Assumptions and Miscommunications

by LysCat

Summary

After accepting a challenge from Natasha, Steve meets Daisy Johnson. However, secrets and half truth make things more than difficult between the pair.

Notes

Disclaimer: I don't own any characters familiar to Marvel

Author's Note: This is set after season two of AOS, Age Of Ultron has taken place, but Banner didn't immediately leave after the events of it. He and Thor are still with the rest of the group.
Chapter 1

It was a rare occurrence, all of the Avengers being in New York at the same time when there was no threat to the world. They started their night at Stark Tower, but Thor wanted to go out for a drink and take in the night life of the city, claiming that he didn’t think he’d ever get enough of it. Instead of going to the swanky place that Tony Stark suggested, the group talked him into a ‘normal’ place, which he compromised by insisting they sit in the VIP section.

“Since you refuse to do anything with the blonde, at least open yourself up for other opportunities,” the Black Widow prodded.

The blonde? Sharon? “What is wrong with Sharon?” Sam Wilson asked his friend after a pause. When Steve avoided his eyes, he turned to the pretty redhead at the table for an answer. Since she appeared to be Steve’s self-appointed love guru, surely she would know what was going on.

Natasha Romanoff smirked. “Sharon is related to none other than Peggy Carter. Steve feels that if he started a relationship with her, he wouldn’t know if it was Sharon he wanted or if it would be him trying to capture the chance he lost with Peggy.”

Sam turned back to Steve with an appraising look. Given his situation, he couldn’t really blame him for thinking such. Despite the fact that his friend had recently seen Peggy Carter, he still wasn’t able to let go of the memory of her and had vehemently denied the possibility of anything growing with Sharon.

“I don’t see why you feel it necessary to try and set me up,” Steve Rogers sighed as he stared down at his bottle of beer. He was quite fine on his own.

“You mean other than the fact that I was your first kiss since the 1940’s?” Natasha asked.

Tony arched an eyebrow over hearing that story. “Aww, are you guys in love?” He watched Steve’s face turn an interesting shade of pink and it only spurred him on. “That’s sweet. Oh, we could call you guys Captain Widow. I’d ship it.”

Almost everyone at the table found amusement in his comment, even Natasha found a smirk. Everyone other than Steve and Bruce Banner. Both found little amusement in the conversation, though for different reasons.

Natasha leaned forward. “In all seriousness though, Steve, don’t you ever feel the need to just…let go? You know, meet someone, spend the night with them and then return to the real world the next day?”

“No,” he denied flatly. He frowned at his table mates. Didn’t they know him at all?

“Look, it’s not a bad thing,” Clint Barnes spoke up to Steve. “People do it all the time.”

Steve inclined his head. “Maybe so, but I don’t believe in it.” He’d never been a ‘wham bam thank you ma’am’ type and he certainly wasn’t going to start now.

She didn’t know how he did it, living such a celibate life. She couldn’t do it. Every so often, she needed a release, and since she had no partner to speak of, she wasn’t opposed to a no strings attached arrangement. “Okay, fine, I’ll make you a deal,” Natasha said after a moment. “I will leave
you alone if you approach someone tonight.”

Steve was one of her closest friends. She may not acknowledge it, but she knew that he sometimes still struggled with adjusting to the modern world. She’d taken it upon herself to help him through it. When she first spoke of finding him a girlfriend, it was done in a teasing manner. The more time that passed though, the more she realized it was a good idea. Whether he realized it or not, Steve still held onto a certain ideal when it came to potential partners, and it was something he hadn’t yet found. It was part of the reason why she insisted on helping him.

“I already told you, I’m not going to take some dame home tonight,” Steve denied. He looked around the table for support, but most of them seemed keen to the idea that Natasha had. Only Thor and Banner seemed to sympathize with him, but even then, they didn’t speak up.

“I didn’t mean for sex,” Natasha denied. “If you approach someone tonight and strike up a conversation I will leave you alone about dates for the next month.”

