Gravitational Well

by somethingclever

Summary

Arrogance ignored biology.

In stripping Bucky Barnes from the Asset’s shell, they also removed a few key components of control. Any anthropologist could tell you about Bonding. That it wasn’t just for Alphas and Omegas, that it wasn’t only bi-directional. Triads could- and did- form. A beta would match to an A/O pair and benefit from the Alpha’s protection and the Omega’s nurturing, and, in turn, provide protection during heats and ruts, and stability a bi-directional pair simply couldn’t imitate. After all, a Beta could be Alpha-mean or Omega-cunning at will. Then, of course, the Catholic Church made new rules and conquered the world, and popular culture did away with the triad in most of the Western World, but deep down...

Humans fit together.

Notes

Hi there! I'm posting this work with the permission of Sabrecmc, upon whose brilliant work this is based. This story will make sense if you haven't read Celestial Navigation, but it's best if you've read that story first, because A, it's brilliant, and B, the WORLD BUILDING. After
reading her story, I wondered how the Winter Soldier would fit in, what Project Insight would look like, and this is the result.

A quick note - this will not become a Barnes/Stark/Rogers fic.

Comments are love! Concrit is accepted at this time.

- Inspired by Celestial Navigation by sabrecmc
Chapter 1

Arrogance ignored biology.

In stripping Bucky Barnes from the Asset’s shell, they also removed a few key components of control. Any anthropologist could tell you about Bonding. That it wasn’t just for Alphas and Omegas, that it wasn’t only bi-directional. Triads could- and did- form. A beta would match to an A/O pair and benefit from the Alpha’s protection and the Omega’s nurturing, and, in turn, provide protection during heats and ruts, and stability a bi-directional pair simply couldn’t imitate. After all, a Beta could be Alpha-mean or Omega-cunning at will. Then, of course, the Catholic Church made new rules and conquered the world, and popular culture did away with the triad in most of the Western World, but deep down...

Humans fit together. They drew each other in.

And all that was left of Bucky Barnes was his Beta, rule-following nature.

And his handler was an Arrogant Fuck, Steve would later mutter.

*

The Asset was thawed, prepared and dressed, and given his handler. His handler looked him over, laughed sharply, and strapped a mask over his lower face. The mask would hinder speech, but not render it impossible. He hated it. “That’ll put a pin in Cap’s attitude, won’t it?” He asked, and the Asset had no answer. “It’s really him? Damn. Here, you. Read this.”

The asset absorbed the information made available via dossier. It’s hands did not shake. He did not question his handler, despite conflicting data (Steve is dead. He’s not coming for you, my dear Sergeant- no, no, no-) and he did not inform the handler of his malfunction (pain in chest, throat aching, eyes burning, a throb in temples and echo in his ears).

If asked, he would tell. (They would not ask it if it felt pain, it was a weapon, not a person.)

He was not asked, and the handler jeered at him as he continued to read.

The secondary target had Bonded. (Oh god Stevie I knew you would, a great Alpha like you, they’re all blind-) and the Target was his Omega.

Pretty, he thought, unbidden, and his mask hid the flush to his cheeks at the forbidden feelings rushing through him. That was the target? That doe-eyed little thing? The Omega belonging to the one who should not be alive, who he knew, he knew, he-

He closed the dossier and returned the information to his handler. He was curious about how this mission would go.

He was just one malfunction after another, this mission- but the chair was undesirable, he did not want-

The signal was given and he followed his handler’s orders.
The Target was wily, brave, and strong, but overwhelmed by force and threat to civilian populations.

The Asset was disgusted by the Handler’s show of force, shooting a young female Omega. The Asset did nothing, of course, simply held the Target back from moving to help, to shield the other Omega with his own body. He could do nothing. Hydra was all-powerful, and the Handler was Hydra.

He did not hurt the Target. The Handler did not notice his sub-par performance, how the Asset allowed the Target to strike it when it could have simply held his throat until he was still.

There were more efficient means of disarming him, and certainly easier and more effective restraints, but the Asset did not relish causing injury, and was a goddamn professional, are you watching this, you ignorant fuck of a handler? No class anymore - This is how you do not cause collateral dama-

The Handler yanked the Target away from the Asset by his hair, grinning in a way the Asset did not like. It called to mind early days, before he learned that Hydra always won. “Finally,” the Handler said, his tone that of a man about to eat after abstaining for a long while.

The Target was thrown on the floor, where he immediately wiggled from his back to his knees.

The Handler kicked the Omega in the belly, and the Asset flinched. One should never hit an Omega in the belly, one could damage- (the Asset knew it had done that, and worse, but not to this one,-) 

The Handler laughed, which showed that, despite the care the Asset had taken with him, he had sustained brain damage. The idea distressed him. His stomach turned, and the arm whirred in discomfort. “I shoulda known it would be you, Rumlow,” the Target spat, “Steve is gonna-“

**Steve. Steve. Steve.** The word, meaningless and klaxon-loud blared through his head, making his teeth ache in his jaw.

“He’s not gonna do anything but what we say,” The Handler sneered, “You know why? You’re smart, I hear. You know why. You tell me.”

“He’ll come anyway-“ the Handler slapped the Target.

That would bruise, high on his cheekbone. The Asset didn’t like it.

The Alpha grabbed the omega by the throat, lifting him off the ground and pulling him close to his face. He put his face against the Omega’s throat and groaned loudly with pleasure. “So sweet,” he said. The Asset could see the Omega’s eyes over the Handler’s shoulder.

Tony Stark was afraid.

That was wrong.

“We’ll let him know you’re alive, but we don’t want him thinking you’re too safe, you know? So, you know what we’re gonna do, right? You know. There’s no armor here, little man, no scraps, just you, me, and Strike Team Alpha. Bet my knot’ll shut up that smart mouth, break you in a little, Cap’s too soft by-“
The words made no sense to the Asset, strung together clattering like beads, but the Omega’s eyes were frightened as he spat in the Alpha’s face, and Rumlow moved to slap him again.

Had there been a change in atmospheric pressure? He felt vertigo, looking down at his Handler’s crushed skull. He was falling from a great height.

The Handler would punish it. The Handler would tell the Head to put him in the chair, make it clean, make the malfunctions (the omission, the flush ( pretty, goodforSteve, Steve, Steve, save him ) stop. First, the Handler would hit the button to turn off its arm. Then he would use the baton.

The Omega was staring at him, now. Steve’s Omega. “What-“

The Handler could not turn off its arm. The arm crushed his head. The Handler could not punish him, could not tell the Head to wipe-

It.

He. he did not want to be wiped.

The room erupted, and the Asset’s preservation of investment and Mission overwrote his crisis of existence.

No one could tell the Head. He could not be wiped.

He wanted to know more.
Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

The Asset makes his plans and priorities as he steps into a new role.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Without a Handler, the Asset needed to become command. Thankfully, the Asset had a great deal of solo experience (thanks to the… Russians? Yes, before Hydra, he’d been Russia’s Soldier, hadn’t it?) in extractions from adverse situations, and retrieval of key personnel.

First: acquire materiel. Easy enough, considering none of his former teammates had gotten more than a shot off. Also helpful, a nearby locker with medical equipment for anything less than a surgery. (It was not for first aid, he knew, but torture implements worked in the same way, and morphine was a powerful gift to give a subject, certain to disorient them-)

Second: secure key personnel. The Omega was clearly clever, and would eventually work himself out of his bonds. Undesirable at this time, and so he regretfully ensured the security of his hands via duct tape. “You bastard,” the Omega hissed, “What are you doing?” The Asset looked at his face, at the fear still there, and felt his stomach churn although he’d received no nutrients via digestion of late. The Asset was never told what his Handlers were doing. All actions were uncertain, and he hated it. The Omega shouldn’t suffer that uncertainty.

