Summary

1971, September 7th ~ Upon the orders of a HYDRA offshoot, LIGHT, Natasha Romanoff, then known as Natalia, stages a car crash to kill Howard Stark. From the boot of his car, she steals the remainder of the enhancing serum. From the backseat of his car she takes a screaming baby. She takes the baby and the serum, and returns to HYDRA.

Notes

For the wonderful Gothic_Lolita who's always helping me make sure this all makes sense.
Chapter 1

Tony never knew his father. He had been killed when he was young, a quick hit and run, leaving a baby Tony screaming in the back of the car. The murderer had turned to the infant, considering her options, she could either kill the child, or take it back to the trainers with her, she might get a reward, young children were the easiest to train.

The closest thing to a father figure Tony received was the blond man who brought him food three times a day. The other assassins around him seemed like family, they all took turns in holding Tony when he cried at night. His closest ‘friend’ was a black teenager, he was the one who looked after Tony the most. Tony didn’t know the boy’s name, just that he’d been taken from a military camp when he was 15, and he had been temporarily wiped (no one said anything to Tony, but he could see the bruises on his cheeks and the vacant look in his eyes when he returned) Tony wanted him to leave, the boy was good. Natalia, the assassin who brought Tony in tried her hardest to stay away from him.

Tony never knew his mother either. He assumed he had one, but he would never know, he was taken from his family too young to remember anyone. Natalia became the closest thing to a mother that he had. She took over his training when the trainers thought he was old enough to start training. Tony didn’t know what love was yet, just people who’d keep him quiet during bad dreams.

The training was brutal. But Tony learned quickly that the better he did in training the easier he would find the next sessions. Training with the weapons was easy. Tony was a good shot, he barely missed, and if left alone with the weapons for too long, he would end up dismantling them and creating better ones, most of them optimised for his size.

By 16 Tony had racked up more kills than most common assassins, he was used for high profile kills, no one ever suspected a small teenager for leaving the area.

At 18, Tony’s fees were in the thousands, the trainers using him as much as they could, changing his appearances so he was unrecognisable.

“We have a new target for you.” The handler spoke in Russian today. Tony nodded lifting the given kit bag from the desk, opening the bag and looking at what they’d given him for this mission. Clothes? Tony tilted his head up at the handler, the question hovering in the air, the handler sighed, “you must blend in to get this target. Make them think they can trust you. Natalia will be your handler in this mission.”

Tony looked through the bag, clothes, some rudimental weapons, a few of his own designs, but nothing exciting. “Where am I going?” Tony responded in the same language, these rooms were the only ones where he could use the same language he was addressed in.

“New York. Natalia will apprehend you and take you to a compound of advanced humans. You will receive information on your target from there. Until then, you act as though you are your own assassin. Follow the light.”

“Follow the light.” Tony responded as per training. The handler waved a hand at him, Tony fled the room as fast as possible.

“Natalia, what is this?” The handler gestured the the bundle she placed on his desk, alongside the
“It is a child.” She said, “children are easier to train than adults. Training a child from an infant is easier than training it from adult.”

“I will ask. It is your responsibility now.” The handler dismissed her with a wave.

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“What is it?” Clint speaks in stunted French, Natalia places the child on a bed, looking down at it regretfully.

A child. She signs it, Clint was deaf and struggled to lip read when Natalia kept switching between languages. I picked it up on my mission, children are easier to train than adults.

“Oh. Will it know?” Clint leant over the baby, wide eyes staring up at him.

Maybe, I don’t even know if it will be alive come tomorrow. Natalia waited until Clint’s eyes were focused on her hands before signing, my handler is going to check.

“What is it called?” Clint was tempted to pick it up and look at it closer.

“Tony.”

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“Nino, what are you doing?” Tony froze at the sound of Natalia’s voice, his hands, wrist deep in the clock from his room, parts of weapons littering the floor around him.

“Sasha!” Tony sprung up, his young brain slurring the russian words as he spoke so fast, “Sasha, I was building, you like the weapons, I was making you a weapon!” Tony held up what he’d been making, Natalia tilted her head, it looked like a clock. “Da, it looks like a clock, but when you pull this, it fires!” Tony made the mistake of pulling the hand in his excitement, firing a ballistic into his wall, he turned, very, very slowly to face Natalia, fear ripe across his face.

“Oh, Tony.” Natalia leant down and took the clock away from him, “I’m sure it’s very clever, but where’s the need for it in real life? Leave it now, you must train.”

