say to you.”

“Please…Vera, please,” he’s begging now.

“You lied Bucky. You tried to set the Prince of Wakanda and Wanda on me. You betrayed me,” the hurt is creeping into your voice. “All because of something I did when I wasn’t me and all because I’m trying to keep our trio friendship together in the wake of that. Was it really that bad that you wanted to try and kill me?”

“Kill you? I just wanted to stop you,” Bucky frowns. “I knew T’Challa would figure it out and I knew Wanda would forgive you.”
“That’s a mighty big assumption to base my life off of,” you point a shaking finger at him. “I can’t forgive this, Buck. I just can’t. Now get off the plane and let me go. Everyone needs to let me go.”

“No,” he shakes his head before gently pushing you aside and typing something into the nav controls. “No because I need to show you why I am the way I am now. Why I lost the best part of James Barnes. Please, just let me show you this and then you can run away if you want to.”

You stare at him, his eyes brimming with tears, displaying on his face every inch of how broken he was. Did he really deserve the chance though?

“If I’m not moved by what I see and you still chase me after if I make the decision to leave, I won’t hold back on fighting you. I warn you now.”

“I know you won’t, doll,” he nods gratefully. “I know I don’t even have the right to ask you but I heard what you said to Tony and I just need to show you this before what we have disappears forever.”

“Fine. But you sit in the back. I fly.”

This was probably a mistake to let him come with you but you were already too high into the air to throw him out now. You just hoped this would be done soon.

**

Steve sees Bucky clinging onto the wing, digging his metallic hand into the hatch to open it and feels a rush of anger.

Bucky had pulled a lot of nasty tricks in the past twenty four hours, tricks that could’ve gotten you killed. He knew he needed to follow somehow so he ran towards the other hangar further down, desperate to find transport.

“Uh, Capsicle? What are you doing?” he hears Tony’s suit powering up.

“I’m going after her,” Steve says simply.

“I thought the game plan was to get her out. Congrats, job done,” Tony says sarcastically.

“I’m not leaving her alone with Bucky. He’s unstable right now, he could kill her,” Steve finally turns.

“Jesus, you three have so many issues. All the girls in Brooklyn and you both want the girl next door?”

“You’ll never understand, Tony,” Steve sighs, refixing his shield’s position on his arm. “We’ve been friends for decades, that bond runs deep.”

“Yeah I get that, freeze pop but look at what it’s gotten you,” Tony gestures behind him at the carnage and Steve’s friends being rounded up and placed in cuffs by the authorities. “You’re too co-dependant on both of them. Missy’s doing you a favour by leaving. She’s a smart girl.”

“I can’t let her potentially die, Tony,” Steve tries to make him understand. “Bucky’s jealousy is destructive.”
“Shit,” Tony groans. “If I take you to her will you promise to stop this? The team is broken, Rogers. It needs to heal.”

“I promise,” Steve says sincerely.

“Fine fine. This is so above my pay grade,” Tony rolls his eyes. “Get in that propeller plane, I’ll give you a boost.”

Tony was right in a way. This did have to stop. All of it had to stop or the world would be a poorer place because of it.

The world needed the Avengers.

**

“Siberia? Really?” you shiver as you stomp through the snow, grateful your suit is waterproof. “Couldn’t have taken me to goddamn Spain?”

“This is where I became the Winter Soldier,” Bucky says quietly, staring at the cast iron doors.

“Let’s get in before I freeze my girls off,” you step forward, until you realise you can’t get in without a keycode.

Wordlessly, Bucky punches in some numbers from over your shoulder and the doors shudder open. He leads you into a long facility built into the hard rock of the tundra where it opens into a main room containing several large tubes.

“Are those…are those people?” you breathe.

Men and women were standing peacefully in the tubes, looking like they could just be sleeping. Was this more Hydra experimentation?

“There was more than one Winter Soldier,” Bucky places a hand on one of the tubes. “They would all pit themselves against me, everyday, everyday training until they could finally beat me. I was the first you see, the yardstick. So much of that life, I remember it now. It was a life of pain and endless war.”

He moves to the electrical console before tapping away and you see the lights in the tubes shut down. He’s killing them.

“If people found them, if people used them-” Bucky takes a deep breath, obviously fearful of your reaction.

“They deserved a chance to redeem themselves, Buck-”

“They suffered!” his voice echoed around the chamber. “We all suffered! You think you felt pain when you were in the Chair? That was endless for us! Any hint of a recovered memory and your brain got fried. No matter how hard you tried to cling on to what you were before, they always knew when you were remembering. I screamed your name so many goddamn times in this place and every time they told me you were dead, that Steve was dead. I was alone and I had no one. I tried to escape once but they knew. They found me in three days flat and I became the punching
bag for the rest of the Winter Soldiers. They went through the same thing. This is a mercy! Can’t you see that?!”

“Bucky you’re scaring me,” you take a step back.

“All the things they made me do,” he carries on, staring at the floor. “They flash in my brain sometimes. I killed so many people and I see their faces in my dreams. Doll, I know I’ve been bad to you. I know. I’m just scared too. I’m scared of losing you. When I found you again, it brought some of me back but it wasn’t enough. It wasn’t all James Barnes used to be. I lost that carefree attitude and I was too worried you wouldn’t like me so I did stupid shit that pushed you away and I’m sorry. I can’t ever undo that. I just need you to understand that I want to be the man I was. I just don’t know if he’s still there.”

“You need to try though,” you respond. “All you’ve done the past day is be vindictive. You need to understand that Steve and I went through pain too. I grieved hard for you when I was brought outta the ice, I fought things I still have nightmares about, I had to fight tooth and nail to bring you back, I went in the Chair too. Steve lost his chance with Peggy. She died not so long ago. We’re all trying to move past it, Buck. You can’t ask me to understand your trauma if you’re not willing to understand mine.”

“I’m sorry,” he starts crying freely now. “God I just wanna be back in Brooklyn on that rooftop when we didn’t have a care in the world. Missy, I love you. I always have and I always will. I’m sorry for everything.”

“I’m sorry too,” you whisper. “But I still need space from you both. I need time to heal too.”

“I understand,” Bucky bites his lip savagely, trying to stop himself from breaking down. “Don’t mean I’m not sure as heck gonna miss you.”

“I’ll miss you too,” you smile sadly. “Destroy this place, Buck. Let the Winter Soldier truly die.”

He nods before turning to the console and starting to delete files. They were projected onto the back wall as he did so. Mission reports, photos of targets, photos of bodies, videos when the 80s started to hit. You watched as Bucky quickly erased all of his past assassinations. You were horrified at the sheer amount and finally getting how much it must have affected him.

“Missy! You’re alright!” you hear Steve say from behind you as he runs in.

Bucky glances up but you shoot him a look and he gives you another nod, meaning he understood not to cause trouble.

“What the hell is that?” Tony’s voice joins in as he walks forward, staring at the projection on the wall with the colour draining out of his face.

“Shit,” you hear Steve do one of his rare curses.

On the screen was Mission Report December 16th 1991 and on the screen was grainy CCTV of Bucky shooting into a car that was crashed on the side of the road. Then he moved around the other side of the car and began strangling the passenger seat occupant, staring at the camera the entire time with a face entirely devoid of emotion.

“Those are my parents,” Tony’s voice cracks. “Those are my goddamn parents….”

“Tony no!” you cry out but it’s too late.
The fight’s begun again and the Avengers have fractured even more.
Tony launches himself at Bucky, Steve trying to grab him but it’s too late.

They’re grappling, trying to tear each other apart and all you can do is try and join Steve in prising the two of them free. Steve takes Bucky, yanking back hard but Bucky just turns and socks Steve in the face before returning to try and jump on Tony. You take Tony, dragging him away but he fights you, shoving you back onto the floor before you hear his suit activate, spreading across his body and then the familiar sound of his weapons powering up.

“Duck!” you yell at Bucky who drops to the ground just in time for the beam to miss him by inches.

“Stop giving him hints, Missy!” Tony yells at you. “Get out of my way! This doesn’t involve you!”

Steve manages to jump in front of Bucky with his shield, the beam ricocheting off into the roof foundations and rubble drops down, smashing all around you. You scramble to your feet, narrowly missing the masonry that nearly cracked your head open.

“STOP IT!” you scream as loud as you can so the words echo in the forgotten chamber.

Bucky and Steve stop dead in their tracks but Tony isn’t listening. He’s too far gone in the rage of
his past grief. He combines his beams, aiming straight for a kill shot and you charge at him, grabbing him by the waist and throwing him out of the room into the corridor.

“GO!” you shout at Steve and Bucky.

It wasn’t a question of their rivalry any more. It wasn’t just a schoolyard scrap between two friends. This was a fight to the death and you refused to see either of them die.

“Come on!” Steve grabs Bucky who finally doesn’t protest and both men flee to the adjoining antechamber where there’s an exit high above them.

You watch for a millisecond as they start climbing before turning your attention to Tony who was marching back towards you with furious purpose.

“What the hell, Missy!” the faceplate peels back. “Can’t you understand I need to do this?! My family is gone because of him! I never got to say goodbye!”

“Neither did T’Challa but he understood it wasn’t Bucky’s fault,” you hiss. “Nothing that either of us do as The Mastery is our fault. We don’t have any memories of it, it’s burned outta our brains by electricity. Why can’t you get that through your thick head, huh? Aren’t you supposed to be a genius?”

“I swear to God I will blast you if you don’t get outta my way,” Tony raises his hand.

“Do it then,” you stand your ground. “Because I’m not letting you murder Bucky because of what Hydra did to him.”

“You were my friend, Missy,” Tony’s face screws up in frustration. “We used to race my cars around the compound. We pranked Natasha by changing the oil in her motorcycle for bubble solution. You used to talk to me when you and Steve grew apart. Then he came back and you were never the same. The Missy I knew was replaced by someone who always worried, whose confidence had gone. He’s not right for you and neither is Steve. You need to get away from the both of them. I’m doing you a favour.”

“By murdering the man I was gonna marry?” you hold your hands out. “Tony, you are my friend but if you do this, you’re not going to be. You’re too blinded by what you saw and you’re not thinking straight.”

“Last chance,” he’s clearly unwilling to do this. “Get out of the way.”

“I can’t and you know why,” you almost whisper.

“Shit!” he swears before powering up.

You grab the Crown, throwing it hard at his hand where it lodges in the mechanism, destroying it completely. You’ve lost your only weapon though and he’s still got another blaster.

You run towards the other room, seeing that Steve and Bucky had almost climbed out of harm’s way, almost free. They were so close to the top.

Tony started flying upwards and you grabbed onto his ankle, trying to keep him tethered down.

“Get off me!” he cries, trying to kick you.

“No!” you yell back, hanging on for dear life.
Using his remaining blaster, he shoots the roof and some of the upper gangways, causing Steve and Bucky to fall back to the ground. You use your remaining strength to swing Tony by his foot and off into another wall before running towards your lifelong friends and trying to pick them up.

“Come on now, boys,” you shake Steve who’s dazed on the floor before turning to Bucky and putting him upright. “Get outta here. Front entrance. Go!”

“We’re not leaving you, Missy,” Steve frowns.

“It’s Bucky he’s after. You need to get him away. Tony will stop once you do. He won’t hurt me,” you plead. “So go!”

“Doll I-” Bucky’s lost for words.

“Go!” you push him. “Both of you!”

Steve’s arms suddenly encircle you and Bucky, his shield protecting your faces as a bolt of energy comes racing towards you. Tony was apparently back in the game.

“God-fuckin’-damnit,” you swear through gritted teeth before ducking under the shield, charging at Tony and leaping upon him.

You wrench the Crown back out of his other hand and rain it down on the helmet, gouges and grooves marring the red metal. Instinctively Tony puts his hands up, trying to protect himself before his suit powers up and shoots him away from you, burning the back of your arm in the process.

“Shit!” you cry, swatting as if the painful sting would go out if you smoothed it.

Bucky and Steve took up a stance either side of you, protecting you.

“How cute. The Three Musketeers,” Tony says sarcastically, hovering above you all. “Your friendship is toxic, you know. It’s tearing the Avengers apart.”

“Then we’re not Avengers any more,” Steve proclaims. “Easy solution. Now stop this and let us go.”

“See, would love to but can’t. It’s a matter of principle. I can’t let him go.”

The three of you look wordlessly at each other before sprinting full pelt at him, tossing the shield between you all to avoid Tony’s weapon taking you out. Then you all pile upon him, fists flying until the arc reactor flares, knocking everyone back.

Steve flies into the support beam, knocking himself out; you fly into the staircase, winding yourself and Bucky hits the far wall. You’re struggling to take a breath, the axis of the stair already bruising your back.

Out of your peripheral vision, you see Tony advance on Bucky, grabbing his metallic arm and wrenching it hard, using one foot on his chest to gain leverage. The scream as the metal starts splintering and tearing has you stumbling to your feet in their direction.

“Tony, no!” you cry out but it’s too late.

Tony’s ripped Bucky’s arm clean away and you see the expression of years of abuse on Bucky’s face, paralysing him in the wake of Tony’s fury. He wouldn’t be able to defend himself.
You pick up the discarded Crown on the floor, jamming it into Tony’s back, wriggling it in the circuits and trying to fry the suit. Tony just punches you in the face, sending you skittering backwards.

Bucky’s regained his senses and is making a break for you but you hear that familiar whine of the energy beam stirring and know Tony’s going for a kill shot. Steve is on his feet and harrying down towards the battle, seconds away.

“Stop it!” you try one last time, jumping up and flinging yourself in the way between Tony and Bucky.

You’re hit in the side, chunks of flesh blasted away as you shield Bucky and finally, finally Tony stops. You don’t even want to look down. The adrenalin is keeping you pain free for now but you know it’ll kick in soon and seeing parts of yourself scattered across the floor was never good.

There was a steady splatter of your blood that rained down until your legs finally gave out and you fell back into the arms of your boys. Working together, they both put pressure on your wound, trying to stem the blood flow.

You watch the grim exchange of looks between them and know they’ve set their differences aside for now. You were more important to them than a petty fight.

“Oh my god. Missy….” Tony looks horrified as his faceplate peels back and he comes closer. “I-”

“Don’t you fucking come near her!” Bucky growls. “You did this to her!”

“I was aiming for you!” Tony fires back.

“Then kill me!” Bucky challenges. “I’m right here! I’m not running anywhere! I’m gonna stay by her side and not move. Easy target.”

“Fine,” Tony holds up his hand but it’s wavering.

“No more,” you cough, blood oozing out of you more around Bucky and Steve’s fingers. “No more fighting. Enough.”

“We’ll go our separate ways,” Steve says resolutely. “We won’t cross paths again Tony unless you need us. We’re leaving the Avengers because it’s better for everyone.”

Tony lowers his hand, “Then get out. I’ll take Missy to a hospital. You’d never make it in time.”

“I’m not leaving her with you, you pretentious fuck,” Bucky snarls.

“Buck,” Steve says softly. “We need to decide. Either we all die here or we let Tony help her. We don’t have time to argue. She’s bleeding out.”

You watch Bucky screw his face up in frustration and anger and worry.

“It’s alright, James. I’ll be fine,” you smile weakly. “Survived a building falling on me after all, huh? This ain’t so mighty an injury.”

“I don’t like this one bit,” Bucky savages his bottom lip. “Tell me to go, Missy. Tell me it’s gonna be fine.”

“Go,” you grimace a little as their hands move on your wound trying to stem the flow more. “It’ll be better for all of us. Time apart. Time to heal.”
“You will find us when you’re well?” Steve asks.

“Will you, doll?” Bucky adds. “I swear I’ll fix myself whilst we’re apart. I swear. I want to be me again.”

“I’ll help him,” Steve nods solemnly and Bucky seems surprised. “Can’t very well have a rival for her affections be anything less than a hundred percent, huh jerk?”

Bucky’s corner of his mouth twitches in a slight smile, “Bring it on, punk.”

You give a shuddering breath that snaps their attention back. You’re pretty sure you can see the outline of an organ through their fingers and it was freaking you out.

“Not to be rude boys but break off to the front lines, yeah? Dying here,” you hiss through gritted teeth.

Both men lean down, kissing your cheeks before both murmuring that they love you. You’re too dizzy to feel embarrassed by this.

Next thing, the pressure alleviates from your blast wound and you let out a string of colourful swearing. Bucky and Steve walk off into the distance, looking back now and then before they’re gone.

“You’re an idiot, you know that?” Tony sighs, leaning down and spraying something from his suit that binds with the raw lesion until the bleeding stops. “I told you they were no good for you.”

“You don’t understand, Tony. We’ve been friends for decades. Even if they’re being absolute jackasses I won’t let them die.”

“Sounds nice having that much loyalty to a person,” Tony murmurs before pulling you upright and into his arms where he carries you out. “Listen, I’m….I’m sorry.”

“Don’t be. I’ll be fine as long as you hurry your sweet socks up,” you groan a little at the new position. “Not your fault I’m a suicidal crazy Jane.”

“Come on, old girl. Time to get you some help.”

And with that, he starts flying with you in the direction of home.

**

Two Years Later….

You’re on the rooftop of the Nelson and Murdock building, Jessica Jones on your right and Matt Murdock on your left.

“I still say this is a fucking waste of time,” Jessica rolls her eyes, knocking back a bottle of dime store whisky. “Nothing’s happening. I’m a P.I. Missy. I’m not like Murdock there. I don’t do vigilantism. This is fucking duuuuulllll. Ugh.”
“Come on Jones, Missy knows what she’s doing. She’s been an Avenger,” Matt sighs.

“Well la-di-da,” Jessica holds up her hands. “Let’s bow down to the majesty of sanctimonious superhero shits.”

“They’re not as high and mighty as you think,” you smirk, grabbing the bottle off of her and downing a large gulp.

“Well no. *You’re* pretty born of the streets for a start,” Matt agrees.

“I was born juuuuuuust over there,” you point to a block in the distance. “Don’t see the point being all fancy about it.”

“So what are we here for again?” Jessica’s swinging her legs over the lip of the roof. “Besides boring my ass off?”

“Something bad’s coming,” you murmur, looking towards the sky. “I can sense it.”

“Like the last time?” Matt prompts.

“Bigger.”

Much much bigger than The Hand and The Black Sky. You’d grown used to the changes in the taste of the air when otherworldly things happened.