“I am securing you,” he replied, covering the Omega’s mouth with a piece of tape, as carefully as he could, “And Taking you to safety. I will not let harm come to you.”

Three: achieve desired distance from enemy forces, regroup, repeat steps one and two as needed.

He could not be followed. That meant he needed to remove the tracker installed in the weapon, which meant he needed to access the port in his forearm. Generally, this meant the chair, and high voltage current.

There were other ways to run a current, he thought, picking up the stun baton used to control him should his programming prove faulty, thumbed on the control. He jammed a belt between his teeth, set the baton into his armpit and thumbed it on.
“What are you- oh my god what- “ the Omega was more distressed than the situation warranted, given he was not the one currently being electrocuted.

Unpleasant, but effective. The panel opened, and he was able to scrape the tracking device free of the surrounding controls using a scalpel.

Excellent. Proceed. Disregard discomfort.

No further Hydra casualties were needed as he slipped himself and the Target out of the compound via personal transportation of the Handler. The car chirped when he hit the button on his keys. It amused the Asset that for all the difficulties he might have had, locating a vehicle hadn’t been one of them.

He’d been tempted to put the Omega in the trunk- surely that was safest- but when he’d laid him in it, he’d whimpered, and the Asset had understood he did not wish to be in such a tight space, helpless.

He didn’t like it either. “I will put you in the front seat,” he said as gently as he knew how, using a voice the Asset shuddered to feel in its throat, “And cover you with a blanket until it is safe. If you try to get attention, they will find us and kill you.” An eyebrow raise, and the Asset smiled with all its teeth. “No, not me. I can’t die.” He carefully put the Omega in the footwell of the passenger side, “Only people die.” That was regrettable, really. The Asset didn’t think he’d mind, being dead. You can’t hurt a dead person.

The omega closed his eyes, curling small beneath the blanket. The Asset kept his face out of cover- he could pull it up quickly enough, and he wanted to see, to ensure that his distress was not overwhelming.

That was important.

He pulled the car out of the parking garage and drove in such a fashion as to not attract attention. He’d put on gloves to hide his metal hand, and a long-sleeved personal garment of a now-deceased technician covered his arms. The color was pleasant, as was the pattern. Neither clothing choice would draw attention in his estimation.

He mentally made the- what was the word for not-distressed? Comfort?- of the key personnel a sub-
goal in mission objectives. That made his face stretch and his teeth show and-

He smiled.

It felt strange and he stopped soon, but it was a smile and he-

Needed to focus on the mission. Sub-goals could not be achieved without overall success. “Don’t be frightened,” he repeated, “I will keep you safe.”

Oddly enough, that didn’t seem to reassure or placate his captive. He had quite the glare.

Glaring, the Asset could tell him if it were inclined to speak, would get him nowhere.

They drove from urban to rural, and he considered his options. Likelihood this vehicle had a GPS function: moderately high. Change in vehicles necessary, as was purchasing supplies for an extended retreat. He glanced at the Omega, weighing his options. He was not trusted- there was no reason to. Therefore, he could not trust the Omega not to attempt something damned stupid and probably horribly brave, such as running screaming into traffic that he’d been kidnapped.

He pulled the car over in a parking area for a hiking trail, and rummaged through the medical kit. “I will sedate you,” he informed his captive, “And when you wake you will be in a different place. Do not be alarmed.” He received an eye roll for his courtesy, which he returned without thinking. He was so unappreciated. But, that was okay. So long as he kept the Omega safe and away from Hydra-there. He was asleep.

He chose an older-model SUV, and transferred his materiel and Omega from vehicle a to b, careful to ensure maximum security.

Then he drove into a small town, stopped at several small stores with nonfunctional security, made necessary (and some luxurious) purchases, and changed vehicles again.

He headed west, with an occasional diversionary foray south, he did one more vehicle exchange, and headed North.
The omega woke as the vehicle jolted down the driveway to their destination, the creek thankfully at low-rise and so only barely brushing the bottom of the doors of the lifted truck. He had taken the opportunity to remove the duct tape from his mouth, knowing it would hurt, no matter how gentle he was about it, even with the thick application of mineral oil he’d applied to help break the adhesion. “The hell-“ the omega croaked, his eyes slitting open against the dim light, “Steve, I- Aw shit it wasn’t a dream. Oh god, do murder-cabins come standard issue for you super-soldiers?”

Chapter End Notes

To everyone who has left feedback, thank you! I’m working full speed ahead on this story, and hope to complete it within the month. I believe it will be about five chapters long? I hope. Might be longer.

Please leave feedback, it feeds the bunnies that work the treadmills that bring you fic.
Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

Murder-cabins and punishment coffee!

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The cabin looked much the same as it had the last time he had been here - he’d been there in spring, year uncertain, perhaps the seventies? The Russians had sent him, that was certain. For one, he could remember it. That meant it was unlikely he’d undergone a wipe directly following the incident. He’d been alone, trusted to carry out his work without supervision, and he’d not disclosed the location in his report. It hadn’t been pertinent, and no one had asked, but he had… it was of interest.

When you have few secrets - even just secrets because nobody asked you to tell them and they’d stop hurting you - you remember them, even when there’s nothing else to recall. “You haven’t even been inside,” he said, “How can you tell I murdered someone here?”

“It was an educated guess, based on how many people I’ve seen you murder since I met you!” The Omega growled at him, and the Asset was pleased his defiance was intact. Less pleasing, the blow Rumlow had laid across his face had, indeed, bruised, and his cheekbone was likely cracked, based on the swelling around his eye.

Fair assessment. He nodded, and determined that no, there were no signs of habitation other than a bushy-tailed squirrel, and signs of recent deer activity. Animals were fine, it was people who concerned him. He left the Omega in the vehicle, and went to check the perimeter.

They key was where he’d found it the first time (and replaced it), under a brick beside the well-cover. He opened the door and went inside. Dust lay thick and undisturbed over every surface, cracks of light through the shuttered windows. It was small, two rooms on the ground floor, a closet, and the loft open above, accessible by a ladder which would not bear his weight.

It was dark, with the windows covered, but secure.

That was unhealthy, an Omega requires light to be well. He remembered that, dimly, an injunction from an older woman, delivered to-
And it was gone again in a swirl of dust motes, but the knowledge was not. There were canned goods on a shelf to his left. He took one down, peering at it. Use by April 7 1974. Pleasant, to have recalled something correctly. He went back outside, squinting at the brightness, the warmth as pleasant to his face as the memory was to his mind. He took the shutters down from each side. It wasn’t as if sight lines were available, anyways - had there been, he would never have had to find the key in the first place.

The area was secure, and he returned to the vehicle, sighing as he discovered the Omega had managed to lock the doors (use of chin likely), and was attempting to free his hands from the duct tape to... “Even if you could get this thing hotwired before I caught you,” he said, “You’re about out of gas.”

“Mother fucker,” the Omega yelped, hitting his head on the underside of the dash - a good place, provided excellent cover from view if one was not standing on the running board looking in - and he felt a flash of annoyance. He was not a mother-fucker, thank you, punk.

He unlocked the door, and eyed the Omega.

The Omega looked back at him, and he felt uncomfortably certain that the Omega was planning his dismemberment into his component parts. That was to be avoided. He could heal from it, yes, but he didn’t...

“So, are you gonna keep staring at me, or take me into the cabin and start telling me ghost stories?” the Omega tilted his head, smiling with all his teeth.

“I don’t know any,” The Asset replied, “But I am taking you into the cabin.”

“I can hardly wait.”

He carried the Omega across the yard and into the cabin, set him on a chair, and drew his boot knife. “I am going to cut you loose,” he said, “Please, don’t try to attack me.”

“I’m not stupid.”
That was debatable.