“If I’m going out of my way to approach an unknown woman, you could at least give me two months,” the man lost to time said.

“Don’t push your luck,” she replied.

He rolled his eyes. “Fine, so I approach someone and strike up a conversation and you’ll leave me alone for a full month?”

“That’s the deal.”

“I don’t know, Nat. I think we should all have a say in who he chooses…” Clint suggested.

“Yeah, I bet you would, but that wasn’t part of the arrangement.” Steve stood up from the lounge area and looked around at the women that surrounded them. While he found quite a few of them attractive upon first glance, none of them drove home the desire to talk to them.

“Oh, what about that one?” Tony asked, singling someone out. The group followed his line of sight.

Natasha gave consideration to the option, but finally shook her head. “He’s probably not going to find someone up here in the VIP section.”

Banner spoke then. “Why not?”

“Because chances are the women up here are high maintenance and Steve won’t be comfortable with a woman like that,” Sam explained.

“She is rather pretty,” Banner observed, looking at someone else.

Steve was so busy listening to the group discuss, debate and dismiss the various women that loitered around them, he missed when Thor moved away from the group.

Natasha shook her head after a moment. “Everything she has on is a designer label.” While the woman didn’t appear to hold the same snobbish air that a majority of the women around them did, she doubted it would be a match made in heaven.

Tony nodded along with Widow’s words. “Steve would go broke trying to maintain that lifestyle.”

“You all do realize that nothing you say will have any influence over my decision, right?” Steve asked but watched in amazement when he was seemingly ignored as his friends continued to discuss
things amongst themselves. He looked around the table and noticed Thor’s absence. He eyed the area and discovered his friend standing at the railing, looking into the crowd below. “Can you believe them?”

“Ah, I have discovered her.”

“Not you too…” Steve mumbled. When Thor refused to move his eyes, Steve grudgingly admitted he was curious about the Asgardian’s choice. Never once had he seen Thor ogle women the way that most men did. He was very happy and content in his relationship with Jane and his eyes never wandered. However, seeing his friend staring at someone so intently, caught his notice. Sighing in defeat, he tried to find the woman that captured the God of Thunder’s interest. “Okay, who?”

Knowing it would be rude to point, Thor explained her positioning. “The maid standing at the end of the bar, dark hair, black dress.”

Steve easily discovered the woman Thor spoke of. How could Thor possibly decide on her? Her back was towards them. Though he had to admit it was a nice back. Whomever she was, she was in very nice shape. “Really? You don’t even know what she looks like.”

“Tis not about appearance, my friend. She is special,” Thor claimed confidently.

“Of all the women in here, why settle on her?” Steve asked.

A slight frown pulled at the god’s mouth. “There is something about her,” he explained. “I can…feel her from here.”

He could feel her? What did that mean? Steve eyed the woman, seeing nothing spectacular about her. “You can feel her?” He asked. “Feel her how? Is there something that Jane needs to be concerned about?”

“My feelings for Jane are as they have always been and she has no reason to doubt my loyalty,” Thor explained, missing the teasing tone in Steve’s voice. “This woman, she is strong. I cannot explain it better than that, except to say that of all the women in attendance this night, she is your equal,” he explained, clapping his friend on the shoulder.

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Taking a sip of her martini, Daisy Johnson looked around uncomfortably. How had she gotten to this place? Once upon a time, she had frequented bars and clubs. Once upon a time, she would have been in her element. However, in the past half an hour, she’d been overlooked multiple times. Had her time with SHIELD run her down so much that no one would approach her?