A rainbow shoots into the nearby Sanctum Sanctorum, piercing the glass artwork and depositing something large into the building. You stand up, peering as best as you could before the rainbow fizzles into nothing.

“Like that?” Jessica points.

“Exactly like that. Stay here,” you motion. “If anything escapes into the streets, deal with it.”

“Sure thing, Mom,” Jessica gives a clumsy salute.

“Don’t stay up past nine p.m. either,” you sass as you jump down the drainpipe to the ground below.

Your old wound still twinged now and then, a bold reminder of your time back in the Avengers and The Mastery but you shoved that to the back of your mind.

The world was in danger and Captain Liberty needed to step out of the shadows again.
Getting over to the Sanctum Sanctorum, you leap across the gap between buildings, much further than a normal woman could jump and you rolled effortlessly, coming to land over the smashed window.

When you looked down, you were surprised to see several figures there and not just the ones you expected.

Sure Stephen Strange and Wong were around but there was also….Bruce?! Bruce Banner?!

Bruce had been missing for a while now. He was animatedly talking to someone you couldn’t quite see and they weren’t coming into your field of view any time soon.

You swung your body over the precipice and dropped down into the entrance hall, coming to land right next to Stephen Strange.

“Was wondering when you’d be making an entrance,” Strange gives you an amused side glance.
“Well shit me,” you hear the astonished voice of the person you couldn’t see before.

Tony.


“Hi Missy,” Bruce nervously tugs at the shreds of his pants, surprised to see you.

“Well if it isn’t Captain Pin Up,” Tony comes towards you, holding his hand out. “How are you doing old girl?”

“Not too bad,” you reply, shaking it. “Stopping some ancient magic cults here and there.”

“Yeah I heard you were keeping busy,” Tony smiles slightly. “Take it you run with a different crowd now. The Defenders was it?”

“They’re good people, a mess but good people,” you nod. “And these two behind me, aliens, robots and Nazis are the tip of the iceberg in threats to humanity.”

“She was…useful on a few of our missions,” Stephen adds.

Wong elbows him in the side sharply. “Useful, my ass. She saved our hides when we got trapped in the dream realm with Nightmare.”

“Fine. She’s a valuable asset,” Stephen rolls his eyes.

You were used to their dynamic though and you flash Wong a wink.

“So I’m guessing that Bifrost entrance was you, Bruce?” you divert the conversation back.

“Thanos is coming,” he nods, completely in fear. “He’s after the Infinity stones.”

“Right. Gotcha,” you puff out air, knowing in your gut that the fight to end all fights was coming.

“Wait, you know too?!” Tony blinks. “Am I the only one in the dark about these stones?”

“Hey it was a long two years,” you shrug.

“Well you look good, Missy,” he nods, still unable to take it all in.

“The point is we have to stop this Thanos from getting the stones right?” you look at everyone. “One’s safe here. What about the others?”

“He already has two,” Bruce puts a hand on your arm, squeezing it, more to comfort himself you reckon. “The power and space stone. I got no idea where the reality and soul stones are but the mind stone is in Vision. We gotta protect him.”

“About that,” Tony wags his finger. “We kinda…lost him.”

“What?!” Bruce’s hold on your arm gets almost crushing. “You lost another superbot?! Get someone to find him then! Call Fury or Natasha or Steve.”

“Boy you’ve not been around lately, have you?” Tony sighs. “The Avengers…..”

“We’re not a thing any more,” you finish for him. “There was a big falling out. Everyone went their separate ways.”
“You’re kidding me,” Bruce looks at you sadly. “Even you? I thought you held everything together.”

“I….caused it,” you stare at the floor guiltily. “That’s why I removed myself. Steve fell out with Tony, Bucky fell out with Steve, Tony fell out with Bucky…it was a mess. I’ve not been Captain Liberty for a couple of years.”

“Well now would be a good time to get past that,” Bruce rounds on you. “The fate of the universe is at stake here.”

“No way, not doing it. I have no issue with Missy but Steve….” Tony trails off.

You hear Wong give a groan behind you and you step backwards onto his sandalled foot to shut him up.

When everything falls silent, you hear it. It’s just a faint noise but it sounds like an engine and people screaming.

“Tony,” you look up, watching things fly past the broken window.

“I see it,” his stance gets tense.

“Something’s wrong,” Strange notes. “We need to check it out.”

The four of you proceed to the door, apprehensive about what you’ll find. When you step outside, immediately a civilian falls into your path, screaming desperately and you pick her up, only for her to stare in terror at the sky before sprinting away. Tony’s helping someone trapped in their car further along and you run down the street, turning the corner to see a circular….thing in the sky, hovering over the city.

“What in the shittin’ heck is that?” you stare at it.


There’s people running up behind you and you see Tony, Bruce and Wong catch up but also Matt Murdock, Jessica Jones, Luke Cage and Danny Rand.

“Who the hell are these guys?” Bruce asks.

“Defenders,” you gesture at them with your head. “They deal with the street level threats.”

“What do you need?” Matt asks, fully suited up in his Daredevil outfit. “We wanna help.”

“I ain’t entirely sure,” you stare at the ship.

“We’re with you,” Luke readies himself.

When two beings suddenly appear in front of you all, you realise this is an invasion.

“Help the civilians,” you turn to your little crew. “We’ll deal with the big guys.”

“Missy, they’re not much different in power level to you,” Tony adds. “Let ’em stay.”

Jessica snorts, “Guess he doesn’t know about what the Hand did to you.”

“Excuse me?” Tony looks at you accusingly. “Is there something I should know?”
“I may have gotten…other enhancements since,” you mumble. “Not by choice.”

“Gee you have the worst luck in the world for being experimented on,” Tony shakes his head. “Alright then, you heard the lady. Keep the population calm, help people evacuate.”


“You too guys,” you wave them off before turning your attention back to the aliens approaching you.

“Missy, you go as well,” Tony adds.

“What?!” you cry.

“I need you to find Steve,” he grabs your arms. “They’re coming for the stones and we need to secure Vision. You’re the only person I trust to do that. Please.”

“Will you be alright?”

“I got wizards and Bruce. I’m fine,” he reassures you. “Go now. Use clearance code ‘Pin Up’ to get into the Avengers base. I’ve just cleared you. You won’t be arrested.”

“Well that’s swell, I guess,” you got the sharp reminder of your years on the run. “Don’t die Tony or I’ll kill you.”

“Get lost, smartass. You’re too pretty for this party,” he waves you away.

You turn tail and pelt down the street across New York, wondering if this was the right thing to do. Then again, if the universe was ending, you’d have to face Steve sometime.

**

“We got a call from home,” Sam says to Steve as he finishes admonishing Wanda and Vision for sneaking off.

“Home?” Steve turns around. “Secure channel?”

“Yep,” Sam nods, grinning. “And you’ll never guess what the call sign is."

Natasha and Steve crowd around the monitor to see the words displayed there.

**The Wanderer: Til the end of the line. Come home.**

“Is that-” Natasha starts.

“Yeah, yeah that’s her,” Steve nods.

The Wanderer. Just as Steve had become The Nomad. The heroes without homes. The heroes cast out.

He’d been monitoring for any sign of you in the last two years, catching snippets. Sam had been
the greatest help in figuring out you’d ditched the mantle of Captain Liberty and ever since, he’d heard about your adventures saving New York.

Still my brave gal, aren’t you? Still helping people.

“Come home, huh?” Natasha reads back. “Guessing if Tony’s let her into the Avenger’s compound it must be serious.”

“Set a course, Sam,” Steve orders.

“Sure you’re ready?” Natasha smirks knowingly.

Of course he wasn’t. What did you even say to someone after two years? Especially after the way it had been left?

“How long?” he ignores the question, turning to Sam.

“Two hours. Sit tight,” Sam nods.

Two hours he mulled over everything he could possibly say. He agonised over whether he should be friendly or keep his distance, whether he should tell you what happened to Bucky and that he was safe…..just what the hell should he do?

When the quinjet touched down, his nerves went up tenfold. Every step towards the compound made his legs weaker until he was holding himself up by pure will.

Rhodey was waiting for them in the meeting room, leaning slightly against a desk.

“You look like shit. All of you,” he remarks.

“Good to see you too,” Natasha folds her arms playfully.

Then Bruce appeared and everyone fell silent. There was an awkward moment of glances exchanged between Bruce and Natasha before Sam coughed to break the tension.

“Right,” Bruce played with his sleeves. “Best to get this show on the road, huh?”

Were you not here? Had it been a ploy to get them to come?

Then the door opened behind him and he saw you.

Your hair was longer than he’d ever seen it, almost down to your waist in long waves. Your physique was stronger, he could see the muscles through your suit. The suit itself….you’d ripped out the Liberty spike motif, replacing it with a Celtic symbol of a ‘wanderer’ and you’d taken to wearing a domino mask. He couldn’t believe it was you.

“Hi,” he says dumbly.

“Hey,” you reply.

“Oh this just gets more awkward,” Sam mutters.

“We should probably get on with the universe ending stuff before doing reunions,” Bruce cuts in. “There is a time limit.”

Steve looks around to everyone who nods. Guess he could postpone the uncomfortable
**

It was decided that Vision would be taken to Wakanda.

Tony and Stephen Strange had disappeared, presumably on that ship so they would be of no use to you in the battle ahead. You hoped they were okay.

Steve, meanwhile, seemed to be actively avoiding speaking to you for long periods of time. You took that more as a sign of awkwardness rather than exclusion. Truth is, you didn’t quite know how to start a dialogue either.

It’s only when you’re all on the quinjet, heading over to Africa that he takes you into a compartment for a chat.

“Look, I’m sorry this hasn’t happened earlier but….but…”

“It’s been too uncomfortable until now,” you supply. “I get it, Stevie. Two years is a long time. Are you doing okay?”

“Yeah, just fine,” he smiles. “Life on the run was interesting.”

“Tell me about it,” you snort. “It’s not easy dodging the cops when you’re trying to save the city.”

“So you became a vigilante, huh?” Steve rests his arm on the bulkhead.

“Gonna tell me off?” you challenge him.

“No, I’m impressed actually. Thought you’d wanna stay off the radar.”

“I can’t sit on my ass and watch the world go by. What kind of gal would I be?” you frown. “I ain’t a wallflower.”

“God you’ve not changed one bit,” Steve smiles warmly at you.

“You have though,” you point at his full beard. “Looks good. Kinda lumberjack like.”

“I should keep it then, huh?” he laughs shyly. “Like the hair. Very modern.”

“Keeps people from guessing who I am,” you push the long braid back.

“I’ve missed you,” Steve seems to blurt out. “But I need to tell you that Bucky is in Wakanda.”

“He is?” you blink.

“I took him there so he could rest and they have technology to deprogram him. Get rid of the stuff Hydra put in his brain.”

“Well gee, I could use some a’ that,” you put your hands on your hips. “Okay, so I guess it’s gonna be a reunion sorta day. No sweat, huh?”
“Sorry to spring this on you,” Steve looks guilty.

“It’s fine, we had to all run into each other again sometime. Are things…good between you two?”

“I think so,” Steve sighs. “As much as they can be. I mean, we both have feelings and that’s tricky but we need to remember our friendship at the core of that. It means a lot to us too.’’

“Alright. I just don’t want any more fighting of that kind,’’ you nod.

“Loud and clear,’’ Steve says.

**

You step off the quinjet at the back, watching as they greet T’Challa and his family. Bruce did a strange bow which Rhodey had obviously pranked him into which kept your attention until you turned to see Steve hugging Bucky on the other side.

He had longer hair like all of you and a fuller beard but the thing that struck you the most was his smile. It seems so…James. It was so genuine and so happy and the twinkle was back in his eyes.

“Captain Adler,’’ T’Challa breaks you out of your reverie. “Good to see you again. Regrettable it was not in better circumstances.’’

“Never is,’’ you embrace him. “One day there might not be a war on.’’

“But not today, unfortunately,’’ he smiles wryly. “Wakanda welcomes you. Make yourself at home and we shall prepare.’’

“Thank you,’’ you nod graciously.

“Missy?’’ it’s Bucky’s voice.

You turn and see him shifting awkwardly in front of you. Steve has gone through into the palace with T’Challa leaving you on the platform with Bucky and a few other stragglers.

“Hey stranger.’’

“Can we talk somewhere private?’’ he asks.

“Sure.’’

He leads you away from the palace, down into the fields before you come upon a hut. He enters it and you follow, seeing a lot of out of place home comforts from Brooklyn.

“This is…your house?’’ you look around.

“Ain’t much but it’s mine. Built it myself,’’ he beams proudly,

“Nice work,’’ you run your hand over the wall. “You gotta build me a cabin sometime.’’

“About how things happened two years ago…’’ he starts. “I just wanted to say I’m sorry for
everything. I’m glad you’re okay.”

“It still hurts sometimes,” you touch your side. “Serum can only help so much internally.”

“That’s my fault,” he bites his lip.

“It’s everyone’s fault,” you correct. “And some bad luck. Steve tells me they counteracted the
Hydra programming.”

“I can officially say I’m…semi-stable,” he laughs.

So much of the man you knew was back in his expressions. He’d definitely recovered some of his
pre-Winter Soldier personality.

“I’m really happy to hear that,” you say genuinely.

“I promised I’d fix myself and I did,” he comes closer to you. “And I made up with Stevie. We
both came to the realisation that you’re free to choose who you like and that our friendship is more
important than fighting. We should just be happy for you and for each other. I just wanted to tell
you that away from everyone. I know they gossip.”

“I appreciate it,” you smile. “New arm looks good by the way.”

“Yeah it works well,” he flexes it.

You stretch up, the flight having cramped up your muscles and your fingers brush on something
stored on one of the beams. You can see from this angle it’s a photo of you, Steve and Bucky in
1941. It makes you feel warm inside seeing the old days.

“What happened?!” Bucky cries in alarm.

Shit. You forgot your casual clothes ride up. The scar from your time with the Defenders is clearly
visible on your back. The one and only time a mark has been permanent since your change. Not
even Tony’s blast had left even so much as dimpled skin once you’d healed.

“Uhhh,” you scramble around for how to explain it.

“Are you alright?!” he holds you still, examining the raised white flesh.

“I’m fine,” you reassure him. “It was a magic dagger. That’s why it hurt me.”

“I think you’d better tell me a story, doll. Magic daggers?” he blinks.

You sit down on his bed, “Alright then. In the two years I’ve not seen you, I ran with a gang of
other gifted humans. We’re called The Defenders. Kinda deal with the street level threats most of
the time until we came across this ancient cult called The Hand. Then suddenly I was back to ‘the
world is ending’ kind a’ fights. They used magic and I got stabbed by some dagger meant to raise
their prophesied leader from the dead. It had side effects though.”

“What like?”

“Well….now I can do this,” you give him a sheepish look before vanishing and reappearing to his
other side.

“What in the good fuck?” he whirls around until he spots you again.
“This is why I get called The Wanderer,” you wring your fingers together. “I can go wherever… within a reasonable distance. I don’t quite think the Hand were expecting it.”

“And are you okay with it?” he asks tentatively.

“I feel more like a sideshow freak than ever,” the words you’ve bottled up for so long around people just slip out around Bucky.

“Oh doll,” and he’s already hugging you tightly. “You’re not a freak. You’re a gifted, strong woman. Don’t you ever forget it, huh? Or you’ll have me to deal with.”

You honestly didn’t know what you would do once you were in Bucky’s presence again but being in his hut, surrounded by things that he’d kept of your old lives with so much of his old persona back, you buried your face in his chest. He just responded by holding you tighter.

“I’ve missed you so much,” he whispers. “I’ve thought about you everyday. thought about the moment when I’d see you again. You’re the first thing I think about in the morning and the last thing on my mind at night. I still so dizzy for you, Vera. Nothing will ever change that. I know you still need space but I needed to say it. I love you.”

And when you pull back from him, there’s the James Barnes you’ve always known, beaming at you with sparkling eyes like you’re the most beautiful thing he’s ever seen. You can’t stop staring at him.

“Buck, I…” you trail off.

You didn’t even know what to say. Nothing about the past two years had resolved any feelings between either you, Bucky or Steve but in the here and now, you were Missy Adler, back in some field operation in Europe with the man you’d always cared for.

Was it worth getting lost in that memory again?
Steve is wandering down to Bucky’s hut like he’s done a few times now when he checked up on his friend’s welfare.

He didn’t expect to hear music drifting up the hill. Did Bucky have a radio now?

As he approached, he could make it out a little better. *We’ll Meet Again*, something he’d heard whilst in the base in London.

He got to the door and peered in, catching glimpses of you dancing with Bucky. He knows he probably shouldn’t but he stays, seeing the pure joy in your eyes.

He should be happy for his friend right? They’d promised each other they would be, whoever you chose. Still didn’t mean it didn’t hurt a little though. I mean…he hadn’t seen you this happy in years.

You start giggling and Steve moves slightly to get a better look. Bucky was tickling you playfully and you were squirming.

“Stop it, Buck!” you laugh. “You know I hate it!”
“I just like seeing you smile,” Bucky grins.

Steve could never be that smooth. He really didn’t have the right charm apart from being a bumbling idiot at times. Did he ever really stand a chance?

“You’re a big goofball,” you push Bucky’s chest playfully.

“It’s how you like me,” Bucky winks.

“Gosh dang, your ego is back,” you shake your head.

“Hey, at least something of me is back right?”

“You are. You really are and I can’t believe you’re better. I didn’t think….”

“I said I’d fix myself and I did,” Bucky pulls you in closer.

Steve realises what’s about to happen before it does but he can’t tear his eyes away. He knows it will upset him, he knows but he still watches.

“I love you,” Bucky whispers and he sees you tilt your head back as he bends down.

You kiss and Steve tries desperately to stem the little flare of rejection. He’s happy for you both, he truly is but his feelings don’t just turn off.

He half attempts to flee but he ends up knocking one of the buckets off a stump nearby, startling a bird which squawks loudly.

“Are you out there, punk?” Bucky calls. “Don’t be shy. Come in.”

Going in was the last thing Steve wanted to do but he’d been well and truly caught. Time to face the music.

**

Steve? Steve was outside?