Once he was freed, the Omega leapt to his feet, brushing past the Asset to look around, pulling back the ancient curtains (the pattern of the cloth tickled at the back of his brain) and coughing as he inhaled the dust.

Oh no. He was the stupid one, he realized, as he swept the Omega up by the waist and dragged him outside, into open air, dropping him onto the back step and tipping his head forward between his knees, “Just breathe,” he said, his voice that odd sound he didn’t recognize, the vowels and consonants unlike the Assets clipped words, “Just breathe, okay, buddy? You’re okay. Breathe with me. In, out.” He held him upright gently, cradled against his body with one arm around his middle and the Weapon against his chest, splayed wide as if he could pull air into his lungs that way. “I’m so sorry, I didn’t mean- didn’t think-” did he have medicine for this? The pack was insufficient. The plan was insufficient.

He was so stupid.

“What are you doing?” The Omega shrieked, twisting away, “Let me- what the hell?”

“Are you all right? The dust-“

“You’re a terrible kidnapper, you know. All this concern!” He clicked his tongue, shaking his head, “I’m fine. Don’t worry.”

Yeah, not gonna happen, buddy, thought that strange voice.

His programming was a damned hot mess. He’d be useless after this, if Hydra ever even found it. Decommissioned, most likely, and the thought lodged itself in his mind, warm and comforting as a cup of a forbidden hot beverage.

No one could forbid it. His face stretched into a smile again. “I want coffee.”

*

Once he’d unloaded the truck, to a non-stop commentary from the Omega, he fetched some kindling and started the little stove in the cabin. He’d start with the bottled water before seeing how potable the well water was. He put the pot of water on the stove and added a good measure of ground coffee.
“Right, yeah, just dump it in- how’re we supposed to drink it?”

“It’ll settle to the bottom.”

“Ugh. You couldn’t have bought a French press?”

He didn’t know what that was, so he didn’t reply, just looked into his coffee and basked in the smell. When it was ready he poured a measure for the Omega first, then himself. The cup felt hot against the skin of his left hand, and he curled his fingers around it, pulling it close. The feel and smell meant comfort and safety, and he closed his eyes, chasing the feeling like a mark.

It was the only target that ever eluded him, and he took a sip.

It tasted like acid and punishment, like cold and misery and non-compliance. “Uh,” The Omega interrupted its downward spiral, “Okay, um, you don’t seem to drink it black. Maybe.”

Black? He looked at the dark beverage in his cup, “It smelled so good,” he said, feeling betrayed.

“It is,” the Omega smiled, “But, this is pretty strong… here, lemme just-“ he grabbed a can of the sweetened condensed milk.

He frowned, reaching out, “That’s for you.”

“What?” He tipped his head, eying the Asset with an unasked question in his eyes.

“For you. It’s sweet. And fatty. Omegas like those things.”

“How sweet and sexist of you,” he said drily, “Well, you’re gonna have some.”

He did not require sweet things. However, there was no reason to deny what the Omega wanted, so he took the cup back from him, looking at the pale brown drink. He should insist the target drink it.
He needed it. However- he took a sip.

It tasted like home- that was a word the Asset could not have, he was not- not a person, it didn’t have a home, or memories, or cups of coffee-

He needed the chair. It needed to forget this, forget the folder of photographs of someone who should be dead. The Asset could not have these things.

The Asset would be punished for weeping into a cup of coffee.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you all for reading! If you enjoyed it, please let me know! Comments and kudos are love. I'm guessing we are about halfway through the story - maybe a little less. I WILL finish it.
Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

Designations assigned may be changed. The Asset would like a new designation, although Murder-Bot would not be its first choice.

It's nice to be able to call Tony Tony, though. Much nicer than 'the Omega'.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The vehicle was unloaded and secured, the ladder removed from the loft area, and the Asset had regained control of his senses and was prepared to pretend that he had not lost emotional countenance and control over a cup of sweetened coffee.

An excellent plan, he felt. After all, the Omega required reassurance of his safety, and so he could not appear weak.

Scouting the cabin clean of dust took the majority of the afternoon. He sent the Omega into the sunlight- with or without asthma, long-still cabin air could not be healthy. “So take us to a motel,” The Omega said cheerfully, kicking his heels in the loft.

“You wouldn’t be able to enjoy the air quality long,” The Asset griped, “And then you’d be in a Hydra base for the rest of your life.”

“Okay, so murder cabin isn’t that bad,” he said.

“It isn’t.” See? He was beginning to learn! “You should really be outside.”

“Uh-huh. So, just curious- why did you save me? I mean, you’re the one who managed to take me down in the first place, which, okay, was pretty impressive. And you wouldn’t have been able to if I’d had the full armor on-”

That was a very uncomfortable question. It’s chest throbbed from the energy burst he’d taken. “I could have,” he said slowly, “But it would have taken longer. And I would likely have had to break your limbs irreparably.” Just the thought made him ill.

This Omega really needed the serum.

No. No, he didn’t. Nobody deserved that hell.

“How?” He didn’t seem concerned about the possibility of having become a quadruple amputee.
“The armor has weak points at the joints and neck,” he said.

“Weak points. They’re- the psi it would take to break-“ he turned to look up into the loft, and lifted his left hand, waggling the fingers at him. “Really? Wow. Huh. Well, next model will fix that. You can help me test it.”

...this Omega is an idiot, he thought, but warmth filled his chest at the thought, and he let himself imagine it, staying with the Omega, helping with creating a new armor, never killing anyone who didn’t try to hurt his Omega, and seeing Steve every day-

Where was that coming from? The rush of emotions he couldn’t categorize, overwhelming to the point of pain- he didn’t have words to express them, and so had to let it go, remind himself of the familiar, a Handler’s hand in his hair pulling him around to focus, reminding him of what he was, he wasn’t a person, he was a weapon. “I couldn’t,” he said and identified regret as the last emotion to flirt away. “Are you hungry?”

“Ugh, I guess. Do we have anything not canned?”

“This isn’t the Ritz, sweetheart.”

“Yeah, you’re getting one star on Yelp, let me tell you. Service is shitty, place is a rat trap, and no wi-fi.”

“Aww,” He grinned, “Tell it to the Chaplain.”

The omega blinked at him, and then pointed accusingly, “Robocop has a personality? Seriously?”

Robocop? That made no sense. It was a designation of some sort, so he shrugged it off and went to the kitchen to sift through the little fresh food he had purchased. “Do you want to do this?”

“Do you want me to burn the cabin down accidentally?”
“No.”

“Then keep me away from the stove.”

“Noted.”

“And there he is again,” The Omega said, climbing down from the loft (he resisted the urge to destroy the ladder to keep him from going back up into the loft, where he could fall and hurt himself), “Sybil, I really like the sassy one better.”

“I don’t understand.”

“Sybil? Famous split personality? You know you talk like two or three different people, right?”

“Is that abnormal?” Wonderful. They hadn’t even made a reasonable facsimile of a person.

“My god, how are you even- no. It isn’t normal. People are usually one person.”

Ah, there was the problem. Some new handlers made that mistake, too, and had to learn. “Omega,” he said, to get his attention and be respectful, “The Asset is not a person.”

“The hell you aren’t.” His face was growing dark, brows coming together, jaw tightening. He was embarrassed to have been fooled.

This was awkward to explain, bordering on painful. “No. It appears to be, but is not.”

The Omega took a deep breath, his hands clenching into fists, “Who the fuck ever told you that?”

...that information had never been useful before. “I don’t know.”

“So how do you know it?”
“I know it when I wake up, when they pull me out of the tube and give me a Target. It’s operational data,” he explained, “Just like firing a gun or using the arm.”

“The… tube. Right. Right, okay.” The Omega took a deep breath and let it out through his teeth. “That… damn. I’m sorry.”