She should have known it was a stupid idea to leave the base. Consecutive days off were practically non-existent, so when Coulson gave her several, she’d decided to travel and see Cal again. The idea had sounded so perfect when she’d thought of it. However, after seeing him for a second time, she was beginning to realize that she was doing nothing more than torturing herself. And then there’d been the less than pleasant confrontation with Lincoln before he left SHIELD without a look backwards. The fallout from both situations, left her feeling despondent. When Mack returned to the base, she decided to take advantage of the rest of the time off that Coulson had given her. It was then that she decided to dress up and take some time for herself. Dressing up, she decided to go out, get drunk and try to meet a guy that wasn’t a complete psychopath. And if she and said non-psychopath fell into bed together, then who was she to complain?

It had been so long since she’d had any sort of love in her life. She supposed that once upon a time,
she and Miles had a form of puppy love. They’d been a good couple for a while, until she outgrew him. Her last experience with him left a bad taste in her mouth and it was months before she was ready to put herself out there again. And then there’d been Ward…

Letting out a sigh, she forced herself not to go down that dark path.

Of course, there was Lincoln Campbell. They’d shared a few moments together over the past few months, but his decision not to stay at the base or even help Joey made her realize that he probably wasn’t the best person to pursue. She didn’t exactly blame him for wanting to keep to himself, but his unwillingness to help had certainly opened her eyes. There was also the fact that even when they were getting to know one another in Afterlife, he didn’t give her the same butterflies she’d felt with Miles and even Ward, or the person Ward had pretended to be.

“Excuse me, miss?”

About damn time! For a while there, she’d been worried that she had lost her touch. Pasting a thousand-watt smile on her face, she turned to the man that spoke to her. “Yes?” However, any other words were forgotten when she realized who was speaking to her. Why would Captain America single her out? She knew she was pretty enough, but Steve Rogers taking an interest in her? No, it had to be a prank. Maybe Ashton Kutcher was somewhere in the building filming the whole thing? She felt the stain of embarrassment flush across her cheeks and silently prayed that she wouldn’t come off sounding like some fangirl.

“Hi, my name’s Steve Rogers,” he began, watching her nod. “I can disappoint you in ways that you’ve never imagined.” His words were rushed, but easily understandable.

She let out a laugh over his words. If he was coming on to her, it was the worst pick-up line ever. If only he knew the many ways she’d been disappointed in the last year and a half… “I appreciate the candidness, Captain.” She held out her hand to him. “Daisy Johnson.”

“Call me Steve.” He shook her hand politely and dropped it. “May I buy you another drink?” When she accepted the offer, he signaled for the bartender. “Another martini for her and I’ll have a Crown and Coke.” The pair waited until they were served their drinks before turning back to their conversation.

“Thank you.”

“You’re welcome.” He fell quiet for a moment, feeling so far out of his element. “So, what are you doing here tonight?”

“Oh, uh, you know…hunting elephants,” Daisy supplied teasingly. She watched him blush and look away. “You don’t do this often, do you?” She experienced the sensation of being watched and cast a quick look around. From the corner of her eyes, she noticed they were being watched. She didn’t turn her head to look, but from her peripheral, she could see the long blonde hair and drool worthy arms. She was fan-girl enough to know Thor when she saw him. And she could only assume that if Thor was present, one or more of the Avengers were with him.

“Is it that obvious?” He asked.

Daisy nibbled on her bottom lip. “A little, yes,” she admitted quietly. His shoulders appeared to droop then and she felt bad for being the cause of it. Instead of letting him close in on himself, she spoke once again. “If you’re so uncomfortable around women, why approach me at all?”

Did he dare tell her the truth? Would that offend her? She didn’t appear to be easily offended given
her teasing, but what if he was wrong? “Oh, well, you see…”

“Does this have anything to do with your friends peering at us from the balcony?” She asked when he hesitated. She watched the mortification take over his facial features and took pity on him. “Just…please tell me you didn’t approach me because of a bet.”

“It wasn’t a bet, it was more of an…understanding. See, my friend, Nat,” he watched her eyes widen when she realized he meant the Black Widow. “Yes, that Nat, has taken an interest in my love life, or rather, lack thereof. She has taken it upon herself to try and find me a girlfriend.”