Oh no….he would’ve seen your kiss with Bucky. You didn’t want to upset him any further than you had done but somehow you kept finding new ways to do it.

Steve sheepishly enters, his bulk joining Bucky’s so the hut felt immensely small all of a sudden. You’re bracing yourself for the awkward conversation.

“So you saw that, huh?” Bucky asks.

“Uh…yeah,” Steve mutters, turning pink.

“I didn’t mean to hurt you,” you blurt out quickly. “I just-”

“I understand, Missy,” Steve cuts you off with a raised hand. “Bucky’s back to his old self and I’m real happy you’re making another go of it.”
“Oh I don’t think she’d decided, pal,” Bucky puts an arm around his friend’s shoulders. “Spur of the moment, thing. Ain’t that right, doll?”

“I…uh….I…” you stammer, not knowing what the heck was going on.

“Look Stevie, if you want a chance too, I’ll leave the tent,” Bucky continues.

“She wants you, Buck,” Steve nudges him awkwardly. “Any blind man could see that.”

“She also likes you, idiot,” Bucky rolls his eyes. “You know, there’s been so much fighting and jealousy and it’s never been necessary. When I said how I felt to Missy, I thought you were sweet on Peggy, Steve. I thought your crush on Missy was done. But I kinda realised when I was getting better. It’s always been the three of us.”

“What are you gabbing about?” you interrupt.

“Sorry, sweetheart. I’m getting to the point, I promise,” Bucky flashes a charming grin. “What I mean is….I wouldn’t be mad if you couldn’t decide between either of us and took both of us. We’re your Brooklyn Boys. It’s always been you, me and Stevie against the world. I know what I’m saying ain’t mighty old fashioned and such but this is ripping us all apart and I’m tired of it.”

“So you’re saying….we all be together?” Steve blinks, like the concept was melting his brain. “I don’t see you that way, Buck.”

“No, you cheddar head,” Bucky sighs. “Both of us with Missy, not each other too. I read about relationships like this in my downtime here. I just want a way for us all to be happy. Assuming Missy wants anything to do with us any more, that is.”

Both men turn to you and you feel incredibly flustered. Bucky was really offering to be part of a three-way relationship?

“But you were gonna marry each other,” Steve points out to fill the uncomfortable silence. “Alright, look. Assuming you want to entertain this idea, Missy, I’m not dumb enough to think I’m your first choice. I think if you wanna do this, you two should be the primary relationship.”

“I can’t think about this,” you take a step back, hitting your leg on the table behind you. “There’s going to be an invasion soon boys.”

“That’s true,” Bucky laughs. “We may all been blown to bits anyway soon.”

“I don’t understand,” you shake your head. “You’re such a jealous guy, James. Why are you suggesting this?”

“I told you. It’s not about me. I love you, Missy, god knows I do but I can’t be selfish. I know you got feelings for Steve too and it’s not fair for me to make you choose. We’re all miserable over this. This is just another option. We’ll go with whatever you want.”

“And you’re okay with this too?” you look at Steve.

You can see the conflicting emotions on his face, the hope and the confusion fighting with the traditional loyalty.

“Yeah, yeah I am. Bucky’s right. When we were fighting, it was all about what we wanted. We can’t claim to love you if we don’t put your happiness above our own.”
You puff out hard, wondering what the heck to do. Missy, the factory girl from Brooklyn who no one looked at twice. Missy, the flat chested streak of water who swore off dating because she’d rather not admit she didn’t feel good enough for a man.

Now look at you.

You had two men who wanted you all along, even before you became this screen siren of a woman. Your Brooklyn Boys.

“Whatever you decide, we’ll go with it. One of us, none of us, both of us,” Bucky nods, taking a step back and pulling Steve back with him to give you some space. “It’s a big decision I know but…the world is ending, doll. Sure would be nice to know where we stand before the big fight.”

He was right. The fight to end all fights was coming and who knew who would survive? Last night on earth and all that.

You make a decision.

“Come here, you goddamn morons,” you gesture.

It was like when you were bleeding out after Tony had shot you. Both of them did that chaste kiss on your cheeks at the same time but you weren’t standing for that any more. If you were truly about to die, you’d make sure this was a good final memory.

You kissed Bucky, making sure to slide your hand up Steve’s neck and along his cheek, feeling the soft beard now gracing it. Then you broke away and kissed Steve, who responded with more passion than you remember from the last time. It was like all the protocol holding him back disappeared.

“Are we all still good?” you ask, worried that maybe they wouldn’t be as okay with it as they thought they would.

“Yes,” they both chorus but there’s a change to the atmosphere.

It’s become heavier, darker and the tension is just hanging in the air. Do you dare push it?

“Well come on then, boys. It’s the end of the world. Let’s have some fun before it gets here.”

“Wait, are you serious?” Steve blinks. “As in…at the same time?”

“I’m sure you caught up on what porn was when you were unfrozen,” Bucky smirks, undoing his leather jacket. “You know three people can fuck at the same time.”

You watch Steve’s face as he blanches at the bluntness of Bucky’s words but tries not to show it. He tries to keep his cool.

“If you’re not comfortable, you don’t have to,” you say softly. “I just don’t know if we’ll get another chance to ever….well…..”

You’re unzipping your suit, peeling it off your shoulders as you say this and you can see his eyes hungrily travelling across where the skin is exposed.

“Geez, Missy, you sure picked a good time when we’re all in full battle gear,” he finally says, laughing before undoing his belts. “If Thanos arrives whilst this is happening, I’ll berate you in Heaven.”
“I would expect nothing less,” you smile back, hopping slightly as you tugged off the legs.

You’re standing there in your underwear, as is Bucky until Steve finally joins in. They both encircle you almost, a little hesitant about where to start until you pressed your back towards Bucky’s chest, knowing he needs less of a confidence boost than Steve before pulling Steve flush towards you, your fingers trailing up his torso.

Bucky starts kissing your neck, hitting the spot that always made you a little weak in the knees and you let out a soft moan which seems to spur Steve into action because he started kissing you again, hands meeting Bucky’s occasionally where they both skipped over your body.

Something flips in Steve’s eyes, something you’ve never seen before. It’s almost a predatory look and you wonder how much confidence your time as The Virtue gave him. This would technically be experiencing him for the first time for you.

“She’s wearing too many clothes, Buck,” he says to his friend.

“Why I think she is, Stevie,” Bucky chuckles, unhooking your bra and pushing the straps off your shoulders. “That’s a little better.”

Bucky cups your breasts from behind, making you arch back a little.

“I think she likes that.”

“I think she does.”

“She’s still wearing too many clothes.”

“After you then,” Bucky nods.

Steve hooks his fingers into the waistband of your panties, dragging them down free. You kick them somewhere off on the floor and you’re expecting a gentle approach. What you’re not expecting is for Steve’s fingers to already be stroking between your legs.

“Jesus Christ, Stevie!” you pant as he skips over a particularly sensitive area and Bucky starts tracing circles around your nipples.

“When did you get so bold, punk?” Bucky seems amused as your arm gets thrown behind you and around his neck.

“I learned a lot of things,” Steve shrugs, letting one finger sink into you and you’re moaning obscenely now. “I’m not some blushing maiden, jerk.”

When he slips another finger to join the first, you’re freely lolling onto Bucky who’s supporting your weight. Your legs are suddenly not working as well.

“The kid’s got moxie after all,” Bucky laughs to himself. “But I’m getting mighty jealous you’re getting her to make those noises.”

“Let’s get her to the bed then and we can make this more fair,” Steve says before looking down at you. “Wouldn’t want our gal to fall over now, would we?”

Our girl. It should sound so wrong given every value you’ve ever grown up with but…it kinda feels right. You just stand there, processing it all rather than moving towards the bed.

“She’s speechless, Stevie. Look what we’ve done to her,” Bucky sounds highly amused, collecting
you from the back and throwing you softly onto the mattress.

“Missy speechless? Well there’s a miracle,” Steve chuckles and the two boys exchange smirks.

Truth was, you’d never really seen this side to Steve as yourself before. You’d definitely not seen the two of them working in tandem and it was overwhelming having two dominant personalities bearing down on you, even for a spitfire like yourself.

“Shut your goddamn trap and get these off,” you grab at their underwear as they get close enough.

“Ohhhhh she thinks she’s in charge,” Bucky grins to Steve. “Adorable.”

“So sweet,” Steve says mock condescendingly.

You don’t think they expect you to suddenly find your fire again, yanking their boxers down and launching yourself into using your hand on Steve and taking Bucky in your mouth.

“Shit, doll,” Bucky hisses, his hand wrapping in your hair already. “You always gotta fight us, huh? I think we should teach her a lesson, Stevie.”

“Sure, Buck, sure….but it can wait a bit,” Steve groans as you switch so now your tongue is running up his length. “God, Missy. Where did you learn this?!”

“A gal has needs when she was alone. The internet was educational,” you smirk as you take most of what you can fit of him in your mouth.

“And did you find anyone else in that time?” Bucky dares the question, almost crowding you and even Steve moves in closer.

“What part of alone don’t you knuckleheads get?” you stand up, still using your hands to stroke along their painfully hard cocks. “I had offers, many offers but….”

“But you’re ours,” Bucky finishes.

“Our gal,” Steve adds.

“You two are the most annoying assholes out there but I missed you.”

What followed was the messiest kiss between the three of you. You even thought there was a point their lips touched each others but they didn’t seem to care. The passion was becoming frenzied as they both staked a claim on you.

“No, this is no good,” Bucky pants as he draws back. “I wanna see you fall apart, Missy. Get on the bed for me, doll.”

“Good idea,” Steve nods.

You get on the bed and instantly Bucky’s upon you, pushing your legs apart and settling in between them, his tongue already getting to work. Meanwhile Steve lays by your head and you start lapping at his cock, keen that he wasn’t missing out.

“You taste so good, sweetheart.” Bucky growls, pressing harder with the flat of his tongue and making you cry out.

“Do that again, Buck. I like that sound,” Steve moans as you lose concentration.
You lose it even more when Steve starts tracing your chest as Bucky increases his pace. This had to be decadence incarnate, the feeling of so many touches on your skin.

“She’s tensing. I think she’s close,” Steve comments.

That prompts Bucky to hook his arms around your thighs, keeping you pinned to him as he alternates his strokes. You’re all but screaming as you cum hard, the sensation so foreign to you after all these years.

“That was music,” Bucky’s eyes are glittering as he surfaces. “How do you feel, doll?”

“Fuck!” you pant which makes them both laugh. “More.”

“That’s greedy,” Steve taps your nose. “Your boys wanna have fun.”

“Then fuck me,” you raise an eyebrow, hoping it’ll make Steve blush but he doesn’t.

Steve was a completely different person in the bedroom and you were beginning to realise that. Whatever you did with him as The Virtue had given him so much confidence.

“After you,” Bucky gestures. “She’s got a mouth on today.”

Steve moves to in between your legs, slicking himself against you teasingly before finally sliding in, making your back arch.

“How is she?” Bucky asks.


“I just wanna watch,” Bucky settles himself next to you. “Never seen her from this angle.”

Steve doesn’t wait for anything else. He starts grinding, making sure he’s truly slick before starting a set of strokes that made you feel like he was filling you completely.

“God you’re beautiful,” Bucky strokes your hair back out of your face, leaning down to kiss you.

When he pulls back, you can see he’s stroking his cock whilst he watches the two of you and you wondering how jealous James Barnes came to be such a deviant after all. Maybe he really did just like seeing you happy.

“You feel so good, Missy,” Steve rasps as his thrusts get quicker and quicker.

You can tell he’s nearly reaching his own end and, with a final rut that has you almost ripping the headboard to pieces, he spills into you, whispering declarations of love into your ear as he does so.

He gives you a sweet kiss before pulling out and falling to the other side of you.

“Ready, doll?” Bucky asks, propping himself up.

“Straight after?” you blink a little.

You didn’t know what exactly was a boundary for these two yet after all.

“End of the world, sweetheart,” Bucky climbs on top of you. “Not a time to get weird about things.”
With the addition of Steve’s cum mingling with your own wetness, he has no trouble burying himself up to the hilt in you.

“You know, I’m enjoying this more than I thought I would,” Steve eyes you both hungrily as he recovers.

“I do have good ideas sometimes, punk,” Bucky grins. “Now, I got a gal to make scream. Hold on now. I ain’t gonna be slow.”

True to his word, his pace was relentless and you found yourself scrabbling at the sheets for purchase. He pauses only to let Steve sit behind you so you can lay against him before continuing his pace. Meanwhile Steve takes your hands so you can squeeze them.

“Shit!” you curse as he builds up even more speed.

“Come on, Missy. Call for me,” Bucky grunts in between frenzied thrusts.

“Fuck, James!” you cry out, until your feel Steve’s hands leave yours and start roughly kneading your breasts. “Fuck, Steve!”

“That does sound mighty good, huh?” Steve jokes.

“Best feelin’ in the world,” Bucky agrees. “I’m close, sweetheart.”

“Come on then,” you encourage him.

He obliges, tensing up hard and pushing as deep as he can go, that coarse shout you were so used to ringing out.

Then both of them move to the side, framing you with arms across your torso and heads nestled against yours.

“God, are we going to hell for that?” you laugh.

“I’ll let you know in a few hours,” Bucky jokes back.

“That was amazing,” Steve sighs contently.

“No regrets anyone?” you ask.

“No,” comes the chorused reply.

“Are we idiots for not doing this sooner?” Steve chips in.

“Tо be fair, I only found out this was a thing recently,” Bucky shrugs. “And I needed time to get better before I could even consider it.”

“I’m glad you’re better,” you cup his face. “I really am.”

“I wish we could stay like this,” Steve nuzzles in further.

“Me too,” Bucky agrees.

But you know you can’t. You know there’s a war coming and there’s no time for sleep or even any more sweet nothings. You have to get back to the palace.
“Well, at least I’ll die satisfied,” you start extracting yourself from their limbs, much to their moody protests. “If we all survive this though, what then?”

“Then we carry on like this,” Bucky says simply. “We both love you, Missy. If we can get along to do something this intimate together than having a bigger relationship isn’t a problem, right Stevie?”

“Right,” Steve nods quickly.

“You know, I never thought sweet little Stevie would be so up for this,” you shake your head, redressing.

“I’ve grown,” Steve smiles. “In many ways. We’re in our early thirties technically. I’ve had time to mature.”

“Yeah don’t remind me,” you grimace. “Early thirties and no husband or kids, my Pa would beat me six ways from Sunday if he were alive.”

It was meant to be a joke but clearly it struck a chord because both men looked at each other, having a silent conversation.

“I mean…technically we’re still engaged,” Bucky ventures. “We can still get married if you wanna…depending if we live, of course.”

“What about Steve?”

“Not legal for two husbands, I’m afraid,” Steve smiles. “But I did say you oughta be the main relationship here. You’ve got more history together. That being said, if you happen to get pregnant with my kid one day, I wouldn’t mind the co-parenting.”

“See,” Bucky starts pulling on his pants, as does Steve. “It’d be fine. We’d be a weird family, sure but it’d be our family. It’s always been the three of us and it’d be weird to go back to just two after this.”

“I feel like the most selfish dame in the world right now,” you put your hands on your hips.

“And we’re telling you it’s alright,” Steve laughs. “Stop being a worrywart, Missy.”

Bucky moves forward, taking your hands in his, “Vera, look. We’ll go by whatever decision you make but just know we both enjoyed this and…I feel it was more right having Stevie there. I know he was after Peggy in the beginning but in the modern world, it just hasn’t felt the same since.”

“I’ll think about it…if I live through this,” you sigh, smiling.

“Hey, what’s the hold up?” a voice comes from the doorway as someone walks in. “Shuri asked…..uh……did you guys just….?”

It was Natasha, looking immensely interested and amused as she stepped further in.

“This is not what it-” you try, desperate not to be judged.

“Oh I think it is,” she laughs. “About time really. We had bets whether this would happen, you know. I just won a thousand dollars from Tony, if he ever gets his ass back to Earth.”

“You what?” you say louder than necessary. “You all thought the three of us….?”

“Yeah,” she rolls her eyes. “You have no idea how much gossip your love triangle gave us. I’m
just sad I had no invite.”

She winks to let you know she’s messing around.

“I don’t think they could handle a second woman as well as me,” you quip and she bursts out into peals of laughter.

“Hey!” your boys say in unison.

“Go on, Missy. Shuri’s waiting for you. Don’t worry, if I had a willing partner to fuck before the world ends, I would do.”

“Bruce is right up there,” you point.

“That ship sailed a long time ago,” you catch a wistful gaze on her face.

“Sure about that? He’s barely taken his eyes off you since he got back,” you leave her with that nugget of information before making your way back up to the palace.

You look back every so often at the hut where years of tension finally just dissolved. Maybe this was the perfect solution? Even after a couple of years away from everything, you still had feelings for them both and they were both willing to give this a try.

Why the hell not, right? It’s a modern world, not the one you left behind as you crashed into the ocean.

**

“It’s you!” Shuri squealed the second she saw you. “Do you have any idea how famous you are?!”

“Oh…I would think so given the war effort?” you’re confused.

“Not that, I mean online!” she waves her hand. “Look at this!”

She pulls up a screen on her device which she flicks and it appears as a bigger projection on the wall beside her. It’s a Youtube channel dedicated to sightings of you as The Wanderer, intercut with mashups of your Lady Liberty promotional movies.

“Good girl gone bad,” Shuri proclaims proudly. “I love the dark and brooding look these days. Must be so freeing to go wherever you please.”

You got the feeling Shuri’s responsibilities were a little caging from the way she was talking.

“It is but also kinda lonely,” you admit.

“That’s so deep!” Shuri puts her hands on her chest. “You’re my favourite Avenger but don’t tell the others.”

“That’s mighty sweet of you to say, Princess,” you smile at her enthusiasm.

“Oh my god! You’re using the slang!” she gets even more excited. “So fascinating!”
“Uh, you wanted to see me?”

“I have something for you,” she snaps back to the reason she called you here for. “Your suit is….punk rock but not very practical for fighting. I made you a new one.”

“You…you what?” you blink. “You made me a suit?”

“Here! Try it on!” she hands you a silver motif of the Liberty Crown mixed with the symbol of The Wanderer and you turn it over, wondering what she was talking about. “Oh right! Just strip out of your clothes and put it on your chest.”