“You didn’t know,” he replied, putting the potatoes in the pan and covering them with water, adding a bit of salt, following coding so old he couldn’t recall its origin, “Don’t worry.”

“Oh, worried isn’t the right word,” he snarled.

What was he so angry about? “It’s a common error- not worth being angry over.”

“You think I’m angry because- y’know what? No. Stockholm’s can’t settle in this damn fast. Not my problem!” He stabbed a finger at the Asset, “Got that?”

“Oh, worried isn’t the right word,” he snarled.

What was he so angry about? “It’s a common error- not worth being angry over.”

“You think I’m angry because- y’know what? No. Stockholm’s can’t settle in this damn fast. Not my problem!” He stabbed a finger at the Asset, “Got that?”

“Of course,” he agreed, slicing the hot dogs and setting them aside. Onion, he decided, and set to chopping it with a kitchen knife- after the Omega handed it to him with a muttered curse about prions from contaminated cutlery. As if the Asset didn’t thoroughly clean his gear- but whatever made the Omega happy.

Even if he wasn’t his mate, he’d like life to be first-rate. Might make for a nice change.

The Omega was quiet as the Asset finished dinner and served it into two bowls. He seemed preoccupied, which wasn’t a bad thing. His chatter made the Asset’s head ache. He wasn’t used to people talking to him. It was uncomfortable.

He had to contribute, consider information outside his usual scope, risk- not that there was anyone who could punish him- punishment. He found it difficult and his tongue unwieldy and slow.

But he was quiet, and it was restful.
“What is this?” The Omega asked suddenly, and the Asset blinked, recalled to the present, away from his considerations of how best to fortify the cabin.

“Dinner.”

“Thanks, Mom,” he rolled his eyes, “What is it called?”

“It has potatoes—“

“Never mind,” The Omega huffed, “That wasn’t what I meant. I mean, did this come from the ‘everything boiled and salt is a spice’ cookbook? Jeez. I haven’t had a meal like this since Steve…” he frowned at his bowl, “Since Steve started cooking for me.”

“I’m sorry, Omega,” he said as gently as he could, “You must miss him.”

“Who, Steve? Pfft. He’ll come for me.”

Unlikely he would be able to, with Hydra pulling his strings. The Head commanded Captain Rogers through Fury, his secondary Target.

Who, he was satisfied to recall, was now someone else’s problem.

“Why do you call me Omega?”

He glanced up again at the Omega, frowning, “What else would I call you?”

“My name is Tony,” he said, “You know that, right?”

He had read the dossier, yes. “The target, Anthony Stark, yes.”

He rolled his eyes. “Jeez, you’re a killjoy. Call me Tony, Murderbot.”
“Murder- That is not my designation.” Little punk.

“Oh, you have a designation,” The Om- Tony (god a relief to have a name, a person, he’s a person, he’s so real, just like-) tilted his head and smirked.

“Yes. I am the Asset. Code name, Winter Soldier.”

Tony’s eyes widened, “Are you shitting me? What’s your name?”

“Asset. Winter Soldier.” Perhaps he was becoming hard of hearing? Or the Handler had dealt him a blow the Asset had not seen, “Are you all right?”

“Me? All right? You want to know if I’m all right? I’m in a murder-cabin, after having been kidnapped, threatened with gang rape, saw all my would-be rapists torn to shreds like tissue paper by my kidnapper who, oh, by the way, shouldn’t exist since the serum doesn’t work on anybody who isn’t my Alpha, and my alpha is in danger, and I can’t even get a name out of my kidnapper-cum-rescuer! Yeah, I’m fuckin’ peachy, pal.”

Ah. Emotional distress. A common ailment for Omegas, if he recalled correctly.

That had to be unpleasant to experience. How best to rebalance him? He had no recollection…

Now he was experiencing emotional distress. Wonderful. “What a fuckin’ pair,” he grumbled, putting more food in Tony’s bowl.

“Yeah?”

“Call me whatever you want,” he said, “Murder-bot is fine. The Russians made me and called me Winter Soldier, and Hydra calls me the Asset, and since they don’t own me anymore, well, I guess I’ll get another designation.”

“...own…” Tony said faintly, looking at him, and then the food again, rubbing a hand against the
edge of the arc reactor, “How come I get to name you?”

“You’re the one who is upset,” The Asset said cautiously, “My designation-”

“Your name!”

“Name,” he repeated obediently, willing enough to yield on such minor issues, “Is not something that is necessary to functioning.”

“Can you even hear yourself? Do you even understand- never mind. Never mind. I can’t. Okay? I can’t.”

“Okay,” he said as gently as he could, because somehow, the situation was escalating, and Tony was standing now, his hands clutching the edge of the table as he leaned towards him, his voice raised and pitched to a near-scream, “It’s okay, Tony.”

“This is not okay. You - what you’re doing, you, and your arm, and all those SHIELD agents-”

“Hydra.”

“Hydra should be dead .”

“Cut off one head-”

“They’ll put a really advanced prosthesis in its place?” Tony sneered, “I’m going up to the loft.”

“Your meal-”

“Not hungry.” Tony pushed away from the table and retreated into the loft, out of his view. Dammit.

At least there wasn’t much he could get into up there.
Comments are life! Please consider leaving kudos or a comment, I treasure them all.
Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

He shouldn't have thought that Tony couldn't get into trouble. Really, he should make note that Tony IS trouble, full stop.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

He should have known better than to even think there wasn’t much Tony could get into. He also should have considered that Tony was something of an escape artist, and very, very smart.

He was also very very stupid, but luckily for him, The Asset (he wanted a new designation, but Tony hadn’t given him one yet. He hadn’t even joked about it since The Asset had requested it. It was a source of unexpected disappointment) was on his side. And currently tracking him down, because goddamn it you idiot there are predators out here, Tony. And it gets cold at night. What’re you going to do if you fall in the creek and get wet, catch pneumonia?

Well that was a hell of a thought, and made his guts clench and cramp.

He was clever though. So clever.

Tony had slipped out when he was doing an evening perimeter check, and said perimeter check had, when he was at the farthest point from the house, included a small explosion by the cabin, which brought him racing back, cleaning up the fire, and searching the near-area for Tony.

He hadn’t considered that Tony had blown up the outhouse, not some shitty incompetent Hydra personnel. It took almost a half-hour after he’d put the flames out and desperately torn the building apart with the weapon- he hadn’t smelled burning flesh but- but.

Well. He was perhaps irrational in his fear for his Omega.

So here he was, at least an hour behind, trailing Tony through the woods at the darkest point of night. He was so angry he could just spank that idiot, how could he be so stupid, why was he so resistant to-

Even his vision missed the tripwire perfectly placed across the path. He fell hard, and failed to dodge
the counter-weighted log that swung down and clocked him in the temple as he scrambled up.

His head rang and vision briefly whitened.

*If I am captured I will continue to resist by all means available. I will make every effort to escape and aid others. I will never surrender of my own free will.*

“I didn’t— I resisted,” he said to the night air, his breath puffing white in the air, blinking the lights out of his eyes and sniffing back blood from where he’d hit his face, “Steve, I didn’t want it.” But he was missing something, missing, what was he missing—

Didn’t matter. He had to get to Tony before he progressed in his stupidity to entirely new levels. He got up, and kept going.

It was all he could do.

A code reeled through his head like a movie tape, parts of it worn through and just beyond his grasp, but parts—

*I am an American—*

*I will continue to resist by all means available—*

*I will never forget that I am an American, fighting for—*

He had to stop and scrub the blurring from his vision.

He caught up with Tony five traps (two successful) and nearly four hours later. “At least you wore a coat,” he grumbled, stepping into the Omega’s path. He didn’t want to tackle him, after all, and hurt him, so best to circle in front.