“And I was her choice?” Daisy interrupted, unable to help herself. The Black Widow singled her out?

He shook his head in negative. “No. No, she promised me that if I approached someone here, she would stop her machinations of setting me up for the next thirty days.”

Daisy pursed her lips. She knew it was too good to be true. “Ah, and I’m the unfortunate soul you chose?”

Steve winced. “Actually, you were Thor’s.” He watched her quirk one eyebrow up in response. Thor chose her? She could work with that. “Oh. Uh, but not yours?” She asked.

“No, it…I…I’m sorry, I didn’t mean any offence. I did agree with Thor’s suggestion, I wouldn’t have talked to you if I didn’t…Should I not have said anything?”

Listening to him stumble over his words and then second guess himself had her taking the liberty of finding his hand and squeezing it in compassion before letting it go. “You’re lucky that I have no insecurities,” she admitted. “Well, if I’m going to help you convince your friends that you’ve done what you set out to do, I may as well make it convincing.” She moved closer to him and gave him all of her attention. “Tell me about yourself, Steve.”

Back at the table, Natasha, Tony, Sam and Clint continued to debate over potential matches for Steve.

“Blondes, everyone knows that blondes have more fun,” Tony spoke. He knew from personal experience, there’d been many blondes in his life.

“Blondes, everyone knows that blondes have more fun,” Tony spoke. He knew from personal experience, there’d been many blondes in his life.

Sam shook his head. “Really? Tell me, does your girl know you feel that way?”

“I would never-” Tony started, only be interrupted by the Black Widow.

“He’ll choose a brunette,” Natasha voiced.

Clint frowned at her. “What makes you say that?”

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The archer shook his head. “He has a type?” In all the time that he’d known Steve, his comrade had never mentioned a girl, let alone brought one around.

After considering Natasha’s suggestion, Sam pursed his lips. “Look at Peggy Carter.”

Clint snorted in amusement. “You’re basing this on her hair color? Did it never occur to you that her
personality may have had something to do with it?"

The Black Widow shook her head. “He’ll go for a brunette,” she repeated.

“You all realize that Steve is gone, right?” Banner broke in finally. He’d noticed Steve’s conversation with Thor before he made his way downstairs without so much as a look backwards.

His observation brought all conversation to a stop.

“You can all rest easy,” Thor shared. “Steve has found his match.”

Natasha and Clint immediately jumped from their chairs and joined Thor at the balcony. They followed Thor’s line of sight and easily found Steve chatting with a brunette. “Ha, I told you she’d be a brunette,” Natasha preened.

His eyes ran the length of her body. “She’s cute,” Clint observed. He wouldn’t have considered her in the same class as Cindy Crawford, but she was pretty. “Oh, she’s laughing.”

“Now is she laughing at something he said or laughing at him?” Tony asked from the table.

“Be nice, Tony,” Natasha chastised.

As Steve told her about himself, she pretended that she hadn’t read his biography. It was nice to hear things from his point of view. When he’d asked about her past, she told him what she could without mentioning her Inhuman status and SHIELD. She made sure to leave her parents out all together as there could possibly be no sane way to explain the situation without all the other stuff.

She finished her second drink and was feeling a happy, little buzz. Standing up, Daisy held her hand out to him. “Dance with me?”

“I uh, I really don’t dance,” Steve replied.

The brunette pulled her hand back. “You don’t dance or you can’t dance?” She tilted her head and studied him. She’d read about him, his experiences back during the war and she’d seen plenty of news footage of the man before her. She didn’t understand how he could be so confident and cool as Captain America but be so unsure of himself as Steve Rogers.

“Both.”

“Well, tonight, you do,” she excused. She grabbed his hand without invitation and began pulling him towards the dance floor.

His eyes widened when he realized where she was attempting to pull him. “Daisy, what are you doing?”

When he began pulling her to a stop, she turned to face him. “You’re dancing with me.”

“What about the part where I said I couldn’t dance?”

