Glass Coffin

by laireshi

Summary

Hydra Cap kisses a comatose Tony Stark to make him wake up. It doesn’t work. The story is different when it's the real Steve Rogers who tries, though.

Notes

Thanks for beta to Comicsohwhyohwhy!

This is a fill for stevetony fairy tale bingo, square "Snow White" and my regular stony bingo card, square "wish".

The CNTW tag is there for Hydra Cap being creepy, but nothing bad happens in this fic.

After that first time, after his *confession*, Steve doesn’t let himself go and see Tony again until his plan is finalised.

Steve is not weak like his other, fake self. He knows what he needs to do. He doesn’t hesitate.

But he also knows that Tony Stark is a distraction. Always has been. He’s also a dangerous opponent, and to be able to destroy him, Steve needs to focus completely on this task.
It’d be easier, if Tony hadn’t put himself into a coma at the end of his little war; if he could just witness Steve taking over his world bit by bit. But Tony never had any respect for anyone’s plans but his own, and so Steve’s victory can’t really be complete until he brings Tony back and breaks him in every way, irrevocably. Until Tony’s forced to admit he was wrong to oppose Steve all these times. Until he succumbs to Steve, once and for all.

Steve dresses in his Captain America uniform, puts his shield on his back. Tony designed his suit and built the shield; Steve wants to see his face as he realises just how much he helped. He walks to the chamber where Tony’s body is being kept in long strides. He’s a man with a purpose, after all. He presses his hand to the door—biometric lock, set to open for him and him only.

And then, finally, he lets himself look at the Starkpod containing Tony’s comatose body again. It hasn’t changed since the last time he saw it. There’s not a particle of dust on the glass, and it still looks like something out of an sci-fi novel. Trust Tony to prepare what’s basically a high tech coffin for himself.

Tony hasn’t changed, either. His hair didn’t grow, he doesn’t have a beard. Steve knows something about being frozen in time. He wonders, not for the first time, if Tony can still hear. If he’s been screaming on the inside ever since Steve revealed his plans to him. It would be so delicious if it turned out to be true.

Steve leans over the glass. He watches it fog when he exhales over it, Tony’s face momentarily out of view. It would be so easy to just break the device (or maybe not: this is Tony Stark he’s talking about), but he couldn’t do that. He needs to see Tony fight with all his might, first.

He wipes the glass clean again. Tony’s eyes are still closed. Steve wants to see him stare at him with his blue eyes, wants to see the obvious, pathetic love that his other self never noticed turn to hate. He presses his hand to the side of the pod and waits.

He knows how Tony designs his fail-safes. He knows how Tony thinks. He knows what Tony believes in. He knows exactly what lies under the layers of genius and futurist.

A full minute passes, and then, with a low hiss, the pod opens. The glass slides away, the top panel collapses into the sides, and suddenly Steve’s looking at Tony’s bare face, no layers between them.

Steve’s mouth is dry. It feels like something important is happening, when it’s clearly not. It’s just another step of his plan. It’s not personal.

Steve slowly, very slowly, extends his hand and touches Tony’s cheek. Tony doesn’t even twitch. His eyelashes seem startlingly dark against his pale skin. That’s the one part that seems wrong. For all that Tony spends most of his time cooped up in his lab, he’s usually tanned. Now he looks almost sick. His skin is cold.

But soon, soon Steve will wake him. He’ll help him heal. He’ll make sure Tony’s at the top of his game, and then he’ll deliver the blow.

Steve slides his hand lower, runs his thumb over Tony’s moustache, slightly scratchy. He touches his fingers to Tony’s lips. They’re dry. Steve has half a mind to slip his fingers inside, but no, that’ll come later. He moves his hand down, over Tony’s neck. Lets it rest, his thumb on Tony’s pulse points and his fingers on the other side, and presses, just slightly. If that other Steve weren’t so weak, he’d have crushed Tony’s neck ages ago.

But then Steve wouldn’t get to do all this now.
He slides his hand over Tony’s collarbone—such a delicate bone, so easy to snap—and lower, to the RT, the biggest flaw in Tony. To get himself to a state where he needs a machine to control his own heart . . . Steve covers it with his palm. If Tony were conscious, he’d tense right now. As it is, he doesn’t react. It makes sense he built the thing keeping him alive. But he also did find Steve in the ice, and that will kill him.

Steve stops his slow exploration of Tony’s body there. He’s tempted to go lower, but suddenly he can’t wait anymore. He needs Tony awake; awake and aware. He needs Iron Man opposing him.