Not wanting to be rude, you humour her, eventually getting the cold metal to sit on your chest where something suddenly erupts from it, covering your body. It’s fitted perfectly, in the old colours of the Statue of Liberty but the texture is unlike anything you’ve ever seen.

“Wow!” you look down at yourself.

“It’s stab proof, bullet proof and shock proof,” she lists, wandering around you to check the fit. “It has vibranium woven into the material.”

“Like that purple glow when I hit T’Challa?” you ask.

“Exactly!” she smiles widely. “That’s absorbing kinetic energy. For my brother, it makes a concussive blast, for you, it’ll enhance your powers and make you teleport longer distances if you need to.”

“Handy in a big scale fight,” you muse. “Thank you, truly. This is beautiful work.”

“It’s nothing really. Made it in two nights,” she dismisses.

“Two nights?!” you cry. “Gosh you are talented.”

“Damn right,” she grins. “Also I made you another Liberty Crown, also Vibranium. I heard your one was Adamantium but I hope this works just as well for you.”

She hands you an near exact replica of the Crown and you thumb the edge, noting how sharp it was.

“This is wonderful, Shuri,” you marvel. “Thank you for your help. I’ll use them proudly.”

“How about a photo?” Shuri suggests.

Before you can fathom the logistics, she’s already at the side of you, a device held high and you just have time to pose before she presses a button and the picture takes.

“That’s going on Twitter,” she smiles to herself. “Captain Liberty wearing my designs.”

“I’d happily wear any more you make,” you stretch out, watching the fabric ripple with you.

“Excellent because I have a whole range I was planning in my head,” Shuri beams.

“Sister,” you hear the voice of T’Challa from the top of the ramp. “The Captain needs to plan with her teammates.”

“Yes brother but I’m just making sure she’s ready.”
T'Challa waves a device, “By taking selfies, hmm? You forget I follow you.”

“He’s no fun,” Shuri mutters to you before doing a fist bump and you thank god you’ve learned this gesture by now. “Good luck.”

“You too, Shuri.”

“See, we’re friends!” Shuri calls up to her brother and T'Challa just smiles exasperatedly.

“Come, Captain Adler,” he steers you towards the viewing platform. “You’ve missed the strategy meeting.”

“Care to fill me in?”

“My sister will attempt to separate Vision’s consciousness from the Mind Stone whilst we buy her time.”

“Is that it?”

“The best plans are never complicated,” T'Challa smirks enigmatically.

You guess that was true.

You finally join everyone else and see that everyone is prepared. There’s a grimmer atmosphere than you remember and you can feel yourself becoming on edge. All of the passion, the love, the recent humour has just vanished to be replaced by this gut wrenching sense of dread.

Sure you’re a supersoldier, even an enhanced one now but by all accounts, an army was coming and one you had no idea how to fight.

**

Lining up on the fields of Wakanda, you’re inbetween Bucky and Steve, watching a spaceship crash land into the grass outside the barrier.

Thousands of beasts pour out of the vessel, rabid and eager, racing towards you, only to be stopped by the forcefield.

“Everyone, okay?” Steve asks quietly.

“What the hell are those things?” Bucky asks in disgust.

“I don’t know but they don’t look friendly,” you add. “This is it boys.”

“This is it,” Steve repeats.

You turn to them both, giving them one last kiss each, much to the surprise of Sam on Bucky’s left who gives you all incredulous looks.

“Ask us later,” you say to him. “It’s complicated.”
“I don’t even wanna know,” Sam blinks, readying himself.

“Open Section Seventeen,” you hear T’Challa say.

In an instant, the creatures that were piling up at the barrier burst through, crawling over each other in their haste to get in, not caring if they injured one another. They flood the field, haring up the hill, their maws dripping with saliva and roars rumbling in their bodies.

“Well, it was a good run,” you say to those near you. “Good luck everyone.”

Their replies are swallowed by the thunder of the stampeding beasts who fill your field of vision.

*God, I don’t wanna die here.*
They were never ending.

Thousands of snarling beasts just pummelling the front line as everybody hacked, slashed and punched their defences, some falling where they stood. The sheer numbers alone were astronomical.

You got pinned down near a boulder, the Crown Mark II embedded in the throat of a creature as more and more of its kin piled on top of it. You were being crushed as snapping, snarling teeth were inches from your face.

You felt like you were back in the Triskelion building again with the rubble trapping you and that rising sense of panic was starting.

“MISSY!” you heard Steve bellow over the growling but you knew he’d have no chance to get near you. He was almost being swallowed in his own pile of monsters.

That squashing feeling was getting worse and in a moment of fear, you disappeared from under the writhing bodies and reappeared near Steve, taking a few of his own problems out for him.

“Uh…..” Steve starts, wide eyed. “Since when could you do that?”

“Since evil cult, magic knife, yadda yadda. Not the time, Stevie,” you gather yourself. “On your right!”

He just has time to use his shields to batter the animal down into the dirt.
You cast a glance towards Bucky who seems to have found a vantage point on a rocky outcrop and was picking off everything he could see. He was doing just mighty fine on his own.

What you also saw was more of those things splitting off and trying to run either side of the troops. They may be primal beasts but they weren’t dumb. They knew how to hunt.

“Regroup and flank!” you shout to Steve. “They’re surrounding us!”

“Go tell T’Challa,” Steve motions. “He needs to reassemble the Wakandan army!”

And in an instant you were next to the King who had just saved one of his soldier’s lives.

“They’re forming a pincer movement,” you hurriedly explain. “We need to stop them before we’re outflanked.”

“Get to the back line. Relay the order. You’re much faster than I am, Captain Adler,” T’Challa nods. “I’ll take care of the front line.”

“Got it.”

“And check on my sister. I need to know how much more time we need to give her.”

Even with a mask on you could tell he was concerned. At this rate, if those creatures kept coming, you would never win.

After appearing at the rear and shouting the message, you flitted up to the laboratory and nearly fell on your ass. You felt dizzy and disorientated, hunkering down into a squat to try and not throw up.

“What the hell are you doing?!” Shuri demanded. “Are you maxing yourself out already?! Moron!”

“Look, I’ve not exactly tested the limits of these powers yet,” you sass back. “Gimme a break, I’m trying fight a war, sweetheart.”

You get hands pulling you upright again and a cup shoved into your hand which you drink down eagerly. It’s not until your eyesight stops spinning that, to your surprise, you see it’s Wanda who’s helped you.

“I thought….I thought…” you stammer, still under the impression she was going to kill you if she saw you again after the Pietro revelation.

“We’ve all had time to heal, Missy,” she gives you a rueful smile. “What did you come up here for?”

“T’Challa needs to know how much more time.”

“Is it bad?” Wanda frowns.

“Yeah. Yeah it’s bad.”

“Tell my brother he’ll know when I’m done,” Shuri’s scowling as she deftly works her hands on a holographic display. “I’m going as fast as I can.”

“If it gets worse, come get me,” Wanda grabs your arm.

“I hope to God it doesn’t,” you nod grimly before vanishing back onto the battlefield next to
“How much more time?” he shouts.

“Still needs more,” you yell back, cutting the head off of another beast.

You’re very sure he just swore but the noise was swallowed by the cracking sound, like a whip, of something entering the atmosphere. You look up and see more ships crashing down which unleash giant wheels that race down the hill, flattening anything in its path.

“Shit!” you squeak, looking around and spot that Bucky is squarely in the path of one but he’s not even seen it because he’s too busy knifing a creature in the side whilst it tries to bite his metal arm off.

In a blink, you’ve grabbed him. You’re not even sure if this will work. You’ve not tried vanishing with another person before but you don’t have time to think about it.

Suddenly you’re across the other side of the field, away from the rolling mechanism which tears up the spot where you were moments earlier.

“Oh God, I’m gonna hurl,” Bucky looks slightly green, swaying mildly. “That was awful, doll.”

“Better than being spam on the sidewalk,” you sigh. “I’m so glad that worked.”

“There was a chance it wouldn’t?!” Bucky cries. “Jesus!”

“Come on, we need to get back,” you watch more machines trundle by.

“Before we go,” Bucky steps forward and kisses you again. “One for the road, huh? I need a treat for survivin’ this long.”

“Get your ass back in that fight Barnes!” you scowl. “Stop stallin’!”

“Yes Ma’am,” he grins before sprinting back.

You take the time to recentre yourself. ‘Wandering’, as Matt Murdock had called it, obviously had a finite number of times you could do it before feeling the effects.

You saw a flare of red as one of the wheels was tossed aside and knew Wanda had gotten tired of waiting. You didn’t blame her. You would hate being sidelined too.

A sudden flash almost blinded you as what looked like rainbow lightning crashed down onto the ground. When it had cleared, you appeared near the site, ready to fight whatever it was. You’d rather spare the Wakandan troops having to fight the more enhanced and supernatural things out there. That’s what you were here for.

“Lady Missy!” booms a voice that you hadn’t heard for years.

“Thor?!”

A much more shaven Thor was standing there, wielding a giant axe with, what appeared to be, a raccoon on one shoulder and a standing tree at his other side. The raccoon looks at your Crown with what you swear was a greedy look.

“You look very different,” Thor points out, smiling. “And you have appeared to have learned magic. Very well done!”
“You’ve had a bit of a change yourself,” you nod to his appearance.

“Yeah yeah, can we stop making goo goo eyes at the redhead chick and get to killing Thanos?” the raccoon speaks and you stare at it for a second before coming to your senses.

“No no, Rocket. You have it wrong. She belongs to the Captain and the Soldier,” Thor explains.

“Well geez, leave some for the rest of us lady,” the raccoon called Rocket gives you a disapproving eyebrow.

“I’m not here to have my life choices judged by a trash bandit,” you fire back, using the old term.

“Who you callin’ trash bandit?!?” Rocket points a stubby finger at you. “I’m a Guardian of the Galaxy, ginger. You ain’t shit!”

“Guardian of the what?” you screw your face up. “Never heard of you.”

“I am Groot!” the tree says angrily to Rocket.

“Yeah yeah, prolly ain’t the time. We’ll settle this later, fireface,” Rocket unclips a gun from his back holster.

“You have…..interesting friends,” you remark to Thor who seems a little embarrassed.

“This is Rocket and this is Groot,” he gestures to them both. “Is Thanos here yet?”

“Not yet. We need your help. There’s too many of his army for us to contain. We……Steve!” you notice him being buried in a ditch by tens of the creatures. “Shit, gotta go!”

Wandering was really taking a toll now as you half fell into the squirming mass, cutting and slashing until you’d freed him.

“Thank you,” Steve says earnestly as you pull him upright. “Wow that really is a mighty useful power.”

“I feel like I’m gonna pass out,” you sway more heavily.

“Stay with me, sweetheart,” Steve grabs your shoulders, steadying you.

“I need rest,” you feel so weak. “I need…”

“You need to dig deep, Missy. We need you,” Steve says sternly. “You can’t give up now. We have to fight to the bitter end. Do you understand me?”

“I…”

“Do you understand?!” he uses his big voice.

“Yeah, yeah I do,” you bite your lip.

You just wanna cry from exhaustion but you mentally hitch your britches up and turn back to the fight. You watch Thor use his godly powers to blast swathes through the opposing army and that gives you some hope back.

“Missy! Get to Vision!” you hear Steve scream from behind you and you whirl around to see a blur as Vision streaks by, fighting an enemy in mid-air.
Could you really vanish one more time though? You took a deep breath and concentrated hard, appearing next to Vision who was struggling with one of Thanos’ chief minions.

“Missy Adler!” Vision looks at you, managing to throw the minion into the nearby trees. “Take the stone from my forehead! Get it to Wanda! She can destroy it!”

“Shit, I can’t do that!” you shake your head, knowing if you do Wanda will hate you forever.

“You have to!” Vision implores you. “Look out!”

He grabs hold of you, whirling you around before you can get a spear shoved through your back and he takes the hit. You dodge around him, punching the minion in the face so hard you hear bones cracking. You pick up the spear, twirling it for a moment before thrusting it through the eye socket where it goes horribly limp and falls to the ground.

“Missy, please. We’re out of time,” Vision begs.

“Don’t make me choose to do this. You know I can’t,” you stagger a little.

“Captain. Captain Rogers,” Vision looks past you to Steve who’s caught up. “You have to do this. You……he’s here. It’s too late.”

There’s a swirling sound before heavy footsteps start approaching. You and Steve form a barricade in front of Vision wondering what was coming through the trees.

You didn’t expect Thanos to be so tall.

Most of the Avengers had found their way to you now and Wanda was cradling Vision behind you as Bruce in the Hulkbuster suit, Sam, Rhodey, Natasha and Bucky, plus Okoye and T’Challa made a neat ring around Thanos.

“Step aside,” comes the low booming voice of Thanos, flexing a golden gauntlet on his hand that contained some of the Infinity stones. “There doesn’t need to be unnecessary blood shed.”

“We’re not doing that, pal,” Rhodey readies some missiles. “Vision stays with us.”

“A pity,” Thanos sighs. “Loyalty is the folly of stupidity.”

“Loyalty is noble,” T’Challa presses in. “It makes us who we are.”

“No. It makes you dead,” Thanos smirks, the effect completely horrifying on his purple scarred face.

You didn’t really comprehend what was happening. People were flying backwards everywhere and bullets pinged all around. Bruce was encased in a cliff face, Rhodey was tossed far away back into the treeline, Sam’s wings disintegrated and he dropped to the earth heavily and you couldn’t even see where T’Challa and Okoye landed. Bucky was also blasted into a tree by a cloud of purple force and you immediately ran to him, forgetting the mission entirely.

“Are you okay?!” you shake him but his head is lolling in his daze.


You look over your shoulder to see Steve desperately trying to hold the gauntlet away from Wanda and Vision, screaming with the pure exertion, his face contorted into fury. With one swot, like he was batting away an annoying fly, Thanos smacked Steve so hard into the dirt you thought his
neck had snapped on impact.

Your boys were dying around you and you were panicking. In your flap, you leapt onto Thanos back, gouging a line with the Crown from the back of his skull to the middle of his shoulder blades but he catches you, his hand reaching over himself and you’re flung in front of him, the Crown skittering off somewhere into the bushes. He grabs you by the neck, raising you high into the air where you’re kicking at him, trying to get a purchase before you’re strangled to death.

“MISSY!” Bucky’s bellowing, trying to struggle back up to his feet.

You can feel the blood pooling in your face, the build up of pressure. You were going to die right here and now and there was nothing you could do.

A blast of red light makes him drop you and you hit the ground, bouncing slightly and drawing a shuddering breath.

“Get away from her!” Wanda screams, one hand destroying the Mind stone in Vision’s head and the other trying to stop Thanos.

He just laughs, stepping on you in an effort to get to her. You feel a couple of ribs breaking with the weight and you’re howling now. You feel hands dragging you back away from the fight before arms wrap around you.


“Where’s Steve?” you manage to growl out, watching as Wanda destroys the stone.

“Here,” Steve crawls over, blood running from his mouth.

Both boys huddle with you, thinking everything was over until you see Vision being restored with the Time stone.

“It’s over,” Bucky says in dismay. “It’s all over. We lost.”

“I’m so sorry,” Steve looks defeated. “I should have done more.”

“Don’t blame yourself,” you groan around the pain. “We tried. God knows we tried.”

“I love you both,” Steve mutters against you, extending his arm to go around Bucky too. “I wanted you to know that.”

“We love you too, Stevie,” Bucky replies grimly.

It’s not until you hear a yell and a triumphant roar that you look up to see Thor, pushing his axe further into Thanos’ chest. Your brief flicker of hope is quickly extinguished, however, when Thanos merely raises his fingers and snaps, vanishing from sight.

“Where did he go? No no NOOOO!” Thor screams outraged, kicking at a nearby tree in his anger. “He was mine!”

“What happened?” Bucky asks, looking around. “What did he do?”

“I have no idea,” you mutter.

Everything had become eerily still. There was no chatter of wildlife, no birds, no rustling of the undergrowth. Even the fighting seemed to have dimmed in the background. The breeze swelled for
a moment then dropped and you were left with a close feeling like extreme humidity.

It all served to put you on edge, wondering what was going on.

Sam starts walking towards your little huddle, rubbing his head, “Man, I think we got our asses handed to us.”

“No shit,” you laugh nervously. “What the hell was that?”

“No idea,” Sam sighs. “I don’t know what’s gonna happen…..guys? Guys, something’s…..help me!”

You sit up in alarm, ignoring the wrenching pain as Sam starts to disintegrate before your eyes, turning ashen grey, flecks wafting into the air until nothing remains. You just stare at the spot he was in a moment ago, dumbfounded.

“What the fuck?” Bucky blinks. “He’s gone. He’s just gone!”

You watch Wanda go the same way too.

The three of you hold tightly to each other, afraid of what was happening. The eerie feeling intensified even more as you heard a scream from Okoye somewhere in the woods. It echoed even more in the total silence.

A sense of dread filled your stomach as you got this odd sensation in your limbs, almost like they were going numb.


Then it started.

**

Bucky felt your body go oddly light. It was like you’d stopped weighing anything in his arms.

“Doll?” he asks nervously. “Are you alright?”

Steve seems to sense his unease because he gives him that look

“Doll?”

Then your skin turns grey, your head lolls back and you flake away in his arms until he’s left holding nothing. He can’t stop looking at his hands, expecting you to come back.

“Steve?” he panics. “Steve?! Where the hell is she?!”

“I don’t know, I don’t know!” Steve shouts, patting the ground as if you’ll spring up from there.

“Oh my god, she’s gone. She’s gone. Is she dead? Did she die?!” Bucky gets to his feet.

“She doesn’t exist any more,” Natasha has caught up to them, looking like she’s going to vomit. “That’s what he wanted. Half of all life erased.”
“What do you mean she doesn’t exist any more?! Where is she?!”

“Buck, she’s erased,” Steve says softly.

“Bullshit!” Bucky snarls. “She’s just done that wandering thing again, right? She’s just somewhere else. We can find her!”

“Sweetie, you know we can’t,” Natasha lays a hand on his shoulder but he shrugs it off violently.

“Don’t tell me what’s possible! I found her again after seventy years and I’ll be damned if I lose her now!”

“Buck, please,” Steve’s openly crying now. “She’s gone.”