She shook her head. “I never get to go out anymore.” Unless SHIELD missions counted. “I had a drink, a cute blonde chatted me up and now I want to dance with said cute blonde.”

Cute blonde? Was she talking about him? His lips pulled back in a smile, unable to help himself. “I still can’t dance,” he reminded her.
“Come on, Steve, live a little. Everyone out there is going to be too busy dancing to watch you. Just…follow my lead.” He may not be able to dance, but she could and she knew she could get him moving if he gave her a chance.

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“Are we still watching Steve-o-vision?” Tony asked Clint, Natasha and Sam as they continued to stare out to the floor below them.

“She’s…is he actually out on the dance floor?” Clint asked, ignoring Tony.

Sam smirked as he watched his friend. The unknown woman had spun around and backed her backside into Steve’s front. He watched as she placed both of his hands on her waist before she began swaying to the beat of the music. Damn, this girl was good. Even from a distance, his friend appeared uncomfortable, but began moving along with her.

“He’s dancing?” Banner asked looking between the three of them.

Clint shrugged. “I guess, I mean if you count that as dancing.”

“It’s not,” Sam was quick to clarify. Steve’s partner may be dancing, but Steve wasn’t.

“He looks like he’s in pain,” Natasha said softly, causing both Sam and Clint to look closer at the pair. She watched both men look to Steve and his companion and chuckle in amusement. “What?”

“He’s in pain all right,” Sam snorted.

Reading into the meaning behind his words, she scrunched her nose.

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When the song changed, Daisy glanced at Steve over her shoulder. “You doing okay?” She’d noticed that during their dance Steve started to put distance between their bodies. Had she pushed him too far?

He nodded his head in a jerky manner.

“Tremors.”

Upon hearing Mack’s nickname for her, she spun around to find her partner standing a few feet away from them. She immediately stopped dancing, the smile on her face dimmed.

Sensing the change in her mood, Steve also stopped moving. He looked to the man Daisy was staring at. She didn’t appear distressed to see this man, but she certainly wasn’t happy. He looked back to his dance partner. “Tremors?” That was a strange nickname.

Daisy blushed. “Yeah,” she mumbled, not bothering to give him an explanation over it. “Steve, this is my partner, Mack. Mack, this is Steve Rogers,” she introduced.

Taking notice that Steve still had a hand resting on Daisy’s waist, Mack looked to her with a single arched eyebrow before turning back to Steve with a smile. “Nice to meet you,” he said.

Having caught the look of amusement, he realized why and quickly removed his hand from her waist. “Likewise.” He looked down at Daisy. “So, partner? You a cop or something?”

She offered him a strained smile. “Or something,” she muttered before clearing her throat and turning
to Mack. “Mack, what are you doing here?” She was supposed to have time off and if she wasn’t currently brushed up against Steve Rogers, she wouldn’t feel nearly so putout. Mack wouldn’t have come to fetch her if it wasn’t an emergency and she knew her time with Steve was quickly coming to a close.

Turning back to his partner, he scratched his temple. “Something’s happened. Jemma’s gone.”

She frowned. “Gone?”

Aware that things needed to remain secretive he coughed. “Monolith,”

Daisy’s eyes widened.


A flash of disappointment surged through her. Turning back to Steve she smiled sadly. “I’m sorry, Steve. Duty calls.”

He offered her an understanding smile. “Of course.”

“Thank you for tonight.” Moving closer to him she placed a sweet kiss on his lips. She knew she was taking liberties, but Steve Rogers had chatted her up and the alcohol she’d consumed made her slightly braver! Though nothing would most likely come from it, it would be a nice memory to have. “I’ve really enjoyed spending time with you.”

The moment her lips touched his, he’d been so unprepared that he froze. It was only a momentary reaction before he relaxed. Before he realized it, his lips formed against hers and when she pulled away, he felt a dash of hope. While he certainly wasn’t comfortable with public displays of affection, he found himself relaxing around her. Doing his best to ignore her partner, he looked to her. “Would I be too forward if I asked for your phone number?”