Sirens blared all around the holding, soldiers and assets alike stood suddenly to attention. Tony hid behind Natalia’s leg, his hands twisting in the rough fabric of her trousers. She placed a hand on top of his head, fear was not something she felt, or was allowed to feel, but she felt something akin to it in her heart. Today she would officially start training the boy, in the same way that she herself had been trained.

“Tony, we must train.” The boy looked up at her with glistening eyes, joy bubbling through him, Natalia feels her gut twist, he didn’t deserve this. She should have left him in the back of that car.

Tony was seven at the beginning of his training, he started on the first of June, and as a result, LIGHT granted him that day as his birthday. Not that it would ever be celebrated. He is strong and sure, having never been given a reason to doubt himself. He is by far the best child Natalia has ever had to train. He learns fast, never letting anyone land a hit on him.

“Natalia, how is his training going?” Her handler called her into a room.

“He is strong and learning well. He is outranking his current training. He needs more.” The handler
nodded, he picked up a black case, Natalia recognised it as the one she stole from the back of Howard Stark’s car.

“If he trains well, you are to inject him with this. Then he must be subjected to radiation of some kind, or something more extreme, you decide.” The handler passed her the case.

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Good training happened more often than not, Tony hated to let Natalia down. And so, he was injected with the serum, exposed to radiation, and left to recover for a day. Tony grew stronger. Where he had only just been beating opponents bigger than him, he was now fully able to take down assets twice his size. Natalia wanted to feel proud. She couldn’t, of course, emotions and relationships between assets weren’t allowed, stories were told of the mutilation and abuse that came from emotions; LIGHT and HYDRA left assets broken, shells of the people they used to be. Not even weapons, just useless husks. Natalia didn’t want that to happen to either Tony or herself.

Years passed. Tony trained, killed, improved. Never malfunctioned.

“You were right Natalia, infants do train better than adults, we’ve never had to wipe him.” The handler’s grin was almost feral. Natalia didn’t say anything. Fear, something she shouldn’t feel. Something she’d been feeling more and more over Tony, was persuading her to stay silent.

Tony is nine when the Winter Soldier escapes from HYDRA. The mantle falls on Natalia to speed up Tony’s training.

Tony is ten when Natalia takes one of his training partners to the American service agency, SHIELD. Natalia feels something for the boy as he keens, almost inaudibly over the loss.

When Tony is fifteen, he is deemed old enough to carry out requested hits. He takes out a member of the British Parliament from the roof of St. Pauls. He has left the city before the police have even been contacted.

Natalia wants to feel proud, she thinks she is proud, this warm glow in her chest must mean something, surely?

Tony was chronologically forty when he was sent to New York, but looked barely twenty. LIGHT sent him to New York following the announcement that the former HYDRA assassin, the Winter Soldier had been recovered, his brainwashing had been reversed, and he was falling back into the life as James Barnes, the man he’d been before the war.

New York was unlike anything Tony knew. Tony had been trained in the middle of nowhere. New York, even the outskirts of it, was bright and busy. One of the handlers had called it the city that never sleeps. He woke up in a ditch alongside a road. A duffel back of clothes and a few small weapons chucked against his side. Somewhere, in the distance, Natalia was waiting in a compound full of highly trained, highly dangerous superhumans.
Tony didn’t want to say he was scared by this mission, but he’d never been sent into a mission like this. Most of his expertise lay in hit and runs, or assassinations. Hand to hand combat, of course, Natalia didn’t train him only on how to shoot people. But this? Figuring out how he was going to get into the compound, find his target and take them out, harder than most tasks assigned to him.

Infiltrate the Avengers base, how you get in is up to you. Make them think you are one of their team, make them some weapons. Get secrets and plans. Target: James Buchanan Barnes.

Tony pulled the slip of paper with the mission details on it.

Tony pulled the lighter he was given out of his pocket, clicking the top off and setting fire to the piece of paper. No one needed to know who he was here for. He walked for a few miles, heading North. His handler had told him Natalia was located in Upstate New York. The American roads were long and full, lights flashing past him.

After about half an hour of walking, a white sports car pulled up next to him, the window rolled down and a blond man leant over the middle of the car. “Where are you headed? I can give you a lift to the closest town?” He pressed a button on the central console of the car, and the door unlocked, “Hop in.”

Tony shrugged the bag off his shoulder, stepping off the dirt and onto the tarmac next to the car, “I’ll go where you go.” Tony’s voice was rough from the dust kicked up by the cars. He grasped the door handle, waiting for any form of acknowledgement from the blond. He nodded, and Tony opened the door, sinking down into the seat.

“I’m headed upstate, is that okay?” Tony nodded, this worked out surprisingly well. “I’m Steve.” The man reached across the console to shake Tony’s hand, a solid grasp, slightly firmer than any Tony had received before.