Tony, for all his love of science and technology, is a dreamer. He grew up on old tales. He never quite let them go, the contrary: he built himself a knight’s armour to try and save the world. It’s amusing, really, how he claims he hates magic.

Steve smirks.

He kneels next to the pod. He sets his hand just next to Tony’s head, to stabilise himself.

He leans in and he kisses Tony.

It feels like he’s waited to do this for years, even as he knows these memories are not his own. He licks over Tony’s mouth, sucks on his lower lip, keeps them connected for a few moments.

Then he leans back, and waits.

He knows it’ll work. He knows Tony must’ve had a fail-safe. A romantic like him; of course he’d have gone with a true love’s kiss. And Steve knows, with complete certainty, that the only person to be able to kiss Tony and wake him up, is him.

He waits more.

Tony doesn’t even stir. There’s no change in him at all. No new system came to life.

Steve waits longer.

There’s another hiss, and he looks at Tony expectantly—but no, it’s the pod closing itself after Steve stopped touching it for an extended period of time.

Tony’s still comatose.

He didn’t wake for Steve.

*It doesn’t matter*, Steve tells himself, and takes a swing and punches the glass over Tony’s face, hard.

It doesn’t break.

Steve cradles his injured hand and glares down at Stark.

“I’ll wake you, and I’ll destroy you,” he promises quietly.

It’s not like he really expected it to work this easily. Stark’s not stupid. There must be more layers to his coma. Maybe his body is still regenerating. It’s not like Steve cares. He has the whole United States to run. It’s much more important that Tony Stark.

He walks out and closes the door behind him.
He never comes back.

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Steve doesn’t go to see Tony for days after he’s brought back to normal.

This is the first reason why, really: that Steve is back and Tony isn’t. It’s not fair. But there are other reasons. There’s guilt and shame at what has been done in Steve’s name, by a man wearing his face. Tony deserves better friends than Steve. Everyone deserves better than Steve.

But when Steve thinks about Tony, there’s more than that. He remembers everything that other Steve has done. He remembers him touching Tony, Tony who was asleep and defenceless. That would be bad enough, but he also remembers him thinking about Tony, and Steve’s cheeks burn red in humiliation whenever he thinks about that.

The world needs Tony Stark, though, especially now. And Steve Rogers, Captain America, is scared of going to see him. He knows his presence won’t help—knows it intimately, even. But a small part of him, a part that he’s ashamed of, almost regrets that not-Steve didn’t manage to wake Tony up. That Tony’s feelings for Steve were never even there. (And then he thinks of what the other Steve would’ve done to Tony, if it worked, if his kiss had woken him, and he can’t breathe for the terror overcoming him.)

He really, really wants Tony back. Even if Tony remembers everything that was said around him. Steve can deal with that, he can deal with the humiliation, with the easy, nice rejection that Tony would certainly give him once he gets his bearings. But he just wants Tony there, near him, a friend like he’s always been.

Steve sighs. Finally, he makes himself look at the team standing in his living room. Strange looks calm, something like understanding on his face. Jan’s impatient. Carol’s to the side, obviously also feeling guilty about Tony.

“I don’t know what you’re expecting me to do,” Steve says finally.

“Don’t you want to wake him up?” Carol asks quietly.

“Of course I do!” Steve protests. “I just don’t see why you need me.”

Jan jabs a finger into his chest. “Come on, Steve. You know if anyone has access to his tech that’s you. Also . . .”

He knows she’s partially right there, is the worst thing. He knows his touch will open the pod. But what then? They have no way of waking up Tony.

And why did Jan trail off? It’s not like she’s shy.

“Okay,” Steve says. He turns to Stephen. “He’s been comatose for months. Difficult months. I doubt anyone had time to study his notes or whatever. Is there a spell you can do? Why are you all here now?”

Stephen coughs. “You could of course call it a spell, although Tony wouldn’t be all too pleased with that, would he?”

Jan snickers. “He’s a Sleeping Beauty, Steve.”

Stephen nods gravely. “Quite literally, it seems, Captain.”
Steve understands with a feeling of dread.

“No,” he says. “No. No. I can’t do it. No.”

He turns away. He wants to be out of this room. He eyes the windows dubiously. It’s not a high floor.

Jan touches his arm. “It’s for Tony, Steve.”

“It won’t work,” Steve says. “Shouldn’t you ask Pepper?