Daisy smiled. “Not at all.” She recited the digits for him as she watched him put it into his phone.

“Daisy, we really need to go,” Mack reminded her, feeling bad for interrupting her night.

She nodded at him, watching him step away. “Uh, sometimes I tend to go dark so if you call or text and I don’t immediately respond, just know that I will. I hope that I put on a good enough show for your friends, seeing as how they were pretty much watching us the entire time.” She watched him blush and she giggled. “I’m sorry, Steve, but I really have to leave.” She turned away from him slowly and made her way in the direction that Mack went. Meeting her partner at the door, he held it open for her as they stepped into the night air.

“So, Captain America, huh?”

She preened. “I know, right?!”

He laughed upon seeing her so light hearted. After the things she’d been through the last few weeks, she deserved some happiness. “He seemed to really dig you.”

“Well, what he knew of me, anyway,” she allowed. They hadn’t had a chance to really speak about personal matters.

“I’m sorry I had to pull you away,” he apologized.

“Me too,” she replied with a sigh of resignation.
After separating from Daisy, Steve returned to his friends. He’d easily noticed Clint’s absence but thought nothing of it as his friends ribbed him for spending time with a girl, only for her to leave the club with another guy. He’d endured it good naturedly and then the subject was changed.

Hours later, the Avengers had returned to the tower. Tony, Banner and Thor were the first ones to excuse themselves for the night. Once the group fell to three, the subject of his time with Daisy came back up in conversation.

“I still can’t believe that you did that,” Natasha said. “I offered because I didn’t think you would actually do it.”

Steve smirked at her. “But I did, and it is a well-deserved month off from your match making.”

“You think you’ll see her again?” Sam asked.

Captain America could only shake his head. “I don’t know, but I did manage to get her number.”

“And you didn’t mention it earlier?” The black man asked.

Natasha arched her eyebrow at Steve as he shrugged nonchalantly. “Really? So…maybe I’ll be stopping my match making for a bit longer than a month…?” He really had been full of surprises that evening. If she’d been shocked that he actually approached someone, she was floored when Daisy had managed to get him onto the dance floor. Up until then, it was something no one else had been able to persuade him to do. And then that kiss? She knew how Steve felt about public displays of affection and the fact that he hadn’t pulled away from her spoke volumes to the former assassin.

Steve smiled. “Maybe,” he allowed. When he approached Daisy under Thor’s advisement, he hadn’t been sure what to expect from her. She was much prettier than he’d first excused. However, it was her lack of gushing over him that really struck a chord with him. It could be difficult talking with someone when they were starstruck over meeting Captain America and then fawn all over him. Unlike most women he’d been introduced to, Daisy seemed more interested in the man than the moniker. He’d enjoyed their time together immensely and looked forward to getting to know her better.

“Oh, hey,” Nat greeted when Clint walked into the room. “Where were you?”

Clint sat down on the couch and turned to Steve. “I thought there was something familiar about the man she left with, so I followed them back to her hotel.”

Steve sat up from his comfortable lounge. “Clint, you had no right.”

“Familiar how?” The redhead asked.

Ignoring the protest and question, he continued on with his story. “And then I followed them to an abandoned building where they went up to the roof and flew away in a small jet with a SHIELD insignia on the side of it.”
Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

The Avengers begin looking into the possibility that SHIELD is still active.

Chapter 2

“So…” Mack started unsurely.

Exhaling a deep sigh, Daisy closed her eyes. She’d been waiting for him to say something about the scene he’d witnessed in the club. As they made their way to the jet, Mack had filled her in on Simmons and by the time they’d been airborne the group sat in silence. “You held out longer than I thought you would.”

“How did that happen?” Not that Daisy was unattractive. He was, on some level, aware that his partner had quite a few striking features. However, to him, she would always be ‘just’ Daisy. He just didn’t think of her in a sexual manner and while he didn’t want to say it surprised him that other men did, he’d just never thought of her in that way.