“So, what puts you on the highway at this time? I wouldn’t think it’s too safe for someone like you to be out this late, let alone so far from anything.” Tony bristled at the tone, maybe he wasn’t the biggest, but he really didn’t look like he couldn’t fend for himself, did he? He looked down at his clothes; a ratty sweatshirt and over-sized jogging bottoms. Not the warmest, but vaguely practical, hid any weapons that he could have been carrying. Also effective at hiding his physique. Made him look kind of weak. Maybe he did look like he couldn’t look after himself after all.

Tony considered his answers. What would a teenager be doing on a highway at this time of night? “I’m running away.” His voice was tight, full of… emotion? Full of lies. Steve’s face twisted at his response. “My parents were abusive, I have nothing holding me there. I need to get somewhere new.”

Steve took a few moments to reply, his breathing slightly faster. He changed down a gear, flooring
the accelerator pedal slightly harder than necessary. “There isn’t anywhere you could have gone to near where you lived?” Tony wanted to wince at the way Steve was taking his feelings out on the car.

Tony shook his head, “you don’t quite understand the concept. I had to run away. The town was too close together to have done that.” Sure, if you count brainwashed soldiers as a town, I guess it’s not a lie. The thought made Tony flinch.

“Sorry.” Steve picked up on the change in tone immediately, his frame softening towards Tony. He paused for a breath before speaking again. “What do you like to do?”

Something reasonable for a teenager, what’s something reasonable for a teenager? “I like cars. And engineering, always been something I’ve enjoyed. Top of the class all the time.” You were the only class. Of course you were top. Tony shook the thought out of his head.

“Engineering? What did you like to design?” Steve changed lanes, steering past an overladen truck.

Don’t be suspicious. “Anything really. I’ve created designs for green energy production, more efficient engines, some weapons - as boys do, I went through a phase.” Tony faked a laugh at himself as if that was something every teenager did.

Steve seemed to perk up at that, “You design things?” He changed lanes smoothly, flooring the car past a line of slow moving trucks, the car easily passing the eighty-speed limit.

Tony nodded slowly, “I’ve always been looking for a place to put my ideas properly into practice, we never had the facilities at school to cover that.” Great bullshit there, you never went to school.

Steve tilted his head, his eyes sharply analysing the road ahead. He changed lanes, almost unnecessarily, seeming to use the movement as a way to think of what to say next, “you say you created weapons, what kind?”

Tony swallowed, his voice came out slightly drier than before, “all sorts really, I didn’t have a specific type. Handguns, projectiles made from what I could get my hands on, bigger weapons. I think I burnt most of my work before I left.” Tony looked out of the window, trees rushing past.

Steve pondered for a minute, Tony watched him cautiously. When Steve started talking again, he spoke slowly, “I work with a group of special people. They’ve all got a certain skill-set to help them in their job. And we need a new team member, someone with a high intelligence. Your weapons, green energy. Were they effective? Would they work?”

Tony blinked several times, slightly in shock that this man, an apparent stranger, was offering him a job, was it a job, in this special team? “I think so? I mean, yes, they would, but I’ve never had anywhere near the funding that’d be necessary to even comprehend making them, I don’t even know where to start looking for the money.”

Steve nodded, “that’s fine, I believe the team can cover that.” He turned off the highway, flicking the headlights on full beam, illuminating the road ahead of him, which seemed to be drawing narrower and closer in on the car. Despite the narrowing foliage, Steve seemed to be accelerating, the speedometer clocking the vehicle travelling around ninety-five as it roared towards an almost impenetrable bush.

I’m gonna die. I can’t die from a car crash. I’m gonna die. Too polite to say anything, not wanting to ruin his chances of finding Natasha and his mark, Tony closed his eyes and braced for impact.

It never came. He opened his eyes on a long road leading up to a big facility lit up by bright white
LEDs.

Tony’s breath caught in his throat, “what, what was that?”

Steve chuckled lowly, “cloaking holograms. These facilities are the most state of the art in the world for what we are aware.” Steve paused. “Not that the rest of the world is aware we exist, according to them, this is just a very large piece of overgrown New York.” Steve pulled the car up at the front of the building. “You coming?” He climbed out of the car, walking toward the compound.

Chapter End Notes

aaaaaaaand she's back, for how long? who knows? but so much has changed since i last updated this it's insane! Happy New Years lmao!

Hope you enjoy this, please let me know if you do!

End Notes

Let me know what you think, idk how long im planning on making this but. welp we'll see.

much love xx

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