“No….no,” Bucky breaks down into silent sobs before the true wail of pain comes out and he drops to the ground clawing at the dirt like it still contained some part of you.

He’d only just gotten you back. It wasn’t fair. How was any of this fair?

“I want her back, Stevie,” he cries into the earth. “I want her back.”

“I know, Buck, I know. Me too. We won’t stop until we do. I promise.”
“I feel like I’m on the Coney Island Cyclone again.”

Then you faded from his fingers until he was left staring at his own hands. Then the loop started again as he watched your face turn grey, the sockets of your eyes recede into your skull and the skin start to flake away.

“NO!” he screams, flailing as he’s caught in the bed covers, falling onto the floor in his panic.

There’s footsteps running down the corridor and Steve bursts in, spotting Bucky on the ground and immediately rushes to pick him up.

“It’s alright,” he holds him tightly. “It’s alright. Did you have that dream again?”
“Every goddamn night,” Bucky’s openly crying now. “I see it every night. It won’t stop Stevie.”

“I know. I miss her too,” Steve’s grip becomes even tighter. “I keep catching her perfume in random places and it’s driving me insane.”

Bucky didn’t want to divulge how badly he was coping. He was sure the rest of the Avengers could see it in his face. He barely slept, he barely ate and he kept losing his temper with people. Everything he’d regained about himself, he’d lost when you vanished in his arms.

“Come on, pal,” Steve leads him back to the bed. “Just sit down for a while.”

“I don’t wanna be alone,” Bucky admits, knowing Steve won’t judge him.

“I was hoping you’d say that. I don’t wanna be either.”

They both sit on the mattress, staring into the dark room.

“You know, you missed the meeting this evening. Nebula said there’s a planet where Thanos might be hiding. There was an energy spike from there recently,” Steve tries to fill the silence. “Tony’s fixed up the spaceship so maybe we can go after him again. We know where we went wrong this time. We can get him.”

“He’s too strong,” Bucky shakes his head.

“Thor’s ready to kill him if necessary,” Steve mutters. “We can get the gauntlet and we can bring her back, bring everyone back. Isn’t that worth a try? Don’t give up on her.”

“I’m not!” Bucky feels a little angry at the insinuation. “But if we go down, who is left to try and save her?”

“Buck, stop being an ass,” Steve says sternly. “We’re getting our best gal back, you hear me? This is gonna work.”


“Tomorrow then.”

“Sure.”

“Gonna sleep?”

“Probably not.”

“Fine,” Steve lies back on the bed. “Then just talk to me until I fall asleep.”

Bucky looks at his friend, feeling a little selfish that he wasn’t considering Steve’s feelings lately. He’d been so wrapped up in the heartbreak of losing you and Steve was going through the same thing.

“Then you’re gonna love my story about seeing Okoye punching her husband into a manure pile,” Bucky starts.

Steve just smiles as Bucky recites the tale, finally feeling safe enough to fall asleep.
Above the planet, Steve felt more nervous than ever. Knowing Thanos had already beat them once played on his mind but he wasn’t about to give up.

When they descended down and finally approached the wooden cabin, he instantly could tell something was not right. The atmosphere was just off and it was setting him on edge. He could tell Bucky felt it too.

Going inside, he saw Thanos was injured, attempting to make stew one handed. Then his heart dropped when he spotted the infinity gauntlet charred and mangled on the floor. What had happened?!

“What did you do?!” Thor flies into a rage instantly. “The stones!”

“The stones are gone,” Thanos sits down matter of factly on a stool, not phased at all. “I wished them out of existence.”

“Why?” Steve questions.

“When I got rid of half of all life, I knew there would be those that would try to reverse what I did,” Thanos explains calmly. “So I got rid of the stones so no one could undo my great work.”

“So it’s over,” Natasha confirms.

“You’ve made the journey for nothing,” Thanos smiles. “So do what you like to me. My purpose has been fulfilled.”

No one moves, too in shock to fully process what’s just happened.

Thor takes two steps forward, swinging Stormbreaker and Thanos’ head slides off his shoulders, rolling towards Bucky’s feet. Bucky just stares at it like he’s not really seeing it before looking up at Steve.

“You promised,” he says quietly. “You promised we’d get her back.”

“I….I’m sorry,” Steve bites his lip, desperate not to breakdown in front of everyone. “I…."

“Shows over,” Nebula folds her arms. “It’s done.”

Everyone walks back to the Milano, strapping in before they take off back for Earth.

“So that’s it,” Bucky hangs his head, his hair obscuring his face. “She’s really gone. She’s gone forever.”

“Listen fuzzface,” Rocket turns around in the pilot’s seat. “Red ain’t gone. Groot ain’t gone. They’re somewhere and we can get them back.”

“Oh shut your piehole!” Bucky snarls back. “The only way to get them back just vanished two days ago. We got nothing! What the hell do you propose we do, huh? Everyone’s given up!”

Steve couldn’t argue with that. The small kernel of hope he’d been nurturing these past couple of weeks had died. There was no more fight left in him.
“Not me,” Rocket flips Bucky off. “I ain’t losing Groot…I ain’t….he’s all I got.”

The rest of the journey is made in silence and the second they’re back at the Avengers compound, Steve hurries to his room, avoiding Tony who was still recovering. The last thing he wanted to admit was that Tony was right and that everyone was truly lost.

As he sat in the bed, the exhaustion caught up with him and he slipped into a fitful dream. He dreamt about you in Bucky’s hut, the moment you’d all shared, when you’d finally chosen him of your own volition and how soft you’d felt. In the background of the hut, Thanos’ smiling face loomed and he stretched out one hand, ready to click just as you flipped Steve over to start riding him.

“Steve!” Bucky’s shaking him awake. “Stevie? You were screaming.”

“I was?” Steve blinks.

“We could all hear you in the command room,” his concerned friend’s face swims into view. “You kept screaming ‘not her’.”

“I dreamt about her in your hut,” Steve sits up. “And Thanos was there.”

“Shit,” Bucky sighs. “Are you okay?”

“No,” and Steve’s voice finally breaks.

He starts sobbing uncontrollably, no longer able to hold back the emotions, no longer able to be the ‘strong’ one of the team. He should be embarrassed but he’s well beyond that point any more.

“Hey, you jerk. Being the emotional screw up is my job,” Bucky tries to cheer him up. “Come ’ere.”

As Bucky puts his arms around Steve, Steve clings onto him for dear life whilst the tears continue to flow. After feeling something wet drop on his face from above, he looks up to see Bucky is crying too.

It was just them now. Your trio was forever officially a duo.

**

“Hello?” you call out, after waking up floating in warm water.

The sky above you was a deep burnt orange, casting deep glows all around you. You couldn’t see anything for miles.

“Hello?” you try again, sitting up to discover the water was quite shallow.

Silence.

The last thing you remember was Thanos breaking your ribs by standing on you and Bucky and Steve rushing over. You didn’t have any clue how you got here.
You stand up, trying to see anything. When you couldn’t, you started walking in any direction, hoping you’d come across something.

You walked for what seemed like forever until finally you heard someone else calling out faintly.

“Anybody?!”

They sounded young, very young. Male you’d reckon. You started running in the direction of the voice.

“Hey!” you shout.

“Is someone there?! I’m over here!”

Then faint sloshing footsteps grew louder and louder and the sunset fog cleared just in time for you to smack into whoever was running at you. You both bounced backwards, sliding in the water.

“Oh my gosh, I’m so sorry!” they babble before you feel hands lifting you up. “It’s you! It’s Miss Liberty! Hi! Remember me from Germany?”

You look up at the young kid who seemed so overjoyed at finding you and you can’t place him at all.

“Err…..” you reach around in your memory.

“Oh right!” he slaps his head. “I was in my costume at the time. I’m Spiderman.”

“Spiderman, right. New York kid, yeah?”

“That’s me,” he smiles, holding out his hand. “I’m Peter. Nice to find you here. I’ve been so lost and I don’t know where I am.”

“Me neither,” you admit, shaking his hand. “Last thing I remember was fighting Thanos.”

“Me too!” Peter’s eyes widen. “And then I started feeling really funny and everyone turned to dust and…..gosh, that must’ve happened to me too. Is this heaven?”

“I hope not. It ain’t what I was promised if that’s the case,” you snort. “Think anyone else is here?”

“You’re the first person I’ve found. If you’re here then the others should be. Mister Drax and Mantis and Mister Starlord.”

“Starlord?”

“Oh he’s nice. Kinda hopeless but nice,” Peter nods enthusiastically. “Oh and Doctor Strange.”

“Strange went too? I need to find him. He might know what’s going on. Did Wong get killed too?”

“I don’t think so. He was guarding the Sanctum when I last saw him.”


“Uh, I’m not ten,” Peter huffs.

“If you don’t take it, I can’t vanish with you.”
“I still don’t see-” he starts, taking your hand but you wander to a point in this world which looks much the same but there’s a man sitting in the water, tracing patterns. “Holy smokes, that’s awesome! I had no idea you could do that!”

“Who’s there?!” the man stands up, drawing two guns.

“Mister Starlord, it’s Peter! Spiderman!” Peter begins. “This is Captain Liberty.”

“Is that like a knock off of Lady Liberty? You her grandkid?” Starlord snorts, lowering his guns back into the holsters.

“Son, I’m the original. I’m old enough to be your great grandma,” you fold your arms. “I just got a promotion is all.”

“No way,” Starlord laughs. “This is great! Hey, you haven’t aged a day. Can you still keep up with young men like me?”

“Oh, Mister Starlord, you shouldn’t flirt with her,” Peter winces.

“Why not?”

“Last I heard she was dating the Winter Soldier. I mean, before the fallout in Germany.”

“Still am,” you nod to Peter. “And Cap.”

“Really?!” Peter blusters.

“Wait, you’re dating two men?” Starlord blinks. “You cougar. High five!”

You oblige him but you’re fast running out of patience. You need to find Strange and get back to Wakanda quickly.

“Anyway, Stephen Strange, have you seen him here?” you ask before Peter can ask you too many awkward questions that a teenager doesn’t need to know the answers to.

“No, you’re the first people I’ve seen,” Starlord shakes his head. “I’m Peter by the way. Peter Quill.”

“Missy,” you give a tiny salute. “I’ll just call you Quill to avoid mixing you up with the kid. Come on Quill, hold my other hand. We need to find everyone.”

“And what’s that-”

You don’t give him a chance to finish the sentence before wandering to another area. You’d search as long as it took to get back home.

No matter what, you’d get back to Bucky and Steve.

**

**

FIVE YEARS LATER.
Bucky’s fiddling with the chain around his neck, the ring sliding along it as he pulls it this way and that.

After Thanos’ death, he’d fled the compound for a while, visiting all the old places in Europe that reminded him of you. Steve understood completely of course, checking in with him daily via comms link.

Eventually Bucky had come back to that house in Slovakia where you’d had to toss your engagement ring down the sink to avoid tracking. Although squatters had appeared to have moved in in the interim and gutted the place, he still picked up the weak signal pulsing in the pipework.

After a few minutes of him tearing the pipes to shreds with his vibranium arm, he was able to find it, coated in soap scum and grime before washing it in the upstairs bathroom where it gleamed dully.

This was the last reminder of his life before The Winter Soldier.

He pulled his old Howling Commandos jacket, that Steve had given back to him, tight around his chest, trying to stem the ache in his heart. You’d stolen this jacket back and kept it in your apartment when you thought he was dead. You’d never stopped loving him even when he wasn’t around. He knew the feeling now.

After the fifth year without you, he was back in the Avengers compound, trying to help Steve with his support group. It gave him something to do, it gave him a bit of purpose.

Everyone else was off trying to save what was left of the universe but Bucky was tired of war and conflict. He just wanted to stop.

“Hey,” Natasha knocks at the door. “There’s something funny on the monitors. Scott Lang appears to be at the gate?!”

Bucky sits up straight, “Scott vanished in the snap though right?”

“Yeah we thought he did,” Natasha shakes her head. “But he’s outside right now. Steve’s going to meet him.”

“Shit, I’ll be right there,” Bucky pulls on a vest top.

If Scott Lang could make it back then maybe you could.

For the first time in five years, Bucky felt hope again. There was a chance, however small and he’d take what he could get.
There's No Medicine for Regret!

Chapter Summary

Let the Time Heist begin!

Chapter Notes

Chapter Warnings: Angst

(Possible proof reading errors)

Welcome to the penultimate chapter! Happy reading!
- TLP xx

“What do you mean ‘no’?” Bucky snarls, looking into the nonchalant face of Tony.

Scott Lang’s idea to use the Quantum Realm for time travel hadn’t been met with derision, in fact, everyone left at the Avenger’s compound had been on board. The only missing link was Tony Stark’s brain.

“I mean no Manchurian Candidate,” Tony sits on his chair on the porch. “It’s ridiculous and it’s not going to work.”

“Tony~” Steve tries.

“-Nuh uh, not listening,” Tony jams his fingers in his ears.

“Come on, it can be done!” Scott protests. “If we pull it off it’ll get everyone back!”

“And if we don’t, the person going back in time might die,” Tony shrugs. “All on the off chance your idiot scheme might work.”

“Tony, please,” Bucky begs, losing all sense of pride.

That made Tony think for a moment. Bucky could see the hesitation.

“I know you hate me,” he continues. “I know that. I’m nothing but trouble but please, if there’s a
chance we have to try.”

“Do we?” Tony replies. “I don’t think we do. You just have to accept they’re gone.”

“We’re never gonna do that, Tony,” Steve folds his arms.

“Listen,” Tony stands up, pointing aggressively. “I have a family. I have to think about them first now. This is suicide.”

“Oh it’s all fine for you,” Bucky’s grip on the wooden railing of the porch starts splintering it. “You didn’t lose anybody! Everybody standing here right now has lost someone. How can you be such a selfish piece of…..”

But he cuts off after seeing Tony’s daughter come streaking out of the house and jumping at her dad. Bucky would never cuss around kids.

“You can all leave now,” Tony picks her up. “That’s your cue to go.”

“This is hopeless,” Steve puts his hand on Bucky’s shoulder. “He’s not going to help us. We’ll do this ourselves.”

“You need to let Missy go,” Tony says warningly.

“Never,” both Steve and Bucky say in unison before heading to the car with Scott.

“Well…that was awkward,” Scott tries for humour when everyone is settled back in. “I feel like I missed something while I was under house arrest.”


“Ohhhhhhh,” Scott gestures between Bucky and Steve. “You both…..Missy right? Nice! I don’t judge, I approve of life choices that make people happy and boy oh boy is that a big one! I’m so-”

“-stop talking,” Bucky interrupts. “You’re gabbling.”

“Sorry,” Scott winces but he still grins like an idiot at the two soldiers. “Captain America, Captain Liberty and The Winter Soldier….wow, I imagine the beds you must get through-”

“-Scott!” Steve blushes.

“Right right, sorry.”

**

“Well that didn’t work,” Bruce declares as Scott had gotten transformed from an old man to a toddler to himself again.

Bucky felt the last part of his hope die until Steve walked back in the hangar with Tony. How had Steve managed to convince him? From what Bucky saw, Tony had an incredibly comfortable life post-snap. There was no reason for him to help.
You’re all idiots,” Tony declares. “I’m here to save the day, now let me fix this.”

Bucky gave him a nod which Tony returned. They’d finally come to an understanding.

“I know you miss her, kid,” Tony comes up to Bucky, murmuring quietly. “Both of you do. Cap filled me in on the super soldier sandwich info. I never would’ve thought Captain Prissypants would ever do something so daring frankly but hey. I don’t expect this will be easy and some of us might die on the way but you’re right, I’m being selfish. If there’s a chance we can get everyone back, I need to help.”

“Thank you,” Bucky holds his hand out. “You have no idea how much this means to me.”

Tony looks at the outstretched hand for a moment before taking it and both men shake, finally putting their differences aside.

It’s one day later that they finally send Clint back in time and declare the experiment a success. Now, strapped up in a suit designed for the Quantum Realm, Bucky ties his hair back and hangs around Steve’s room, waiting for him to get ready.

“Nervous?” Steve finally pokes his head out of the door.

“I didn’t think I could feel nerves again after the shit we went through but I feel like I wanna throw up, Stevie. I’m gonna see her again.”

“Well, you’ll see 2012 her,” Steve nods. “I need to warn you, Buck, she wasn’t all there around this time. She felt incredibly bad for kissing me, like she’d betrayed you. Loki showed her a vision of you saying how hurt you were. Maybe it’s best if I deal with getting the Tesseract and you help with getting the Time stone.”

“No way,” Bucky shakes his head. “I can’t not see her. I’ll keep out of sight.”

“The Battle of New York was not pretty,” Steve remembers grimly. “It’s not going to be a walk in the park. We wait for the right moment, go and steal from our past selves and get back here. No big heroics, no interfering, no trying to stay with her in that time.”

“The bigger picture,” Bucky groans, rolling his eyes.

Steve had been saying that phrase for the past two days and it was beginning to grate. It was like Steve didn’t trust he wouldn’t drop the entire mission if he came across your past self.

“Come on, let’s go,” Steve takes a deep breath.

“We can do this, pal,” Bucky nods.

“End of the line?”

“End of the line.”

They walk towards the podium, standing in a circle with everyone else. Tony, Steve, Bruce, Scott and Bucky were going to 2012 for the Space, Mind and Time stone, Natasha and Clint to Vormir for the Soul stone, Nebula and Rhodey to Morag for the Power Stone, Thor and Rocket to Asgard for the Reality stone.

“Everybody ready?” Bruce asks.

“Ready,” everybody choruses.
There’s the sensation of Bucky’s stomach being dragged down out of his body, his legs stretching impossibly before he compacts, minutely shrinking and then…

**

War, the sounds of war.

Bucky sprang to attention immediately before noticing his prosthetic arm was glinting silver. In fact, when he actually looked down, he was wearing the old Winter Soldier uniform.

“What the hell!!” he says out loud before turning to Steve who was wearing something akin to his USO tour days.

“Well that’s pretty neat,” Scott remarks.

“Shut up,” Bucky points, watching metallic monsters flying all around him.

“The tin man is right. We need to get to Stark Tower right now,” Tony looks up. “Bruce, I’ll see you later, big guy.”

