Summary

Tony Stark dies in Siberia- and wakes up more than eight years earlier.

or

Tony doesn't deal well with betrayal

or

The author is still bitter about Civil War. And will be to her death.

Notes

To any of my Connections readers, no, I haven't abandoned you. I'm working on the next chapter, I'm just having trouble wording what I want to happen. The second it's finished, it'll be up for you to read. I promise I'm not leaving the fic as it is.

Anyways. I'm still hella bitter about Civil War. So. I wrote this in the hope I'll get some team Tony thoughts into it at some point.
He was going to die alone.

He seemed to accept his fate more easily and much faster than was probably normal, but, then again, it wasn’t as if Tony had ever lived up to the definition of normal.

He’d felt it when the suit finally gave up, the last reserves of power running out after the thirteenth hour of lying in the cold, chills slowly seeping through the metal to touch his skin as the heaters failed midway through their regulated four second burst. It was never meant for this. The most he'd prepared for was being stuck underwater, or a short mission in one of the Poles, where he had an extra arc reactor or the team was nearby, not in a fucking Siberian winter with his only energy source broken beyond repair, not with three inches of metal forced through his chest, pressing against his lungs in a way that couldn't be healthy.

Not alone.

He wished Jarvis were with him, or Pepper, or Happy, or Rhodey.

God, Rhodey.

He hadn't deserved any of it. He shouldn't have been there at all, but he was too goddamn good to leave any of it alone. And now he wouldn't just lose his ability to walk (it was his fault, he was too slow, if he’d just reacted a little quicker…) and Tony was going to die before he could work out something to help, before he could say goodbye or just tell him… He didn't care. Just something, just see Rhodey’s face and see him smile one last time before Tony was gone.

This wasn't how he'd thought it would end.

He'd wanted to find someone to grow old with - he and Pepper would always love each other, but they were never meant to stay together, and there had to be some person out there he was meant for - maybe have a kid, or maybe go out helping someone in one of the battles, but at least knowing that he’d done what he could to save someone, or just having made a difference. Just, something. Some way to know that he didn’t die in vain.

Instead, it was with a vibranium shield crushing his chest, left behind by someone he’d believed for
certain he could trust.

Somehow he wasn't surprised.

Maybe he'd just known deep down that he was never going to be able to compete with Bucky Barnes, not when he was still Rogers’ friend. *(So was I.)*

He was either being selfish, or trying to buy his way to friendship. Impulsive and irresponsible, or ridden by guilt and needing to 'loosen up'. A drama queen on a good day, an egotistical narcissist with a god complex on bad ones. Reckless, not caring enough about the *consequences*, never quite good enough for Rogers, or SHIELD *(or any of the Avengers for that matter)*. And wasn't it just ironic. He'd come here as a friend, to help, planning attacks against the other Winter Soldiers before he'd even walked through the door, just trying to stop the team tearing apart further, just as Rogers had always wanted him to be, and he was going to die now, left behind by the model of Good, Honourable and Righteous. *Fun times.*

Tony’s breath caught, condensing in the cold, and he coughed, tasting blood in his mouth again as he turned his head, forcing himself not to move his chest in an attempt to stop the metal ripping through more of his skin. Black tainted the corners of his vision, almost like shadows on the walls around him, creeping in slowly as his head spun, and he let it, feeling his body numb to the pain that coursed through it, falling into darkness as he felt the last of the air leave his lungs and he counted, waiting for it to take over.

*Five. Four. Three. Two-*

*-One. Zero.*

Tony breathed out, and choked as he tried to breathe in again, coughing up the water that seemed to be stuck in his throat and-

*Wait.*

*That wasn't right.*
Someone yanked his arms, pulling him up from where his head had been submerged, yelling something indecipherable through the water moving in his ears as his spine cracked in protest. He opened his eyes, blinking to try and clear his vision, and the blurred shapes around him started to come into focus. Those were rock walls. The suit was gone. There were wires. Coming from his chest. That was where the arc- Oh, hell no.

This had to be a nightmare, some demented, twisted hallucination his mind thought up before he died.

Yinsen ("Don't waste your life." He shouldn't be alive-) was watching him with well-concealed worry from where he stood, glasses slipping from their place while he hurriedly translated another less-than-terrifying threat from a language he couldn't identify. Tony watched him follow as he felt himself be dragged from the room (sixteen steps, left from the door, four to the right... This didn't feel like one of his other nightmares, it was too ordinary, nothing had changed so far, and he wasn't normally this aware) into the desert sunlight, and he squinted slightly as it hit his eyes.

“He wants to know what you think.”

He barely registered him speaking, but the reply rolled off of his tongue almost instinctively as he took his view in the camp. “I think he's got a lot of my weapons.”

(Why wasn’t he dead yet?)

He kept his eyes on the men moving between the tents for just a moment, making a mental inventory of the weapons they had available to them before turning back to the man as he replied hungrily in his own language and let Yinsen translate for him. “He says they have everything you need to build the Jericho missile. He wants you to make the list of materials. He says for you to start working immediately, and when you're done he will set you free.”