“Dammit, it’s the fuzz,” Tony groaned, bending double and panting. “Here to take me back to my cell, warden?”

“Yes.” There were worse things than cells. Being out of a cell, for example.
“Gonna pull a Misery on me? Break my ankles?” He sat down on the forest floor, “I’m not walking,” he informed the Asset, “You can just drag me.”

He’d had his feet crushed once. He remembered that agony viscerally. “No,” he said tersely, picking him up and swinging him over his shoulder, “I understand that you… feel an obligation to escape. I did the same in your place, I think. I tried. I don’t think I-” he closed his mouth and set off for the cabin again.

Tony smacked his ass, (he deserved to have it in his face, with how annoying he was!), “When have you ever been put in a murder cabin against your will, huh?”

“It was-“ he frowned, “A base. Not a cabin. I like the cabin. And I-“ he shook his head, “It can’t be right. It must be faulty, I cannot have-“

“Dude,” Tony’s strident voice became softer, “Let me up. Okay? My obligation is fulfilled for today, but you don’t sound so good.”

“There is a- a record?” he said helplessly, “Playing words in a voice I can make, and he’s saying, I don’t understand-“

“Play it for me. Maybe I know it.” Tony levered himself up to look down at him, which made his neck hurt, so he set him down. It wasn’t as if there was a rush to return to the cabin, after all. They had no appointments.

The idea had merit. “I am,” he cleared his throat, shook his head. It was hard. “I am an American soldier,” he said, and Tony sat down on the ground, hands clenched on his knees, staring up at him as he played the faulty record fully, let the words spill out, and memories flickered of being bound to a table and not knowing what that meant yet, only that he must say-

“Barnes, James Buchanan, Sergeant, 32557038,” he finished.

Tony blinked up at him, and then stood up slowly, dusting himself off, his eyes fixed on the Asset’s face. He reached up- the Asset yanked his head back, and Tony made a soft sound of reassurance and comfort, and the Asset allowed him to touch.

To be touched by a gentle hand was foreign, and something he wished to experience more of.
Tony’s fingers were light as they brushed his hair out of his face. He was shaking.

“Oh my god, Bucky?” He whispered.

“Who the hell is Bucky?”

Chapter End Notes

Thank you all for the kudos and comments! I hope you're continuing to enjoy this! I'm probably going to stick to the Thursdays update, as they’re my 'night off' from parenting. Comments keep me going, and make my day.
Chapter 6

Chapter Summary

Learning to be Bucky.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Really, he should have just kept the Asset designation. Every time Tony called him Bucky it made his head ache and his teeth grind. He wished he had his mouth guard, but he hadn’t thought he’d need it without the chair. However, he was learning that he could suffer without the chair almost as easily as with it.

Although Tony never laughed at him, and would often touch him in gentle, non-painful ways, bolstering him physically in a way that comforted him mentally. It had never- He had never really considered the ties between the body and mind, really, he’d never needed to, but it was there. Images would come to mind, and make the body ill. Tony said those were ‘flashbacks’, and he found the word similarity to ‘flashbang’ darkly humorous, as the feeling of too-much, too-bright-too-loud mirrored itself in his head.

“You should take me to Steve,” Tony said as he - Bucky - made pancakes for breakfast, “He’d be able to keep us safe.”

“That flag-wearing moron?” poured out of his mouth, “He’s more likely to-” god, his head, but there it was, an image fully-formed, “Even before he got zapped, he’d-”

Tony beamed at him, like he did every time his programming fucked him over and that voice came out of his mouth. “Yeah, what would he do?”


“Then maybe,” Tony said, toying with the fork, peering at him from under his lashes (don’t try that on me, doll, I’m not-) “Maybe we should go to Steve to keep him safe. No telling how stupid he’d be without one of us there to stop him.”
He scowled at the pan handle his hand had just personalized to his grip. That moron, that punk -

“It’s not-” he took a deep breath, “I can’t risk it,” he said, “He’ll have to save himself.”

“Oh, sure,” Tony nodded, “Steve’s great at that. Did I tell you about the plane? In the ice?”

Goddamn it, that was their last fucking pan.

“Yeah,” Tony continued on, happy as a dame in her new Easter dress, “Steve handles being alone so well. Do you think he thinks I’m dead? Wonder what he’ll do… oh well, you’re right, Bucky, it is so much better to just sit up here in our murder-cabin, all safe and cozy . Do you want me to make you more coffee?”

He did not want more fucking coffee. “Eat your pancakes,” he said, “I’m going to go check the perimeter.”

“Didn’t you do that, like, half an hour ago?”

“Perimeters need constant vigilance to be effective.”

“Mmhmm,” Tony nodded, wide-eyed and so innocent that he wanted to shake him. He knew he was causing emotional upheaval! He was doing it on purpose!

It was hideously effective, and the Asset did not like him currently.

He paused, tilting his head. Since when did it matter if he liked or disliked a Handler?

Tony wasn’t his handler, case in point, if he was his handler, the Asset would have already taken him to Rogers. However, he was the closest thing he had to a handler currently, and -
Other than Tony’s badgering him to take him home to Steve (not safe, not safe, not safe, no one is safe) he did like him. He made him smile and sometimes the ache in his chest would ease up when Tony talked. Only when Tony talked about his robots and garage and Steve, though.

Anytime Tony talked about the creation of the Asset, the ache would come back and turn itself inside out, make his lungs process inefficiently and his internal organs prepare for cryofreeze by emptying any foodstuff within him.

He’d hoped, somehow, that it would be disgusting enough that Tony would stop asking. After all, he didn’t seem to like watching the Asset puke his guts out (he always watched, and sometimes held his hair back with gentle hands). In fact, half the time, he cried as it happened. He’d say things like I’m so sorry, Bucky, or It’s okay, you didn’t have a choice, or, Asset’s favorite, I’m here, okay? I’m here, I’m not going anywhere.

Sometimes the questions drove him out of his head, made him wild like he’d been when the Asset was born, before he could be handled, and he’d say things that made no sense, his mouth utterly divorced from himself as he asked if Steve would forgive him, for his mother (the Asset had no mother), and to go home. Tony took his hands and held him as if he were stronger than the Asset, fearless as he looked into his face and spoke softly to him.

There had to be a way to stabilize himself. This flashing - this in and out and emotional upheaval - had to stop, or he would risk the safety of the Target. Of Tony.

The perimeter was, as always, secure. He turned back towards the cabin, turning over the question of stability and safety for Tony in his mind. If only those assholes hadn’t turned his brain into holey cheese, he would be better at this.

He kicked the dirt off his shoes at the door irritably. “Goddamn Hydra,” he muttered, rebellion burning hot and bright and clearing his thoughts but tightening his throat, “I wasn’t always stupid,” he told Tony, who looked at him with wide eyes.

Already fucking it up. Go ‘Bucky’, he sneered.

“Oh, okay? So, nobody thinks you’re stupid now,” Tony said, “I mean, even Hydra probably doesn’t although that’s not a ringing endorsement given the source- but maybe, just mayyyyybe, you should try, you know- sleeping. It helps.”
“There’s no tube,” The Asset informed him, the exhaustion returning and blanketing his rage, “I can’t sleep without it.”

“That’s probably not true,” Tony said, “I mean, you seem to be running out of stimulant, which, since it’s been like, a week, and I haven’t seen you shoot up, is pretty terrifying. Is there something in your arm, maybe?”

...stimulants?

“You didn’t know?” Tony asked, “It’s why you’re so sick, Bucky. You’re coming off of some pretty strong drugs. I’m no expert- yet- but I will bet half of my company that you’ve been kept pumped full of a lot of shit, to make you obedient and stuff- and if I were them, well, I’d put it there. I mean, it’s another means of control.”