Running through the streets of New York was hell. Bucky had only ever heard about this battle but living through it must have been awful. He passed many dead civilian bodies in the street and heard shrieks of agony that he would never unhear. The panic was rising in his chest as memories of other dying screams mingled with these ones, his Winter Soldier days relapsing his recollections until everything was blurring.

“Are you alright?” Steve asks, noticing the dour expression on Bucky’s face.

“I’m really sick of war,” Bucky grits his jaw, trying to shake the thoughts out of his head.

“Hopefully this will be the last we ever have to do. Think we can live a quiet life in the sticks? Maybe a cabin for the three of us?”

“Yeah, yeah that’d be nice.”

The more he concentrated on the image of a log cabin next to a lake, the three of you sat out on the porch talking until the sun went down, maybe a little dark haired kid trying to catch frogs in the water…..

They reached the tower quicker than they thought, hardly any traffic flowing towards it, before Bucky grabbed the hated mask and slotted it over his face. It felt more oppressive than ever but he couldn’t be recognised by you. Even though Tony had told him the time flow was different and his actions here wouldn’t have direct consequences for the future, he still didn’t want to put this version’s you through the horror of finding him this early, especially after what you’d just experienced.

Scott and Tony broke off to go to the penthouse whilst Steve and Bucky waited near the elevator. Rumlow, the key was Rumlow. Rumlow had taken the sceptre with the Mind stone in it and they needed to get it off him. Being the Winter Soldier would make the situation more believable but Bucky had no idea how he’d react when he saw Rumlow’s smug face again, knowing he tortured
“Keep it together, Buck,” Steve whispers out of the corner of his mouth as a group of officials start approaching the elevator.

Bucky wiped all trace of emotion from his face, stood ramrod straight and held a rifle he’d taken from a soldier’s body outside. He needed to sell the image.

“Asset?” Rumlow says as he finally comes into view.

Bucky strangely felt nothing, knowing Rumlow would die soon enough.

“It’s alright, he was sent to guard me,” Steve says genially enough. “Orders from on top. I’m gonna escort the sceptre to base.”

“I didn’t hear anything about that,” Rumlow narrows his eyes.

Everyone gets in the elevator, Steve taking the case off Rumlow who whispers in his ear, “Hail Hydra.”

It was a pretty genius move for Steve, so Bucky thought. Instantly everyone relaxed around him, allowing him and Bucky to walk out unscathed.

They thought they were in the home stretch until alarms started sounding.

“I think we’re gonna get company,” Bucky looks around himself, scoping the exits out. “The others must have messed up.”

“We need to get out of here,” Steve says and walks about ten paces forward before he’s knocked off the walkway by what appears to be his own shield.

A blur of red, white and blue hares after him whilst Bucky picks up the case and starts to run for the lower levels. From the looks of it, past Steve had found present Steve and believed he was Loki. Bucky couldn’t stay to help though.

The rules of this mission were clear. Get the stones above all else.

“I don’t think that’s yours now, is it son?”

Oh shit.

Bucky doesn’t even want to look but he can’t help himself.

He turns around to see you, also in an USO style suit with one hand on a popped hip and the most severe eyebrow raise he’d ever seen on you. You were battle weary, bleeding a little from a head wound but by God, you were the most beautiful thing in the world. He nearly started weeping right then and there out of relief.

All he wanted to do was reach out and hold you again in his arms, to say he loved you, to kiss you until he got dizzy. None of that could happen though and he needed to get out of the tower and fast.

He says nothing in response but starts doubling back, running for the stairwell and you’re chasing after him with an indignant ‘hey!’

He gets about three feet from the door when you barge him from behind, knocking him clean through the wood and he tumbles down a set of stairs, hitting his head against the wall when he
finally comes to rest.

“Give it back!” you leap after him.

“No.”

“Alright, hard way it is. I’ve been told I got a mean right hook, sir, so this is gonna hurt.”

Bucky found himself blocking your blows but only barely. Every time he caught your fist, his footing moved back a little and he was handicapped by the case dangling from his other hand.

He’d never been on the true receiving end of a fight with you. During the fall of the Triskelion building, you’d been heavily injured and not at your best but now, you were in danger of spoiling the plan by retrieving the sceptre and all Bucky could do was try to remember that this wasn’t his timeline’s version of you, that it was okay to hit back.

“Who the Sam heck are you?” you draw away, after rolling down some more stairs and through the door on that level.

You’d got him pinned, the case lying feet away and you were straddling him in a way that was becoming uncomfortable.

“No one,” he replies as monotonously as he can.

“Bullshit,” you frown. “You ain’t just nobody. You need the case but why?”

“I’ll tell you why. Come here,” Bucky lowers his tone so you’re having to lean down to catch the words before headbutting you hard so you rear back and fall off of him.

He felt awful for doing that but he needed to. He leapt up, grabbing the case but the second he turned around, you were back on your feet.

“Ah god-fucking-damnit,” he sighs.

“Gettin’ tired there?” you smirk. “I-“

“-If you say ’I can do this all day’, I’m gonna hit you so hard,” Bucky says without realising what he’s done.

Instantly your face drains of colour and your fists lower, this expression of pure astonishment taking root, “How the hell do you know that phrase?”

“Not got time, sweetheart,” Bucky growls, tackling past you out into the maze of walkways again.

He sees one of the Steve’s crash down onto the middle floor and hopes present Steve is winning. God this bended his brain to think about it.

He heard rapid running footsteps and suddenly his legs were swept out from under him. One of the dropped Captain’s shields flew away as he tumbled and tumbled in an inelegant heap.

I wish Steve hadn’t taught her how to use that damn thing.

“Take that mask off,” you sound serious now, all trace of playful etiquette gone.

“I can’t.”
“Why? Is it welded on? Are you a robot man?”

“It’s dangerous to see my face, trust me.”

“I don’t trust anyone who waltzes in here and steals government property. Take it off or I’m getting fatal on my next strike.”

Bucky stands up and sees The Crown, poised in your fingers and he knew you weren’t messing around. He’d never felt more terrified by the thought that someone he loved could turn their full rage upon him.

“I can’t.”

“Last warning, mister.”

“Fine.”

He strides forward, full of determination and you don’t back up an inch, stubbornly staring him down. In one swift motion, he removes the rebreather and watches your eyes widen impossibly.

“Oh my God….Bucky?”

As much as he hated himself for what he was about to say, he knew it was necessary to get away from you, “I know what you did, doll.”

“No…no I’m sorry,” you start biting your lip in that way that always meant you were trying not to cry. “I didn’t mean…I just….”

“With my best friend?”

“But you’re dead! You’re dead!” the Crown drops from your hand with a loud clunk. “I saw you die! Is this…is this more illusions? I don’t know what’s real any more! You don’t even look like he used to!”

Bucky came up so close that he towered over you, “All I ever wanted was a life with you.”

It killed him to see how upset you were, how absolutely distraught you were. He felt like the worst person in the world.

But if it gets her back to me in the future, I need to do it.

“Forgive me,” the dam breaks and you start openly crying. “Please. James, is that you or am I going mad? Please tell me.”

And he can’t hold himself back any longer. He leans down, taking your face in his hands and kisses you so hard, all of his loss and all of his grief finally unleashed.

You throw your arms around him, holding him so desperately close and Bucky could honestly stay like this forever but he knows he has to make a move.

With one precise swipe, he hits you in the temple, watching your eyes roll back and you slump to the ground unconscious. He does his best to arrange you so you won’t hurt your limbs in an odd position before jumping down to the lower level where one Steve was strangling another in a headlock.

“End of the line pal,” he says loudly and one Steve looks up in complete surprise whilst the other
“What do you mean you lost it?!” Steve says angrily at sheepish Tony.

“I mean we encountered the Hulk and things went a bit off,” Tony brushes his hair back.

“It really was quite spectacular,” Scott grins.

“Shut up,” Tony scowls. “I’ve been thinking about the Tesseract. We know S.H.I.E.L.D took it and kept it for many years so if we can just go to a later point in time—”

“- But we only have enough for a one way trip back,” Bucky interrupts.

“We need more Pym particles,” Scott says helpfully. “If you can pick a time where Hank Pym was experimenting on them near a S.H.I.E.L.D base then you can get the stone and get back.”

“That’s actually smart, Lang,” Tony looks impressed. “Okay, you take the Mind stone back, Bruce has already got the Time stone and taken that back. Capsicle and the Tin Man can come with me and we’ll go get the Tesseract.”

“Be safe,” Scott nods, taking the sceptre before disappearing from view.

“Are you sure about this?” Steve says apprehensively. “We could get stuck if we get this wrong.”

“I guess I’ll have to not be wrong then,” Tony winks. “Set your co-ordinates to this date.”
Once again, Bucky felt that same strange sensation of his organs being pulled out of his body before he was flung onto an army base. Tony grabbed him backwards, desperate not to be seen.

“We need to change,” he whispers. “We’re too conspicuous like this.”

“Where are we gonna get clothes?” Bucky whispers back.

“There,” Steve points out the laundry hall.

After some awkward fittings, Tony had manage to disguise himself as a scientist, Steve a grunt soldier and Bucky had swept his hair up in a military cap, knowing his long hair would be a give away.

“We could cut it off you know,” Tony ventures.

“Missy said she liked it like this,” Bucky shuts down that suggestion straight away.

“Fine,” Tony rolls his eyes, leading them to an elevator where another attendant gets in.

Nobody moves or speaks, trying not to give the game away until the attendant starts looking a little more closely at them. Bucky immediately gets off at the next level and so does Steve. They both draw too much attention with the size they are. Tony could figure things out on his own.

“In here,” Steve pulls them into an office to avoid some passing patrols.

“Shit, what do we do now?” Bucky can feel his heart hammering before turning around and seeing they were in a lab. “Stevie! Are those it? The particles?”

Steve points to the lettering on the window of the door which spelled Hank Pym backwards, “Sure seems that way. Grab them.”

They both load the particles into their bags before sneaking out again.

“Think Tony has the Tesseract?” Bucky asks.

“No idea. We just have to trust everything’s going according to plan,” Steve shrugs.

“I feel like we’re the only ones pulling our weight here.”

“Be quiet, Buck.”

“But…”

“-Shhh!”

He was shoved into another office as soldiers were running down the corridor. Both men looked around in panic before barricading the door.

“That was too close,” Steve mutters.

“This is bad for my health, Stevie,” Bucky puts his hand over his heart. “I’m an old man. I can’t do this sort of thing any more.”

But Steve didn’t reply.

Bucky turned around and Steve was at the window, peering through the slats of the blinds intently.
When Bucky joined him, he saw why.

Peggy Carter was on the other side of the glass, going through some paperwork.

"Stevie?" he asks quietly.

"It’s her."

"Steve we need to go."

"Give me a minute, Buck."

"Steve!"

When Steve turned around though, Bucky could see the longing on his face. Peggy was his first requited love after all and the ‘what if’ girl but things were different now.

"No," Bucky says firmly.

"No what?"

"No you’re not gonna go in there and talk to her."

"I wasn’t gonna."

"Liar. I can always tell."

"I’m not having this conversation now."

"I’m not dropping it either," Bucky scowls.

"I’m just looking. Jesus, Buck. Peggy was the first gal to like me for who I was. I’m allowed to look."

"As long as that’s all it is. We’re here to bring Missy back."

"Right," Steve seems to shake himself. "Right. Let’s go."

Bucky watches him take one last look at Peggy and the two flee the office out onto the base again and hide behind some crates waiting for Tony.

"You do remember that’s why we came here, right?" Bucky continues the conversation.

In truth, Steve’s expression had worried him a lot. That was the look of a man who wasn’t over someone. Seeing Peggy again had complicated everything and Bucky was afraid you and he would lose Steve completely over this. He hadn’t realised how co-dependant he’d become.

"Of course I do. Drop it," Steve’s tone gets sharper.

"I don’t want you to break Missy’s heart when we get her back. You’re either fully in this with us or you’re out."

"That’s not fair," Steve turns rapidly. "You and her have romantic history, more than me and her do. With Peggy, I gave up my interest in Missy and she liked me back straight away, her first choice. I always knew I was the second choice with Missy, the outsider."

"Is that how you feel?" Bucky’s face drops. "Steve, she chose you too. You weren’t an
afterthought. I always knew how you felt about her and I knew how conflicted she was when she thought I’d died. I’ve just seen that first hand. It’s always been the three of us. Don’t give up on us now, pal.”

“Really?” Steve asks quietly. “You think she likes us both the same?”

“Yeah, I do, so if you hurt her, I’m gonna kill ya, ya jerk.”

“Alright. I think Tony’s ready,” Steve nods towards the jeeps, waving Tony over.

“Hey, how did it go?” Tony asks, dazed and out of breath. “I got the Tesseract.”

“We got the particles,” Steve shakes his bag. “Let’s get back.”


**

Returning to the platform, instantly Bucky knew something was wrong.

Clint just sank to his knees in despair and when Bucky saw the empty space next to him, he knew Natasha had not made it back.

The mood was sombre in the compound as Tony worked on his own version of the Infinity Gauntlet with Steve setting a wreath of flowers onto the nearby lake in Natasha’s memory. Nobody wanted to speak, nobody wanted to celebrate their achievements of retrieving the Infinity Stones.

They just all missed her.

“It’s ready,” Tony comes to collect them all as they sit on the bank, staring out at the water.

Bruce volunteered to use the gauntlet as the strongest person there and everybody gathered around him, forming a circle.

“Okay, wish everyone back. No problem,” Bruce muttered nervously before slotting the gauntlet on his hand.

Everybody formed shields around themselves as rainbow light forced its way up Bruce’s veins, making him cry out until finally, he snapped his fingers and silence fell. The gauntlet dropped off his blackened and withered arm with a heavy thunk.

“Is that it?” Rocket asks. “Everyone’s back now?”

“No idea,” Rhodey added. “Do they just pop back up where they were?”

“Well that means a whole bunch of them are still in Wakanda.”

“And Nat?” Clint prompts Bruce.

“I tried. I tried so hard to bring her back but it wouldn’t let me,” Bruce whimpers on the floor as
Tony attends to his injuries.

“Feeling okay?” Bucky asks Steve quietly.

“Yeah,” Steve nods, still not entirely confidently. “We’ll soon see if we got our gal home.”

“Hey look at this!” Scott waves from the other room, looking at a bird that had flown in through the roof. “Haven’t seen one of these since I got back.”

“Baby?!” Clint’s saying into a phone. “It’s really you?! No, no reason. I’ll be back to you soon, okay?”

He hangs up and smiles sadly at everyone, “They’re back. My wife is back. My kids are back.”

And that meant you had to be back too.

“I think our next move should be-”

But Tony never gets to finish the sentence because the entire compound explodes into rubble. Bucky’s blasted backwards before he falls one storey down and the last thing he remembers before concrete drops on his head is Steve screaming for him.
“What do you mean you can’t do nothin’?” you frown at Strange who’s just sat in the water, patiently meditating.

“It’s not time yet,” he opens one eye to look at you. “Things have to be done in an order or they won’t work. We won’t win.”

“So what the hell are we supposed to do now?” you gesture behind you at the motley collection of people you’ve managed to find in this world.

“Just wait. Be patient. I’ve already sent word to Wong to be prepared,” Strange huffs. “You as well as anyone should know you don’t mess with things you don’t understand or isn’t that how you got your interesting powers?”

“I didn’t mess with anything. I got stabbed,” you grumble. “Thanks for bringing that up by the way, not like it hasn’t helped everyone I’ve found.”

“Miss Captain?” Peter tugs on your arm. “I don’t think he’s going to do anything.”

“Me neither, kid. I’ll leave the rest of you guys here and see if I can round up anyone else. And it’s Missy, not Miss Captain.”
“Yeah but Missy, I don’t actually wanna stay here with the rest of them. I wanna go with you.”

You realise just how nervous he is, how caught off guard. What the hell was Tony thinking bringing him along to fight Thanos in the first place?

“Alright, son. Grab my hand,” you offer it out and Starlord grabs your other just before you can wander on.

“Hey!” you stumble when you reach the new point. “I didn’t say you could ride shotgun.”

“I’m looking for someone,” his face seems serious. “If you come across someone green, mean and super sexy then I need to be there.”

“Girlfriend?”

“Something like that,” Starlord nods grimly.

“Hello?!” you bellow into the distance.

“Someone there?!” a faint voice calls back.

“Well at least we’ve found another person,” you walk forward, urging the others on. “Come on.”

You walk for what feels like ages again but it’s never a determinable amount of time in this place. At least it’s a comfortable temperature. Even the water you’re sloshing through is nice.

Slowly you come across a figure that comes into focus.

“Missy?!”

“Natasha!” you grin, rushing forward and hugging her before stepping back. “Wait…you were blonde last time I saw you. What the heck is going on?”

“I can’t believe it’s you,” she says like she’s not seen you in years.

“Who else is it gonna be? Rita Hayworth?”

“Peter Parker right?” she looks to the kid at your right.

“Yes Ma’am,” he nods politely.

“Tony’s been worried sick about you, though he’d never say it.”

“Oh I didn’t mean to make Mr Stark worry,” he wrings his hands. “I’m not sure how I got here.”

“I am,” she turns back to you. “The reason I look different is because you’ve all been gone five years.”

“Excuse me?” Starlord cuts in. “Five years?! No way!”

But you know from the look on her face that it’s true. You can see the small wrinkle lines around her eyes, the red hair growing back in, the slight sallowing of the skin. She was much older than you remembered.

“Five years,” you trail off. “Is everyone alright?”

“Steve and Bucky haven’t really moved on if that’s what you mean,” she smirks. “Both of them
are still lovestruck puppies. Everyone else is fine though.”

“How did you get here then?”

“We found a way to time travel,” she crosses her arms, hugging herself slightly. “We went back to get the Infinity stones before Thanos could. I went after the Soul Stone with Clint.”

“Ah no,” Starlord whispers, putting a hand on your shoulder. “Like Gamora?”

“Like Gamora,” Natasha nods. “You should be going back any moment now.”

“Back to Wakanda?” you ask.

“Wherever you were before you got snapped. Tell the rest of them I’m okay, will you? Tell them I don’t regret it. At least I could do some good in my life.”

“What are you talkin’ about? Come back with us?”