He plastered a smile onto his face, and Raza mirrored it, satisfied, as he shook Tony’s hand. “No, he won’t.”

Yinsen agreed, with what would appear to be resignation to anyone else, but Tony could see a flare of hope in his eyes. “No. He won’t.”

He’d prefer dying now to this again. It didn’t seem too bad.
It didn’t seem like Tony had much of a choice in the matter.

For some reason, the only thing that had changed in this…. Nightmare? Hallucination?... Whatever it was, in this *thing*, was Tony himself. Which ruled out most the chances of this actually being a nightmare, since it was nothing like his other ones where everything that could go wrong, did - here it was uncannily normal, or at least as normal as a kidnapping could be, and he didn't think his mind had been, well… *alive* enough to generate a hallucination.

(He didn’t want to think about what that meant for the situation he was in now.)

But if he was going to have to relive this, while he was completely clueless as to what *this* was, he was going to make it count.

This time around, he was extremely glad to say, he remembered enough from his last experience to skip out a lot of the theory of what to do, and could get straight to plan Get Out Alive Quickly (Yes, he knew it was a terrible name. It got straight to the point, though).

His captors still spoke Arabic, Urdu, Dari, Pashto, Mongolian, Farsi and Russian. Yinsen still didn’t speak enough of them to keep up. Tony still only understood two, and not well enough when they intermixed them constantly with the ones he didn’t in their conversations. Yinsen still promised to see his family when they escaped. It was still his weapons in the hands of terrorists. He still needed the twelve missiles broken down for the palladium - he’d synthesize the Starkanium the *second* he got home (*if* he got home), this time round - for the reactor.

(And, god, he *hated* the cold metal that sat heavy in his chest, and even with the power it generated, he still got chills from it too often to be comfortable. It felt just like the chestplate of the suit did as it pushed into his body in Siberia into his head. He knew he’d regret thinking it later, but he wished he had his strain of Extremis with him to help with the pain of it, even with the amount of trouble he’d gone through to modify it, because at least Tony wouldn’t feel like he was going to freeze to death every other moment he was awake.)

He could draw up the plans for the first suit much quicker than before, and while it made him want to cringe just thinking of how much better the next ones would be in comparison (*not* *good enough, evidently, though*), it was the least conspicuous design he could do if anyone was watching them on camera. The shapes, this time, at least, mirrored some of the ones he’d used in the original Jericho design, so he had a lot more leeway than before, and he and Yinsen had a lot more time to plan their escape.
However much he hated being here, if this really was some sort of time-travel rather than a hallucination - and while he shuddered at the thought, it was becoming more and more likely by the day - then the foresight was useful in pretty much every way possible. The time it took to make their plans and construct the suit was almost halved, and by the end of Tony’s second (he thought it was his second, but he wasn’t outside enough to know for sure) month there, they were almost ready to enact their plans. He just hoped that Rhodey was in the area, because last time he ended up under the sun for hours until he was picked up, and he wasn’t going through that again if he could get away with it.

“Hey, Yinsen?” Tony paused a second, waiting for a sign he’d been heard, and he continued as the doctor lifted his head. “What're you planning to do, once we get outta here?”

“I told you,” he started, smiling wistfully, “I am going to see my family.”

He took in a breath. Here he goes. “I thought maybe- I was wondering-” Tony shook his head slightly. “I’m gonna shut down weapons manufactory when I get home. But I think I'm going to carry on with this,” he gestured wildly towards the chest and faceplate of the suit on the worktop, “And see if I do something other than blowing shit up. Try saving lives instead. So I was wondering if maybe… you'd like to come back with me? You know what's been going on around here better than anyone, maybe we could work on something to help.”

“Stark…”

“You don't- Don't decide anything right now, please. Just think about it. I know I'm probably the last person you’d want to hang around after all this, but I think we could change lives.”

Yinsen gave him a wistful smile, and Tony crossed his fingers.

“We should do it tomorrow.”

Yinsen turned his head, and looked at him questioningly.

“We’ll start the suit-up tonight. Escape in the morning.”
He ensured they were both caught under the cameras every so often, and made it look like he was constructing the Jericho whenever he was in their view, giving him and Yinsen enough time to at least start bolting the metal together. At the rate they were moving, they'd have another five or so minutes before someone started getting suspicious of them. Not ideal, but every second he got counted, at this point.

He couldn't help but watch the progress bar on the screen as it counted agonisingly slowly upwards. Paranoia, Tony guessed. Seventeen percent... nineteen... twenty... twenty-three...

“Старк, что вы делаете? Расскажи!”

No! They weren't supposed to be here so soon!

He thought for a second, then shouted, “Мы строим ваши ракеты. В чем дело?”

The man stayed silent for a moment, but he could hear someone else outside, then a shove on the door.

End Notes

I'm on Tumblr at @its-natatatalie, on Instagram at itsnatatatalie. Feel free to talk to me!

Comments and kudos and conversations are always appreciated.

Let me know what you think should happen in future chapters! I love to hear your opinions :)

Natalie xx

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!