The arm had so much to answer for. He looked at it balefully, and only the need to keep his best weapon at hand (ha, good one) kept him from tearing it off his body. He didn’t want it, couldn’t bear it, and his breath caught in his throat again, his eyes shutting tight so he didn’t have to see.


“Yes,” The Asset was aware that waking screaming was not optimal rest.

“Maybe if you’d lie down with me, I’d sleep better? Contact is proven to relax Omegas, did you know that?” He’d been neglecting him. Dammit. “Yeah, okay, I maybe don’t need this much contact. You can put me down.”

“No,” he growled, because it felt nice, and it was good for Tony.

“Yeah, didn’t think that one through…” Tony sounded amused and rested his chin on his flesh shoulder, sighing a little. “Let me sleep, cuddle-bot.”

This designation made everything in him ache, and he pulled his Omega closer, lying down on the mattress and curling himself between Tony and the door, making a safe space with his body. He could understand how this would provide comfort.
Warmth, too.

And safety.

Tony smiled at him, and he nodded. “Go to sleep.”

“Mmhmm.”

The last thing the Asset remembered was thinking that yes, he was a cuddle-bot.

The best damn cuddle-bot to ever have that designation.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks to all who have left comments and kudos! I am continuing apace in this story, and hope to have it finished in the next few weeks. Comments are love, and help me feel loved.
Chapter 7

Chapter Summary

Bucky and Tony talk.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

A week dragged into two, and then he lost some track of time as his system finally collapsed under detoxing. Tony held him, comforted him, and (humiliatingly) kept him clean during the three (Tony said) days he was raving.

He woke up on that fourth morning, aching and raw, as if the skin of his brain and teeth and body was all new, all untouched. Tony was curled beside him, asleep.

So trusting. He shouldn’t be trusting Barnes after all he’d done, after all he’d seen and-

With the drugs burnt out of him he could remember. He remembered all of it, and wished he didn’t.

And he could think more clearly than he had since, well-

God, since Azzano, probably.

How fuckin’ lucky was he, huh? Fucked up six ways to Sunday, lived ninety years as a Goddamn mindless slave, and somehow his poor animal brain woke up to protect his best buddy’s mate.

It was like a pulp fiction. He’d have loved to read it. Living it, though, that was a hardship he wished he hadn’t had.

What wouldn’t he give to be dead right now?

Tony rolled over in his sleep, and Bucky covered his face with his flesh hand (he couldn’t touch
himself with the metal, feel that coldness against his skin, the hum of electricity through it turning his stomach). Yeah, okay, he wouldn’t have given Tony to be dead. Or Steve.

Damned little punk.

How was he supposed to get him out of this one? Dammit.

He got up and went to make coffee, and fry some potatoes to go with the powdered scrambled eggs. Tony woke up when he smelled the coffee, looking as grouchy as an alleycat in the rain. Bucky gave him his food and mug to forestall any shitfits, and cleared his throat.

“Tell me about Steve?”

Tony lit up like the Rockefeller tree at Christmas, and Bucky held his coffee between his palms and pretended he could feel the heat on both sides as he listened-

And listened-

And slowly got more and more pissed off.

“You’re tellin’ me, he wakes up, in the future, after trying to kill himself, and the solution is to give him an Omega?” He took a deep breath, “No offense.”

“Some taken,” Tony said, looking wounded and amused.

“They gave him a person. Like, like you were a dog. He musta been- Steve’s a romantic, that-” Bucky said, heartbroken for his best friend, and unable to say it right, to explain to his damned mate, “That musta half-killed him, to not get to- to, I dunno, he was always on about how to treat an O properly. I stopped listening when we were ten. How did he not know they were Hydra?”

Tony’s grin was huge, sharp, and he laughed, “I like you, Barnes. And I didn’t know, either. I don’t think all of them are. Not really.”
So naive.

“And yeah, Steve just kinda flipped it around. We bonded first, then he courted me for forever, then we consummated.”

Good. Good.

...damn them, anyhow, putting so much on Steve.

Time someone other than Tony picked up some weight.

“Okay,” he let out his lungful of air, “I don’t think ya going back is a good idea. It isn’t safe for you. But they’ll be expecting me.”

“Bucky. Bucky, no, you can’t go back alone.”

“I don’t want to,” he admitted, “But we can’t leave Steve with them. With me in the wind, they’re gonna start eying him to take my place.” Tony went milk-pale, and Bucky gave him a bitter little smile, “But if they get you, sweetheart, they’ll have the whole damn world. If they get me back, all they get is a mostly-broken tool they’ve had for the last twenty-some years. You know I’m right. You’re a genius.”

Tony gave him a dirty look, “Don’t think I didn’t notice the way you talk about yourself. I’m just electing not to fight that with you right now. You really think they’ll... to Steve... like you?”

“No,” Bucky said, “The Steve I knew wouldn’t’a broken like me. It just- it wouldn’t work. They’d have killed him. But the Steve you’ve talked about, all they gotta do is tell him often enough it’s the right thing, and keep him away from the truth, and they’ll have him.”

Tony bit his lip, “Okay, I- what did they even want from me? I won’t make weapons, I won’t.”

“They wanted you to fix the engines, and some coding problems with Insight.” Something that would make him obsolete. He’d perked right up, hearing that, in the time he’d been thawed.
“Explain Insight- and how do you know so much?” Tony curled onto the armchair, heedless of the dustiness of the cushions, even with the best beating Bucky could manage to give them.

“Really good memory for mission intel,” Bucky said bitterly, shrugging his metal shoulder, “And you aren’t careful about what you talk about in front of the furniture, are you?”

“Well, my furniture has delicate sensibilities. But I take your point. Now, tell me about Insight, and let’s figure out a way to keep you out of the toolshed.”

Funny. He took a deep breath, and explained what he’d seen in the dossiers, what he’d heard Handlers talk about, what the Head had told him.

He tried not to think about how eager he’d been for it to be the last time he was the Fist.

Chapter End Notes

I hope you're still enjoying this! I'm sorry for the short chapter, but life's running faster than usual. I believe I have two more chapters and an epilogue to finish this story out.

Please, do leave me a comment below. At the risk of sounding shameless, they keep me going!
Chapter 8

Chapter Summary

Things don't go according to plan, but the fantasy of it all was nice.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

He left Tony with strict instructions, and Tony let him go with some invectives and also instructions.

Neither really thought the other would follow the plan, but it was the thought that counted, and the head start Bucky got by tying Tony up was also pretty good, and better still, putting his shoes up a tree.

He’d get to Steve, grab him, and make a run for safety, intercept a no-doubt pissy Omega, let Steve make out with him to calm him down, while Bucky drove the getaway limo with the privacy screen up and some nice music playing while he ate something crunchy and cheesy.

It was a nice fantasy.

He put the Soldier back on, except for the mask, tied his hair back, and got ready to make some poor life choices, going after Steve.

It felt pretty damn familiar.

First goal: find Steve.

Growing up, finding Steve was never an issue. Follow the yelling or coughing, or look for a nice city view, and there he’d be, the crankiest little Alpha. When he got big, of course, you just had to look for where there were the most Nazis or Hydra troops, and there he’d be, all big, patriotic, and stupid.

Thankfully, Tony had a more effective method of finding Steve. All Bucky had to do was go to his house, and ask Jarvis. Which was a computer program.
There was no way this could go terribly wrong, right? Talk to a Jarvis, give him the code Tony gave him, have Jarvis call Steve for some bullshit reason, talk to Steve, go on with plan.

For example, Steve wouldn’t be home in the middle of the Goddamn day.

And he wouldn’t have hit the alarms before Bucky could say more than “Jarvis?”

And he also definitely wouldn’t want to murder his old buddy who stole his Omega. Definitely not.