“She can’t,” Starlord squeezes your shoulder tightly. “I’m sorry.”

“No damn way,” you scowl. “I ain’t leavin’ her in this place.”

“Missy, it’s alright,” she comes up to you and gently kisses your cheek. “It’s always been fun with you around. Be safe and don’t let those boys run you ragged.”

“Natasha, I-”

But you feel a tug at your very soul at that moment. You make a wild grab for Natasha just as you’re wrenched back and you miss her fingertips by seconds, thrown into the air along with both Peters.

As you watch Natasha growing smaller, you see a green figure come stand next to her, waving up into the sky.

“GAMORA!” Starlord yells but it’s lost in the rush of wind until suddenly there’s blue skies above you.

You’re dumped onto the grassy floor of a Wakandan field, mere feet away from Wanda who rushes over to help you up.

“Shit, guess my ribs didn’t fix themselves,” you moan in agony as you stand. “What a downer.”

“Let me,” Wanda nods, red light emanating from her fingers. “We have more fighting ahead of us according to Strange and I want to make Thanos pay.”

Your eyes travel past her to a stone marker with an effigy of Vision on it, the weather having already claimed the sheen of marble. You really had been gone a long time.

You feel your bones popping back into place with an unpleasant thunk but at least you could breathe easier now.

“You think I’d be used to smashin’ my rib cage apart by now,” you make a joke, remembering the Triskelion battle.

“Pain is subjective at the time,” Wanda glances back at the memorial. “Some pains never really go away.”
“We’ll get you your revenge, Wanda. I promise,” you say solemnly.

A glowing portal opens nearby and Wong sticks his head out, “Long time no see. You look like shit, Missy.”

“And you look like you’ve been eating too many tuna melts,” you fire back.

“There’s not been much to do for five years,” Wong winks. “Come on, Strange told me to come get you first. Apparently there’s an order that needs to happen so—”

“So we can win. Yeah, he told me there’s a very specific outcome.”

You take Wanda’s hand and walk through with her, one second it’s warm heat and blue skies and the next….

**

“Bucky!” Steve pulls some of the wall off his friend, yanking him to his feet. “Are you okay, pal?”

“Been better,” Bucky hacks, ash coated spittle on his lips. “What in the Sam Heck happened?”

“Thanos did,” Steve points towards what used to be the entrance to the compound. “Guess messing with time travel has consequences.”

“We got a fight on our hands it seems,” Bucky steadies himself.

“This is it, Buck. I think this is the final one,” Steve looks out at the newly carved out battlefield as Thanos’ troops line up patiently.

“Thank god,” Bucky jokes. “I’ve had enough excitement for one lifetime.”

Both men join Tony and Thor who are staring at Thanos below. Thanos is sitting idly on some blasted concrete before getting up and walking with heavy footsteps towards them.

“You know what I realised?” Thanos stops feet from them. “When I get the stones, this time I’ll just wipe out all life and start again. If I leave anyone, they’ll only reminisce about what was and not what is. Thank you for helping me see that.”

“Yeah we’re all kinds of stubborn. Let’s get this party started,” Tony’s suit activates and he flies at Thanos, using beams to knock him backwards.

Thor charges Stormbreaker and Mjolnir with lightning, cleaving upwards, intent on making a kill shot this time. Steve knew he was still smarting over his perceived failure five years ago.

Meanwhile Steve and Bucky charged forward, Steve using the shield to hit Thanos in the face and Bucky using his vibranium arm to jab at Thanos’ weak points. They both knew they were the weaker people on the team but they never gave up, even when they were beaten down into the dirt over and over, they got back up.

Bucky was bleeding heavily from a cut above his eyebrow, staining one side of his face in a mask of red but he still tried to jam a knife into Thanos’ knee, twisting a little to jar the tendons apart.
With one big swipe, Thanos backhands him, sending him skittering off into the ruins of the compound.

“Go check on him,” Thanos taunts. “I’m not stopping you.”

“I’m not going anywhere,” Steve grits his teeth, flinging the shield to ricochet off Thanos’ forehead before Thanos grabs it and throws it to the floor, punching Steve backwards.

It felt like a freight train had rolled over him. Every bone in his body ached, down to his toes.

“Get up, you son of a bitch, get up,” he whispers to himself, seeing Thor and Tony go down in the corner of his vision.

As the last one left standing, he tries the one thing he always kept a secret. He stretches out his hand and calls Mjolnir to him, knowing it had moved that day all the Avengers were messing around but being too polite to spoil Thor’s ego by fully lifting it.

It sailed past Thanos straight into his outstretched hand and he felt a surge of energy ripple down through him as he swung it and.uppercutted Thanos in the jaw, calling forth lightning and shocking the titan where he stood.

In response, Thanos grabbed his blade and knocked the hammer from his hand. Steve was forced to roll and grab his shield, holding it over his head as Thanos rained down blow after blow, chipping away at the vibranium, breaking the metal until only half a shield was left and Steve was pretty sure his forearm was broken with the impacts.

Was this it now? Was all hope lost? Had they come this far just to fall at the final hurdle? He couldn’t even see Bucky right now.

He got to his feet one more time, strapping his arm tighter to the shield despite the wrenching pain and spat blood onto the floor, readying himself. He wouldn’t give up. He’d keep going until he was dead.

There’s a whistling sound as Mjolnir rises and Steve thinks Thor’s gotten back up but when it soars past him, his confusion grows until he turns around and sees you standing there, the Crown 2.0 in one hand and Mjolnir in the other, looking exactly how he remembered you.

“Missy?!”

“Hey handsome,” you wink. “Heard you needed back up. Guess it’s just like old times in Brooklyn, huh?”

“Oh my god,” Steve can’t form a sentence properly.

“You know, I’m starting not to feel special any more,” Thor manages to catch up, Wanda keeping Thanos busy for now. “Too many people are worthy and I don’t like it.”

“I didn’t even know if it would work,” you shrug. “Now if you excuse me, I have a little titan ass to kick. Oh and...one for good luck.”

You leap forward, kissing Steve before running off and sending a swathe of lightning directly at Thanos.

“And make sure Buck is okay, you dumb broad or I’ll be real mad.”
You’d kissed him. You’d not headed straight to Bucky. It was such a small gesture but it meant so much to Steve. He’d been so conflicted ever since seeing Peggy again, wondering if it would be better to go back, to spend a life with her. He’d never thought he was Bucky’s equal in your relationship but you’d just shown he was. You loved him just as much.

“Hello?” Thor is waving his hand in front of Steve’s face. “Does Missy have some sort of paralysing toxin in her kiss perhaps? Is that a new power?”

“Sorry,” Steve shakes his head. “I was just surprised is all.”

“The quarry is that way,” Thor points to where you’re using the hammer as a bat to give the Crown more momentum where it carves a deep gouge along Thanos’ neck, just missing the vital points. “Although she appears to be doing a rather good job of it. You know, I knew she’d be able to pick up the hammer? She always does everything for the good of other people, never herself.”

“Yeah she’s a peach alright,” Bucky catches up, rolling his good shoulder and Steve hears audible pops. “We did it, pal. We got our girl back.”

“Yeah we did, Buck,” Steve smiles. “And look at her go.”

Every time Thanos reached for you, you disappeared and reappeared somewhere he wasn’t expecting. Between you and Wanda, you were driving him back towards his army.

“I don’t feel like we’re really needed here,” Bucky snorts. “God I could kill for a beer right now.”

“Me too!” Thor grins. “What an excellent idea! I always said we get along well.”

“Guys, focus,” Steve rolls his eyes. “The fighting is not over yet.”

And just as the last word left his mouth, portals started appearing all around them, everyone who’d been snapped away marching through and drawing up battalion lines. Hundreds of familiar and lost faces rejoining their friends.

“Who gave Missy permission to have all the fun?” Sam Wilson soars around Steve’s head and comes to land next to him.

“You think I have any say in what she does?”

“Naw I think you’re both whipped,” Sam smirks. “But that ain’t a bad thing. Shall we do a little avenging?”

“Thought you’d never ask,” Bucky cocks his rifle.

And now they were all running, running towards the opposing army, Steve and Bucky outstripping everyone with their superhuman stamina to be at the front of the line, Sam soaring above, Tony bringing up the left, Rhodey on the right. Steve lost count of how many people were charging.

“Bombardment!” Thanos screams as he’s levitated into the air by Wanda and electrocuted by you using Mjolnir.

Steve just has enough time to look up to see missiles haring towards the ground and you were right in the path of one.

“Missy! Look up!”

You glance upwards, cuss spectacularly and run towards them, forgetting your power completely
in the panic.

“Use the hammer!” Thor calls. “Fly!”

Steve can see the confusion in your face but you get it when Thor starts making swinging motions. You twirl the hammer by the leather thong before letting it pull you forward just as the missile explodes behind you. You let out the most shrill shriek like that time you’d gone out of the plane back in the war days as you hurtled towards them and only because Bucky caught you did you manage to stop.

“Oh no I didn’t like that at all,” you stammer. “Oh my god. Take this damn thing.”

You hand it to Bucky where it immediately drags him down to the ground with a heavy clunk. Steve can see Thor smirking out of the corner of his eye.

“Well, guess I’m a little shit but we all knew that,” Bucky shrugs before gathering you in his arms. “Not the time at all for this but hey doll. I missed you.”

“I missed you too, Buck,” you kiss him. “I missed both of you. I hear I’ve been gone a long time. I hope you two ain’t been fallin’ out.”

“Actually we’re getting on better than ever,” Bucky smiles at Steve. “But let’s wait until this fight is done before we catch up.”

“And we’re catching up in a big ass bed soon,” you grab Mjolnir, tossing it to Steve. “A girl has needs after being stuck in another dimension for five years.”

“Yes Ma’am,” Steve laughs. “Bossy as ever.”

“Quit it, punk!” you scowl playfully at him.

“Always telling us what to do,” Bucky sides with Steve.

“Can you save your Roman orgy for another time guys?” Tony’s voice comes crackling through the comms device. “The gauntlet is on the move. Keep it away from the big meanie.”

“Who has it now?” Steve asks, scanning the horizon.

“Spider-man and he’s pinned down. I can’t get to him.”

Steve whirls the hammer, letting it fly free towards the area where creatures were swarming Peter, “Grab it, kid!”

Peter manages to, escaping from the pile of squirming enemies before zooming off. Meanwhile the bombardment continued and Steve was forced to pull you under cover of one of the sorcerer’s shields.

“Just like the ol’ days,” you giggle nervously. “I’d take a World War over this shit any day. At least you knew what you were getting into.”

“Hopefully this will be the last war we have to fight,” Steve tugs you further under the safety of cover. “We had an idea about getting a nice big cabin for us all. Somewhere where we can see stars every night, like we used to.”

“Don’t forget the lake for fishing in,” Bucky adds.
“Sounds nice,” you nod. “Maybe a summer place though. I’m a city gal, Stevie. I need that dull honkin’ a’ traffic in the background.”

“That works. Penthouse then so we can sit on the roof,” Bucky nods.

“I’m alright with that,” Steve smiles.

“If we ever stop getting mortar shelled that is,” Bucky looks up.

The guns are still firing down before they suddenly swerve upwards and off to something unknown in the distance. After a moment, something bright crashes through Thanos’ ship, breaking it apart before coming to land on the ground.

“What the….” you blink.

“Oh that’s Carol,” Bucky fills you in. “She’s got some hefty powers. You’d like her actually. She’s as sarcastic as you are.”

You thump Bucky lightly in his flesh arm before getting out of cover, “Come on, you bunk lizards. We’ve still got an army to push back.”

“Bunk lizards,” Bucky shakes his head. “Man, I’ve not heard that in years.”

“She never grew up,” Steve claps him on the back. “You can take the girl outta the forties…”

They both gave each other a smile before dashing back into combat.

**

“Hey, Captain Pin Up. Welcome back,” Tony flies by you. “Just got your comms device back online.”

“Hey Tony,” you wave before cutting the head off a creature. “Ya know, I’m lookin’ forward to getting a break soon.”

“You and me both, sweetheart,” he laughs. “Shit! Parker is in trouble again.”

“On it!” you vanish, reappearing where Peter was and shoulder barging one of Thanos’ main flunkies out of the way.

“Okay so that’s new,” Tony’s voice comes through again. “I’m guessing that was the enhancement you said about in New York?”

“Sure was, junior,” you extract Peter who was clutching onto the gauntlet for dear life.

“Normally I’d kick your ass for calling me junior but I’ll let it slide,” Tony zooms overhead to join up with the person Bucky identified as Carol. “Protect Parker.”

“Come on, son,” you grab his arm, about to wander out of there but Thanos screams across the battlefield.
“Glaive! Don’t let her escape!”

And a heavy hand grabbed the back of your suit before you could shake him off. When you reappeared, Glaive was on top of you, wrestling you to get to the kid.

“RUN!” you shout at Peter but he doesn’t.

“Suit lady! Activate Instant Kill!” he panics and a metal spike shoots out of his back, narrowly missing Glaive’s head. “Miss Captain! Take the gauntlet! You can get away with it quicker than I can.”

“You go back to Tony, y’hear?” you grab the weighty glove. “No heroics.”

“Not me, Missy,” his mask peels back and he’s obviously terrified.

“You’ll be okay,” you kick Glaive backwards. “If Tony is indisposed, find Wanda. She’ll be glowing red. She’ll protect you.”

“Glowing red lady. Got it,” Peter webs up Glaive before running off.

You wander three or four times, narrowly missing being decapitated by another of Thanos’ right hands that Natasha had once called Proxima Midnight.

“FIGHT ME!” she shrieks at you.

“Ain’t got the time, sorry,” you shrug before vanishing again just as she slices her blade at where your neck was.

“Hey doll, keeping up okay?” Bucky’s voice comes through the comms device.

“Gettin’ tired,” you admit. “But I got enough to keep going for a bit longer, as long as—”

Something hard hits you full on in the back, knocking all the air from your lungs and sending you flying forward into the mud where you slide for a few feet. You don’t let go of the gauntlet though.

“You are a thorn in my side, human. Although I admire your spirit,” Thanos approaches you. “Give me the stones.”

“Shove it up your ass,” you hiss, scrambling to your feet.

Again he swings a block of concrete at you and you’re not ready for it, catching the full effect as you hit the ground again and he quickly tries to grab the gauntlet, yanking hard but as he rises, you rise with it, gripping on with sheer stubbornness.

He shakes the glove, trying to dislodge you but you wrap your legs around the arm that’s slowly peeling your fingers away and kick him in the face.

A solid punch lands on your face, splitting your eyebrow open and you’re spitting blood before it can enter your mouth.

“If you don’t let go, you’re going to die,” Thanos growls. “And I’ll take the gauntlet anyway.”

“Use the stones!” a female voice you don’t recognise comes through the comms. “Purple one! I’m on the way to you, hang on!”

You scramble for it, prising it from the metal and nearly scream in pain as energy rips up your arm,
threatening to burn out your veins but you sock Thanos in the face with such ferocity that he drops the gauntlet, disappearing back into the horizon.

But now you’re stuck. Your fingers don’t want to open, too shocked into gripping the purple stone and you think you’re gonna lose your arm soon.

“Here!” someone’s prising your fingers back before taking the stone and putting it back. “Are you okay?”

“What in the Sam Heck happened?” you pant, looking at your smooth arm that was burned and flaking just a second ago.

“The power stone,” the blonde woman tells you. “Humans aren’t meant to hold it for long. Long enough for you to escape anyways. Now, take this and I’ll hold Thanos off. Your power is more useful for keeping it away from him.”

“Thanks, lady.”

“It’s Carol,” she nods.

“Missy,” you nod back. “Nice hair. Always wondered if I could pull off a style like that myself.”

“I think you could, and you’d rock it,” she winks. “Off you go, Missy. He’s coming back.”

“Aww fuck,” you swear loudly. “Thanks for the back up, stay safe Carol.”

And you wander on, all the way back to Tony who was locked in a battle with the alien you’d seen in New York.

“Get that thing away from here, Missy,” Tony chides you.

“Look, I’m just aimlessly appearing here,” you fire back. “Ain’t got no specific place to go.”

You spot Mjolnir nearby and call it to you, using the lightning to immobilise the attacking enemy before throwing it towards Steve who was getting pinned down some several feet away.

“Duck!” Tony shouts but like the curious moron you are, you turn to look and get hit by debris which knocks you on your ass as rocks trap your legs.

The gauntlet goes spinning out of your hands straight towards Thanos.

“TONY!” you get his attention. “CODE RED OR WHATEVER YA FUCKIN’ CALL IT!”

You can just see Tony swoop down and play a tug of war with Thanos over the gauntlet.

“Get me up!” you call out desperately to anyone who might be nearby.

“I got ya, sweetheart,” Steve half crawls over, shoving the rocks off you and soon Bucky is at the other side of you helping also.

“You did so well, doll,” Bucky helps you to your feet.

“The stones,” you break off from both of them, only to see Thanos raise his fingers and snap.

You’re looking at your body wildly to see if you were going to flake away again, to enter that strange orange world but nothing happens. When you look back up, Tony’s sat on the ground, a
makeshift gauntlet appearing as he holds up his own hand.

“NO!” you shout but a barrier erects in front of you and you turn to see Stephen Strange waving a finger at you in warning.

So this had to happen. This was the outcome of his experiences with time travelling. Tony had to die. It wasn’t fair though.

“I….am….Ironman,” are his last words as he snaps and an eerie silence descends across the battlefield.

Chitauri, the beast like creatures and the giant metallic flying things start fading away but you’re not looking at that. You’re looking as Tony’s burning up from the inside, his skin blackening, cracking.

“No,” you say more softly, going to him and helping him prop himself against some wreckage. “I’m so sorry. I tried….Strange said….oh Tony.”

There was no time to be selfish though. You saw Pepper land a few metres away and step back. This wasn’t your place to grieve. He needed to be with his family.

You walk back to Steve and Bucky who both hug you as you watch the entire army just dissolve into ash and flakes. They hold you tightly, kissing wherever they could and the tears finally start falling.

You’re not sure if you’re distressed or relieved or maybe both but you didn’t feel like celebrating. It was over, the war was over but the cost was so high.

“I love you both,” you manage to get out.

They say nothing, knowing you didn’t need words right now. They just continued holding you as the wails of Pepper got louder, echoing across the wasteland.
“Let's go home,” you help your boys leave the burning wasteland.