He knows it won’t work, but he can’t make himself explain how. He’d try; god knows he’d try if his other self hadn’t had the idea first, but—he already knows it’s useless, so what’s the point?

Jan forcibly turns him around. “I’ve known you both for years, and if you try to deny you love each other—”

Steve digs his fingernails into his palm. He wants to disappear. He can’t deal with this, not on top of everything else. “It won’t work,” he repeats, and he doesn’t meet anyone’s eyes as he says, in a monotone voice that hopefully doesn’t betray how he feels, “He tried that. It was the first thing he did; he went to Tony and he kissed him and he—well. It didn’t work. So if you really think a kiss will wake Tony up, well, you have to find other people important to him.”

He crosses his arms in front of his chest. He knows his face is burning. He wants them to go now. But Jan is staring at him. “I know for a fact you’re not dumb,” she says, “but you’re being a complete idiot.”

“Steve,” Carol says. “We need you to kiss Tony. Not some warped, Nazi version of you.”

No, Steve thinks. Nononono. That’s—that’s even worse.

Because there’s hope, here. Hope that maybe Tony loves Steve, and Steve can save him for once. There’s hope that Steve buried long ago.

And he really remembers everything his other self thought. Everything he felt, too.

He remembers the crashing realisation that his kiss didn’t wake Tony up. He remembers the anger and the humiliation, yes, but mostly he remembers the pain, the all-encompassing, bright pain because Tony didn’t love him. The hopelessness, the utter betrayal, the emptiness that overcame him after.

Steve can’t go through it again. He can’t.

“You don’t know it’ll work,” he says carefully. “And it’s not right, okay, he’s unconscious, are you parading people to kiss him now—”

“Not people, Captain,” Stephen interrupts. “Just you.”

“He’d do anything for you,” Jan says.

Steve’s well aware of that.

He doesn’t want to do it. He doesn’t want to kiss a comatose Tony, only for it to change nothing. Again. He really, really doesn’t.
But if there’s even one percent of a chance . . .

He has to try.


Strange raises his hands and bright light surrounds them all.

Moments later, Steve finds himself squatting to fight off the wave of dizziness. He hates magic. He thinks it’s something Tony would say.

He slowly straightens, and he looks around. He’s in the room with Tony’s body in it. There’s only Strange with him.

“I thought you’d like some privacy,” he explains. “I’ll go back for Jan and Carol and we’ll wait outside.”

Steve nods his thanks, but all of his attention is on the pod.

It still looks the same, as if it didn’t survive the world ending and being in a care of a Nazi murderer. Tony’s always been the best engineer.

Steve feels cold all over, but he makes himself approach the pod. He’s shivering. He knows this won’t work. Why is he doing this to himself again?

*For Tony*, he thinks. *Maybe it’ll work, and Tony will be back.*

He doesn’t let himself look at Tony’s face. He touches the pod’s side panel, like his other self did. He’s prepared to wait, but the effect is immediate this time. The pod opens, the glass receding. It must’ve remembered Steve touch.

Steve looks at Tony’s feet first, but of course Tony’s clad in one of his undersuits, and he hasn’t actually moved. Even now, his muscles are well-defined under the tight material. Steve scolds himself. Ogling Tony is not what he’s here for.

The RT is still shining bright. It brings Steve some comfort. He touches it briefly, feels the warmth emanating from it. It means that there is a chance. That even if not today, someone will wake Tony up. That he’s not lost.

Tony’s face is unchanged. He looks so calm and so still; the way he never did when he was awake. Steve almost doesn’t want to disturb him. But god, he misses him so much.

He leans down and touches Tony’s cheek. He thinks he sees Tony’s eyes move under his eyelids, but it must’ve been just an illusion. Tony’s still comatose, and it’s not Steve’s touch he needs anyway.

It’s a kiss.

Steeling himself for a disappointment, but full of hope all the same, Steve leans down. He presses his lips to Tony’s in a chaste kiss. He moves away almost immediately.

A hand wraps around Steve’s wrist before he can step away.

Steve’s frozen in spot. He’s hallucinating. It can’t be.

But it is.
Tony’s looking at him with wide open eyes, the blue of them brighter than any sunny day. His hand is on Steve’s wrist, not letting him move away.

“Steve,” he says, and his voice isn’t even hoarse. “Do you really kiss and run?”

_It’s him_, Steve thinks, and he’s not sure if he’s crying or laughing in relief. He knows what he’s feeling is pure, unadulterated love.

“Tony,” he says, and lets Tony pull him back down, and hugs him tight.

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