Except Bucky was a fucking unlucky bastard, and all of those things happened, and so here he was, trying to fight off an enraged, grieving Steve Rogers (he’d be better off fighting Captain America) and trying to get through to him that no, really- Tony is fine!!!

Except whenever he tried to say ‘Tony’, Steve just got madder. Damn, good thing your heart got fixed, Rogers, or you’d’ve had an apoplexy by now-

“You have the nerve to come here? ” Steve bellowed, “After what you did? They made you look like him, pal, but my Bucky woulda never-“

Oh.

Oh.

They told him half-truths and believable lies, and Bucky played right into their fucking hands, and what could he even say? Nobody - not even Steve - would believe him.

Hell, he didn’t believe himself. But, he had to try. He had to, for Tony’s sake, for Steve’s. “Stop. Please, Steve, you gotta listen!”
“Where is Tony?”

“He’s safe, I swear, I swear on my ma’s grave, Steve, I didn’t hurt him—” much, and that guilt showed in his face, because the Alpha bellowed, twisting out of the hold Bucky had managed to scrabble together, and all but wrenching the weapon from his body.

“You killed the entire team sent to protect him, you think I believe you didn’t hurt him?” Steve’s boot caught him in the belly and he let the force move him out of range, scrambling up to his feet.

He had one shot.

He took it. He dropped his hands, sucking in a rattling, rasping breath, “Who would he be safer with, me, or fuckin’ Brock Rumlow?”

Steve stopped, his face going milk-pale. “What d’you think a guy like Rumlow wants to do with an Omega like Tony, huh? ‘Specially if he’s got orders to bring him down, make him compliant, get him to work on Project Insight—“

“Fury said they tabled that—“

“Fury doesn’t know whose hand is up his ass,” Bucky snapped, “Steve, they have Hydra weapons. You saw ‘em. They were gonna nuke Manhattan. Tony stopped ‘em. Walks like a Hydra, quacks like a Hydra—“

“Well, what about you, huh? They told me you’re a clone Hydra made, that they, they found his body and—“

“The Russians found his body,” The Asset said coolly, “He was alive, Zola’s serum succeeded. And they—” what had Tony said they did? How had he made it sound like he could still be a person, “Tony says to tell you the short story they broke my brain and wanted to make me a robot, but I… wouldn’t dance. So they burned me?”

The shield dropped.
Steve fell to his knees after it, covering his face as he sobbed out, “Tony, Bucky, where’s Tony?”

“He’s okay, he’s safe, I left him at a safe house I never told anybody about,” Bucky said, “I came because I remembered how stupid you get. And Tony never forgot, and he’s–”

He’d been so wrapped up in Steve that he hadn’t heard the team coming.

“Ah, Soldier,” a known voice greeted smoothly, and ice crystals burned his lungs and closed his throat. “It’s so good to see you.” The agents moved to cover him, to cover Steve, and Bucky didn’t have much time left to be a person. “Welcome home.” The voice wasn’t from a person, it was from - oh, dammit, it was from all the speakers, from their walkie-talkies, the goddamn walls -

“Steve, they’re all Hydra,” and just saying that, seeing how his words cut Steve to his good, goddamn kind core, it hurt, but it had to be done, “SHIELD is Hydra.”

The agents closed in, and the voice smiled as it said, “Longing.” The voice wasn’t from a person, it was from - oh, dammit, it was from all the speakers, from their walkie-talkies, the goddamn walls -

No.

No, no.

How had they - Karpov had the book, not Pierce, not the Head--

“Please,” he gasped, even as he broke an agent like a frozen lock, “Please, I’m a person.”

“Rusted.”

“Please.”

They’d sent almost enough to take both of them down, even as he and Steve moved in concert, the shield flying between them like a bloody-edged frisbee. For every person mowed down, another came through, although the house seemed to be fighting them, lights flashing and if Bucky wasn’t
mistaken, the workroom Tony had talked about had just closed itself down and set itself on fire, which was honestly neat and he woulda loved it if it wasn’t his last minutes as a goddamn -

“Steve,” he tore through a riot shield, spun it, used it to biset the man who’d held it, “Steve, you gotta kill me.”

He would do it himself but something in him - something so stupid and young and naive - didn’t want to. Didn’t want to die.

“Furnace.”

“Fuck you!” Steve screeched at him, and Bucky snarled it back as he used a couple of bodies as stepping stools to get back to Steve. He’d like to die close.

“Your Omega’s perfect,” Bucky told him, got the sharp smile he’d never seen enough of after Sarah passed, “And you’n he are - god, I wish I could see it.” the words hit like bullets, daybreak, seventeen, benign .

Bucky was falling, going down under the weight of the sheer number of agents that swarmed like hornets, taking away the sight of Steve, his buddy fighting like hell and damnation - “Go! Get out, get Tony -”

“Not without you!”

There was a sound of explosion and the smell of ozone, and he’d know the feel of those repulsors anywhere- Tony landed astride, and fucking hell , he was shit at orders-

“This wasn’t the plan-”

“This was always the plan,” Tony said, and his gauntlets covered Bucky’s ears, “Trust me, okay, Cuddle-bot?”

"Yes, Tony," he replied, closing his eyes. So, he'd be decommissioned after all.
The repulsors fired, and Bucky…

Bucky opened his eyes, looking into the blue-light eyes. The world was silent, no more words, no Steve bellowing, no Tony’s music blasting, no-

No words.

This was the silence of cryo without the cold. He was still himself, the countdown clock stuck at five, and there was time to get the bomb away from the timer, so to speak.

Time to thank Tony later.

First - oh, first, the lock was broken, the wolf let loose. He had no interest in revenge, only in protecting his Omega and Alpha, in ensuring their safety. This battle wasn’t over, not by a long shot! He would tear these men to pieces, for daring try to harm his family!

Chapter End Notes

One more chapter and an epilogue! Thanks, guys, for being with me so far! If you're enjoying it, please leave me a comment - you really don't know how much I love them!
Chapter 9

Chapter Summary

Sometimes coming home is going to a seedy little motel.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Interestingly enough, neither the remnants of SHIELD nor Hydra much wanted to fight Captain America, Iron Man, and the Winter Soldier.

Funny thing about bullies, really, Bucky thought. They’d fought their way free, Tony above and Steve and Bucky back-to-back, because Bucky couldn’t hear anybody on his six so he’d gotten a little stabbed, and figured they’d have to take on the Triskelion and the Helicarriers-

But Tony was a genius. No wonder they’d needed him out of the way or under their thumbs (and how that must have chapped some Alpha asses) - Bucky couldn’t help laughing as he thought about SHIELD and Hydra agents fighting, and Hydra thinking they’d ever get those carriers off the ground with Jarvis in their systems.

Tony smiled at him over Steve’s shoulder before burrowing back into the Alpha’s neck. Steve held onto him like he’d never put him down again. He’d carried him out of the ruins of the house, and Bucky’d trailed behind, grabbing car keys and following the direction of Steve’s chin to a car, a cherry-red somethin’-fancy-he’d-never-seen. He drove.

Steve held Tony.

The car blinkers turned themselves on and off to tell him where to go, and Bucky let himself relax into the silence. Steve’s mouth was moving - he caught a glimpse and watched the words form and fall, soft and sweet, and Tony was shaking, now. Steve’s mouth said, ‘here now, you’re safe, you’re safe, darling’- and Bucky resolutely looked away. That wasn’t for him, the comfort mates offered, the safety and surety of a bond.

He didn’t even deserve to see Steve putting Tony at his ease. That he needed it at all, was - at least partially - was on him. Tony’d been scared more than he should have been, but-
He pulled into a lot at the direction of the car, and turned off the engine, staring straight ahead.

Tony’s fingers snapped in front of his face, and he frowned, looking over at them. We’ll regroup, Tony said, You need to rest.

Oh, the hell he did! “You and Steve should go on,” he said, “I can throw them off the trail from here. Take him up to the cabin?”