There was nothing you could do for anyone any more. Everyone was leaving to be with family that had reappeared or grieving those that had been lost.

“Where's home for us?” Bucky asks.

“We have our old apartments still, Missy. I got them back and cleaned up and knocked through to be bigger,” Steve limps on the other side of you. “We can go there.”

The garage on the other side of the compound was still intact and Steve's motorcycle was there.

“Think we can all fit on?” Bucky smirks, fighting through his obvious pain. “I mean I can stick Missy on my shoulders.”

“You can take a powder if you think I'm doing some sorta circus trick,” you scowl.

“God, I missed you so much,” Bucky nuzzles his face to the side of yours. “Ain't the same teasin’ Stevie.”

“Because I don't bite,” Steve raises a mirthful eyebrow. “Get on. We can manage. I don't think
You manage it just about, sandwiched in between them as you begin an awkwardly balanced ride across New York, away from the smoking wreckage, leaving the fight behind. You caught a glimpse of how far the devastation had run into the surrounding streets and briefly saw a flash of Daredevil helping a battered Luke Cage to walk as you went by.

You were so desperate to just have something peaceful, you shoved the anguish of Natasha and Tony's deaths far into the back of your soul and tried to concentrate on the now.

Now you were with Bucky and Steve and you felt safe again. For you it had only been two days since the three of you became intimate, only two days to come to terms with a new slant on your friendships but driving through the streets sat between them, it felt like home.

“Here we are,” Steve comes to a stop before getting some keys out of his suit.

You walk up the familiar steps to the second floor and he opens what used to be your apartment that now has swallowed the surrounding ones. You stop to see the old list of the fallen Howling Commandos is still there with Bucky's name smeared out.

“I remember this,” Bucky walks up to it, touching the letters. “I broke in here because you seemed familiar.”

“Yeah, I changed the windows out,” Steve says dryly. “No more security issues.”

“I could get in if I wanted,” Bucky shrugs.

“Sure, Buck,” Steve smiles a little, rolling his eyes before taking his helmet off, his hair plastered to head. “I need a shower.”

“Room for more?” Bucky asks.

“There is since I made it have more room. I just....I'm covered in blood and I don't know what else.”

“Well don't dilly-dally,” you strip off, dropping your suit to the floor and removing your underwear. “Come on.”

“Even bloodied up, you're beautiful,” Steve gives an appreciative sigh before leading everyone to the bathroom.

The boys take off their own clothes before joining you in the shower and soon the water around your feet is swirling red, smatterings of mud and debris following the trails. The magnitude of what just happened hits you hard and you're bracing yourself against the tiled wall, shaking slightly.

“It's alright, doll,” Bucky's hugging you from behind, kissing your back gently. “We feel it too.”

“We can get out. We don't need to-” Steve starts.

“-I've been away so long though,” you turn to face them both, water streaming down your face. “You waited all those years for me....”

“It wasn't the end of the line,” Bucky smirks. “We didn't give up.”

There was a pointed exchange of looks between Bucky and Steve that you didn't understand, almost like an admonishment. Something must have happened in the five years you'd been snapped
away but you didn't want to know. Whatever it was must have been sorted.

“So...” Bucky slides his hands over your body. “What do you want, Missy?”

“My boys,” you answer, holding your arm out for Steve. “You still all want this, right? I mean, it's only been a couple of days for me since Bucky's hut and...uh....”

“Are you blushing?” Steve seems amused. “Gee, I didn't think you'd come back so shy.”

“Can it, punk!” you hiss. “This is new to me.”

“It's new to us too, ya mook,” Bucky raps your head affectionately. “What do you say, Stevie? The three of us still?”

**

Steve could kill Bucky for that look.

It was the look that said he knew Steve had had doubts, that seeing Peggy had really shaken him. He didn't want you to know he lost faith for a while. It felt dishonest, shameful.

You were holding your hand out to him, looking so vulnerable as you did so and he saw shades of the girl on top of an apartment block in Brooklyn, the girl that no one looked at twice except him and Bucky.

How could he ever have thought of leaving? How could he have ever thought there was nothing there but pity affection between you and him?

“Stevie?” you prompt softly, a little worry line in between your brows. “You do still want us, right?”

“I'm just wondering how we're going to manage this. It's very slippy in here,” he smiles and he watches you relax. “Of course I'm still with you guys.”

He sees Bucky give a wink over your shoulder before moving you to be sandwiched in between them both. Steve got an eyeful of your panting chest as you were anticipating the tension breaking and he couldn't hold back any longer.

Five years of being apart and only seeing you in his dreams and now you were real, you were right in front of him, moaning loudly as Bucky savaged your neck. Steve lost his composure completely, kissing your lips and grabbing your thighs to pull you closer, leaving indents in the skin.

“Geez guys,” you pant. “Gettin' a little rough there.”

“I think you like it though, sweetheart,” Bucky nips at your earlobe.

And you didn't say anything further. You just leaned into their touches before running your hands up both of their bodies. Steve didn't realise how starved he was for attention until this point and he had to restrain himself from being selfish and wanting your sole focus. He could see Bucky was just as desperate.

“Legs apart,” he makes the decision, using his own feet to kick yours open gently before dropping
down to his knees. “I've missed the way you taste.”

“God, Stevie,” you look down, flushed in the cheeks. “It always surprises me what a filthy mouth you got on ya sometimes.”

“Time's have changed. It's not the forties any more,” Steve smirks a little. “I can say what I actually think.”

“Say somethin' else,” Bucky encourages him, dipping his hand in between your legs from behind you and chuckling at what he finds there. “She really likes it.”

“Ohhh. Like that, huh?” Steve nods. “Here's what's gonna happen then. I'm gonna taste you and Buck's gonna fuck you and you're gonna let us know you appreciate it.”

“And after I'm done, Steve's gonna have you from behind against the wall whilst I touch you,” Bucky continues, winking at Steve. “Because he deserves to feel you get tight too.”

“She's blushing, Buck. Our strong little Captain is all shy.”

“Ain't that sweet.”

“Shut up!” you hiss, embarrassed before Steve's tongue started exploring between your legs and your eyes just rolled back. “God-fuckin'-damn!”

“Music to my ears,” Bucky positions himself before sliding easily into you. “This is home, darlin’.”

**

You didn't quite know where to put your hands. All your legs were doing were shaking uncontrollably as you felt the duel sensations of Bucky moving inside you and Steve swirling his tongue around your clit.

“Gonna collapse soon?” Bucky whispers.

“Yeah,” you manage to get out.

Two hands keep your hips steady and Steve's come under your ass, supporting you.

“Want it harder?”

“I...” you trail off, not sure if your legs could handle any more. “I....yes.”

“That's our gal. We got you.”

You could feel Bucky hunker down a little before really picking up his pace and even Steve got rougher, fully burying his face, his tongue moving more quickly and erratically than before.

“Guys, I.....I...I can't...” you're half yelling as the stimulation becomes overwhelming.

You end up letting out a string of high pitched swearing as you cum hard, scrabbling to stabilise yourself, yanking Steve's shorter hair where he lets out a low groan which mingles with Bucky's as
he pushes deep inside you, finding his own release.

“I hope it's not another five years before that happens again, doll,” Bucky laughs, kissing your cheek. “Now let's let Stevie have his fun.”

“You're gonna have to prop me up,” you shudder with the aftershocks. “Jesus, Steve.”

“Come here then,” Steve stands up, the shower water making his hair fall into his eyes which were burning with an intensity that was foreign to see.

Bucky was always flirtatious but your little Stevie you would never have expected such fierceness from. It was still such a contrast and you briefly wondered about your time as The Virtue and how he must have been then.

Steve spins you around so you're bracing your hands against the shower wall, Bucky in between them, as he slicks himself against you, pushing in. You're already oversensitive and you whine a little at the sensation.

“Oh come on, doll,” Bucky kisses your forehead. “You can do better than that. Let Stevie know how much you like it.”

When the pads of his fingers caress your already aching clit, the sounds of your moans starting echoing loudly around the shower, magnified by the running water. You twitch around Steve's cock, hearing this deep rumble in his chest and Bucky's laugh at the reaction.

“She gets so tight,” Steve thrusts hard.

“Just you wait, punk,” Bucky smirks, rubbing small circles against you and all you want to do is fall over, fall down. “Ah ah ah, Missy. Stay upright now.”

“Buck...god! Fuck, it's too.....shit! Steve! No...don't stop! Don't stop!”

You're hardly coherent any more. You can feel your body gearing up for another orgasm, knowing it's going to wipe you out completely.

“Let us hear it, sweetheart,” Steve murmurs by your ear. “It's just us.”

You're sure the apartments surrounding must be making noise complaints because you can't control your volume as Bucky makes you cum hard, Steve ramming brutally until you hear him grunt loudly.

“Oh my God,” you sag a little in their arms. “You're gonna kill me with this.”

“Good way to go though,” Bucky kisses you softly.

“Let's get cleaned up and get to bed. It's been a long day for all of us,” Steve pulls out, grabbing a wash cloth and helping you.

Bucky has to carry you into the bedroom because your legs are gone but you manage to see the biggest bed you've ever laid eyes upon.

“Expecting a party?!” you look at Steve as you're put down on it.

“Just so we could all sleep together,” he mutters, a little pink at the ears. “I didn't know if...well we never discussed....”
“I'm so beat,” Bucky jumps onto the bed making it bounce a little before getting under the covers. “Joining us, Stevie? Be like old times, yeah?”

“Yeah. That was the idea,” Steve smiles.

The three of you in the bed, you just naturally gravitated towards each other. As much as you'd just released some tension, now your mind was casting back to the horrors you'd experienced. Once the light was flipped off, all you saw was Tony's resigned face before he snapped, saw Natasha's pitying look as you tried to get her out of the orange world.

Steve fell asleep immediately to your left but you could tell Bucky was still awake.

“Can't settle huh?” he whispers.

“No.”

“It's okay to be not okay, Vera,” he prompts softly. “Five years without you has taught me that.”

“I can't believe I was gone so long. It cost so much to get me back.”

“Don't think of it that way. Steve and I knew the risks, Natasha knew the risks, Tony eventually came round. They saved half of the universe.”

“I can't stop seeing it.”

“We're here. We're not going anywhere,” Bucky throws his arm over you, nuzzling into your right side. “We'll work this out together. We all need time to heal.”

“Who made you all sensible?” you laugh a little.

“A thing called therapy,” he kisses your cheek. “I was so bored without you, doll. You have no idea. I had five years of Stevie's pep talks. I need a medal.”

“I noticed you found my ring while I was gone. I saw it on the chain around your neck.”

“Yeah, I went back to Europe, retraced our journey during the war. Felt like the closest I could get to you.”

“What happens now?”

“What do you mean?”

“The marriage thing.”

“You want Stevie to get down on one knee for ya?” he jokes.

“Ass. It ain't legal.”

“I don't think anyone will care just about now,” Bucky says honestly. “As long as we're private 'bout it.”

“What will our surname be?” you're just desperate for a distraction at this point.

“I think Barnes-Rogers is better. I was here first after all,” he tickles you a little bit. “You have no idea how happy I am you're back, Missy. I felt like Thanos had snapped away a part of me too. Holding you right now...I'm still not sure if I'm awake or maybe I just died on the battlefield.”
“I think after the shower you can definitely say ya ain't dead,” you snort.

“I love you.”

“I love you too.”

“Try and sleep. I'm right here with you and so is Steve,” he kisses your cheek again.

And you found when Steve rolled over in his sleep and threw his arm over you too, you finally felt safe enough to drift off.

**

You did your own little funeral for Natasha, having missed out on the first one.

You tried to relay her message to Bruce, knowing they were close but Bruce didn't want to hear it. Clint, however, was grateful to know.

After Tony's funeral though, and seeing the family he'd given up to make sure you and everyone else could come back, you felt a gnawing guilt every time you looked at Morgan, Tony's daughter. You were just glad you'd made up with him before he passed.

Two weeks after, Steve was ready to take the Infinity Stones back to the points in time where they'd been taken. Everyone had had a chance to heal, to breathe.

“Now you have four Pym particles in case something goes wrong,” Bruce relayed to Steve who was getting ready to stand on the plinth.

“Got it,” Steve drops Mjolnir on the platform whilst he adjusts the Quantum suit before coming back over to you and Bucky who were waiting by the side of it.

“You'd better come back, punk,” Bucky claps him on the shoulder. “I'm not sure I can handle her by myself any more.”

Again, the pointed stares between the two and something resolute in Steve's features. Then Steve moves onto you.

“See you real soon,” Steve kisses you.

“Oh I'm going with you,” you unzip your coat to show a Quantum suit you'd stolen.

“Excuse me?!” both men said at once.

“I got somethin' to do. A wrong to right,” you nod. “Don't bother tryna change my mind because you know how that goes.”

“Missy, what do you need to do?” Bucky looks worried.

“I'll be back in a heartbeat,” you promise, avoiding the question.

As you step on the dais, you ready yourself, plugging in the co-ordinates and the time you needed
to be there. Both of your boys are looking at you as if you'd gone mad but you knew you had to do something, just one thing to undo some of the tragedy recently.

“Ready?”

**

Bucky sees you give a thumbs up and he's wondering what the hell you're doing.

You knew you couldn't bring back Tony or Natasha so what could you possibly go back for?

He thought all he had to be worried about was losing Steve to Peggy and now you were throwing a wrench into the works. What if he lost you both?

You were just whispering something to Steve and he couldn't catch what it was but Steve just looks surprised and then incredibly happy.

He almost ran onto the platform as Bruce flipped the switch and you disappeared along with Steve.

“How long?” he asks anxiously.

“Five minutes,” Bruce answers.

Five minutes turned out to be almost as long as the five years he'd experienced without you. Surely Bruce was getting annoyed with his constant pacing but he couldn't help it. What happened if you didn't come back again? What if you'd both left him here to have fuller lives back in the past?

A million and one paranoid thoughts raced through his mind.

“And five...four...three...two...one!” Bruce powers up the machine.

He was hoping for two people to be standing there. What he actually got was three.

“What the hell?” Bruce looks up in alarm.

“Is that...Pietro Maximoff?!” Bucky walks up the dais, looking at the young man with silver hair.

“It sure is,” you grin. “Righting a wrong.”

“Apparently she shot me in your timeline,” Pietro shrugs. “I'd say she's skilled if she can do that with my abilities.”

“What does Wanda think about this?” Steve asks,

“I don't know. I just told her to be here about now,” you look around for her. “I hoped it would help with some a' the tragedy, ya know? Give somebody something to be happy about?”

The shriek that echoed around the wooded area made Bucky think differently for a moment until Wanda came streaking past you all to hug her brother, rapidly talking in her native language.
“You did this?” she asks you.

“For you. I couldn’t leave things as they were with this technology.”

“I never blamed you,” she holds out her hand for you to take. “I know you were not yourself, just as we weren’t but thank you. No one can save Vision but at least I have my brother back.”

The two wave as they leave to catch up.

“That was awful nice of you,” Steve pats your back.

“She's always had a big heart,” Bucky jokes. “That's why she took you under her wing as kids.”

“Maybe,” Steve grins. “I need some coffee. I'll meet you inside the lab.”

As Steve walks away, Bucky takes the opportunity to talk to you in private.

“What did you say to Steve earlier that got him so happy?”

“Oh you mean because he was thinking about leaving us for Peggy?”

Bucky blinks.

“Oh yeah, I know about that,” you snort. “Not exactly subtle the looks you were exchangin’ and the second time travel was mentioned, I put two and two together.”

“You always were smart,” Bucky sighs. “Yeah, he was having doubts.”

“So I told him a secret hoping he would choose us.”

“Which was?”

“How good are you at building cribs?” you smile before walking towards the lab yourself.

It takes Bucky a minute to process before he’s running after you, “Hey! Wait! You mean one of us is gonna be a daddy?!”

“Ain't gonna be just one a' ya, James,” you turn around. “No matter whose kid it is, there'll be two dads.”

“I'm gonna be a dad?!”

“Early days but I took a test in that lab yesterday,?” you're laughing now.

“Holy shit.”

Something he'd wanted since the forties, a family with you. After so many mishaps, years of torture and not being so careful, he thought maybe it couldn't happen, that the serum affects fertility. Maybe there was just too much strain to be able to conceive. Now the dream was materialising in front of him and this was the lightest he'd felt in years.

“I wanna be the first to name them!” he calls out.

“Eat dirt, Barnes,” you fire back over your shoulder. “My choice.”

And that was just fine with Bucky.
Seven Years Later

You were at the summer cabin with your family, sunning yourself on the porch and keeping a 
careful eye on the two kids dive-bombing off the pier into the lake....also the two big kids known 
as your husbands who were doing the same thing to make tidal waves for them.

Bucky had been right. No one had cared to stop the three of you marrying, too grateful to have the 
world put back to rights. It had been an actual welcome distraction to everyone on the team and 
although many jokes had been made, it had been a day filled with friends, family and happy 
memories.

Six months after that, your twins were born. You had your reservations, all the old horrors that 
Johann Schmidt had described to you making you worry but your two little boys, whilst having a 
great immune system and more than average strength and speed, thankfully did not have faces that 
peeled away.

They surfaced in the water, one with dark hair, one with blond plastered to their faces as they 
giggled loudly.

“Get them inside,” you call out. “Steve, you're cooking tonight.”

“You heard your Mom,” Steve picks up the dark haired boy and slings him over his shoulder. 
“Let's get dry, rascal.”

Bucky picks up the blond boy, putting him on his shoulders as he waded towards the shore.

“Do we have to? I wanna play some more,” the blond boy protests, wriggling about.

“Junior, don't make your Mom use the big voice,” Bucky smiles. “Your brother isn't kicking up a 
stink, is he?”

The dark haired boy sticks his tongue out at his brother in response. You just shake your head, 
getting up and walking to your family, kissing them all before walking inside, looking up at the 
wall where a new list was displayed proudly.

The Barnes-Rogers Family:

Steven Grant Barnes-Rogers

James Buchanan “Bucky” Barnes-Rogers

Vera “Missy” Barnes-Rogers

James Anthony “Junior” Barnes-Rogers

William “Billy” Barnes-Rogers
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