No, Steve shook his head, and his lips formed a word Bucky didn’t know, and Sam have it handled. It’s safe, everyone knows-

“Knows what?”

Everything, Tony smiled at him, coy and sharp, We burned it all down.

Everything?

Steve held out a phone to him, and Bucky took it, frowning at the webpage, at the headlines as he scrolled down. Hydra unmasked, it read, Avengers joined together to fish the tentacled-

“This passes for writing, these days?” he muttered, but apparently not quietly enough, because Steve laughed at him, shrugging the shoulder Tony wasn’t snuggling his head onto. He scrolled down again, and froze.

The next news story had a picture no bigger than his pinky nail on the phone screen.

That was Bucky. Bucky the boy, the child who went to war, that was his picture. “Viewer Discretion Required,” the headline said, “War Hero resurrects to save the world.”

...Okay, so, Father McKeown would take some strong offense to the liberties that reporter was taking with the story, and-

He didn’t let the videos load, skimming through the contents of the article. The first third talked
about how they’d tortured him, about the leaked files, about how he was made into an Asset for the USSR, and then Hydra used U.S. taxpayer dollars to purchase him and other things from the collapsing dictatorship, assassinations continued apace but with new hands pointing him, he was frozen and tortured some more, and now he’d broken free to warn his old best friend Captain America about the Squid-shaped menace under everyone’s beds, Cap turned on the lights, so on, so forth, presidential pardon issued.

What.

He frowned, looked at Tony, because Steve was stupid, and stubborn, and never would listen. “I killed people. I almost killed you.” Tony’s eyeroll told him that he was also being stupid. “If I’m a person now,” he said, “I was then, too, and people don’t- it’s not okay. I saved people this time because I wanted to save you and Steve, and they can’t just-” he shook his head again, “I can’t be pardoned for what I did. There’s no-”

Steve’s face got that stupid, goddamn stubborn look, and Bucky closed his eyes so he couldn’t see what he was saying, couldn’t fill his mouth with his voice in his head. His ears had started ringing already, a sure sign of healing eardrums. It was only a matter of time before it was as if none of it had happened, his body erasing everything that had happened, like they were trying to erase his crimes.

“Put me back in,” he begged, “Back in cryo, where I can’t hurt nobody, nobody’ll be able to find the words and I can-” rest. Finally rest, and be done.

Tony’s hand - he smelled like oil and ozone - touched his face, and when he didn’t open his eyes, the little jerk pinched his ear. He looked at him, hoping against hope Tony would understand, would tell him it was okay to go to sleep. I can fix you, it’s sort of what I do, you know, the impossible, Tony told him, We can get the words out of your head, and you’ll be safe. Please stay. Please let me.

Bucky swallowed hard, and looked at Steve. End of the line, pal, Steve told him, and smiled shakily, Don’t jump off too early.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for coming along for the ride! I’ve posted the epilogue as well - I hope you’ve enjoyed reading this as much as I’ve enjoyed writing it. Please consider leaving me a comment or kudos!
Epilogue

Chapter Summary

Epilogue

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Never let it be said that the reporters interviewing the Avengers kept their priorities straight. The co-leaders- Tony and Steve- got asked dumbass questions about their Bond nearly every time the press was allowed to interview the panel.

They were gracious about it, usually, Tony smiling through his teeth and answering questions about being an O on a team of A’s.

Bucky occasionally wanted to add that he was actually a B, thanks, no knots to be had here, but he supposed it didn’t matter what he was or wasn’t- while the press was falling over itself about the Dreamy Winter Soldier, he never could talk to them- words just dried up like a slug covered in salt.

Until one of those goddamn bastards asked Tony if he had considered his daughter’s safety and mental well-being in continuing to be Iron Man- and did his hormones permit him to make the best decisions for himself and her?

Steve went white with rage, and only somebody who knew Tony as well as he did would see the self-doubt and fear welling up at the mention of his daughter, the baby he and Steve had had against all the odds, who they’d wanted so much, who Bucky considered his daughter even if his dick hadn’t been consulted in her creation.

He loved her the same, he helped care for her when her parents were tired, he gave her bottles and changed her bottom and this fucktard thought he could mention her like she was a goddamn fashion accessory?

Steve was opening his mouth to answer, and Bucky leaned forward to his microphone, “I’ll take this one, Stevie,” he said, his voice clear and calm, “Hey. Hi. I’m Winter Soldier.” The reporters all stared at him, tongues all but lolling out of their damn carnivorous mouths, eager for him to throw Tony to them, to explain how an Omega was a terrible leader, made choices with his feelings, how he should, especially now he was breeding, should stay home.
Fat fuckin’ chance.

“I know you all know what I do, right?”

“You’re the Avengers marksman, right?”

“That’s Hawkeye,” Bucky said, pointing at where Clint was asleep on the other side of the itsy-bitsy spider. She looked amused. “I’m the pet assassin. The most prolific of the century. Not by choice, though—seriously, you missed the whole inquest thing? You call yourself a reporter, and you missed that?”

“Surely it’s… exaggerated?”

“Oh honey,” Bucky said, to make the man squirm the way he had wanted to make Tony squirm. “You sweet, naïve idiot. No. Not exaggerated. Possibly understated. So, now you know, right? Who’s talkin’ to you?”

Steve made a sound like a honking goose, and Bucky continued on, folding his hands under his chin and smiling in his most cheerfully false manner.

The reporter looked scared.

“Yes,” he said finally.

“Good, okay. So, to put this in perspective for you—Tony and Steve’s child,” he wasn’t telling gender or name or anything! “If they had one, which I won’t confirm or deny for you asshats, but say they did, for your piddling argument’s sake, say they did. That baby would be theirs, right?” The reporter nodded dumbly, “Well,” Bucky let the pretense of pleasantry drop, and the mask of the Soldier.

The Russians and Hydra had tried to destroy him, reduce him to his basic, Beta nature. It had worked, except Bucky Barnes was something of a survivor (stubborn asshole, Steve would say), and he’d found his place with Steve and Tony and now their baby. And he was a Beta. Bland, unassuming, Alpha-savage and Omega-cunning, Beta. “Steve and Tony are mine,” Bucky said,
“Which would make their baby…” he waved a hand towards the reporter to finish the sentence.

“Yours?”

“Got it in one! Mine. Now. Think of it this way- if Steve’s all sunshine, and Tony’s all starlight, me? I’m a goddamn black hole. You know what black holes do?” Weak shake of the head. Aww, did someone not understand physics? “Tony could explain it better than me,” Bucky continued, as if Tony wasn’t holding himself up on Steve’s shoulder, laughing away from the microphone, “But here’s my best shot. Black holes pull things into them via pretty damn inescapable gravity, and then they, well, crush them. That is what I’d do to anyone who ever tried to hurt my family, or, I don’t know, tried to sneak pictures of a little baby that wasn’t theirs, bribe a nanny or something for a sensational story, or made my families’ Omega upset in any way, or questioned the Alpha- are you following my drift, sir?”

“Yes,” the reporter said weakly. The whole room full of media staff looked a little queasy. “I think you’ve made it perfectly clear-“

“Good. I assume you have questions about the killer robots, now? Boy, was that a swell fight, huh, Steve?”

Steve nodded and grinned, all teeth, leaning forward to the microphone and Tony leaned back, looking bored and pulling out his phone- Bucky’s phone pinged, and he glanced down.

Thank you, cuddlebot.

Chapter End Notes

WHOOO WE DID IT! Thank you all for reading, subscribing, commenting, kudosing! Made me so happy! I hope you've enjoyed this little fic. Please let me know what you thought!

Big thank you to Sabrecmc for letting me play in her sandbox, and reading over the chapters for me. I have had a wonderful time.

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