From behind the pilot’s seat Bobbi Morse turned from Mack towards Daisy. “How did what happen?” What had she missed?

Pursing her lips, Daisy tried to fight the urge to frown at Mack. She’d been hoping to keep her night with Steve to herself, she liked the idea of having the memory of the night to turn to when the world started sucking. “Like it usually does. Boy approaches girl, boy offers to buy girl a drink and they chat and dance.”

“But…Captain America?” Mack asked.

Bobbi easily caught up in the conversation. “You chatted up Captain America?”

“Oh, she did more than that,” Mack retorted with a smirk. “They danced and before leaving, she kissed him.”

“You kissed Captain America?” Bobbi turned to Daisy with a look of astonishment. Damn, she should have made Mack stay with the jet while she went to retrieve Daisy.

Daisy rolled her eyes and mentally thanked Mack making it sound so dramatic. “It was an innocent peck on the lips, hardly anything to get excited over.”

“But still…Captain America…” Mack muttered. Daisy meeting Steve Rogers. It was just…it was too close.

“You know, if you keep saying it, it isn’t going to make it any less true,” the Inhuman said to her partner. “I didn’t realize you were such a fan-boy. I’d expect Coulson to be put out, not you.”

He wasn’t put out, he was shocked. Given her past relationships, Steve Rogers was the complete opposite. “But he’s so different from the guys you usually go for.”
Go for? She hadn’t gone for anyone in a long time. Her experience with Ward had turned her off from any potential romantic interest. “You make it sound like I have horrible taste in men,” she frowned.

“Miles,” Mack piped up, reminding the Inhuman. He of course hadn’t met him, but he’d heard all about the events surrounding Daisy’s ex-boyfriend.

Bobbi clicked her tongue. “Ward,” she pointed out. There was no need to elaborate.

The Inhuman opened her mouth to reply, but when no argument came, she closed it in resignation. When there was nothing to dispute, she continued on. “Anyway, I doubt it will come to anything. Aside from the fact that I live in a different state than him, I work for a secret organization that he disavowed.”

“You didn’t mention Coulson, did you?” Bobbi asked, slightly alarmed. Everyone on the team knew that he was dead to those from his former life, the Avengers included.

“Of course not.” That was yet another reason why a relationship would never work with Steve. Even if Steve were to overlook the SHIELD thing, she and Coulson were incredibly close, how would she be able to hide him from Steve? “I didn’t even mention SHIELD.” She figured if she had, it might have driven him away.

A pregnant pause settled over the teammates. “So, you kissed Captain America, huh?” The blonde asked once again.

Daisy forced herself not to smile. If she couldn’t keep her experience with him to herself, she would keep her feelings to herself. “Yeah, and if we could keep it to ourselves, that’d be great,”

“Captain America and Quake…” Mack trailed off. Captain…Quake? “Captain Quake. I could ship it.” He looked at his partner and smirked.

She knew he was only teasing her, but she felt her cheeks flushing upon hearing their monikers linked together. So could I, she said to herself. Daisy, leaned back, her head falling to the headrest and closed her eyes.

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And with that phrase, the good mood in the room instantly faded.

“SHIELD?” Steve asked. She was SHIELD?

Sam looked from one person to another. “I thought they were shut down?” He asked, confused.

Steve shook his head. He should have known it was too good to be true. He should have known that he wasn’t that lucky when it came to romance. So, she’d been what? A plant? Didn’t SHIELD realize that they wanted nothing to do with them anymore? They were persistent, he’d give her that. As much as he respected Nick Fury as a person and as grateful as he was for the man’s help when he first woke up, he didn’t agree with the way he ran SHIELD or the organization itself. Maybe if there hadn’t been so many secrets and levels, Hydra would have been found out sooner. “Nat?” He and his teammates may have come together because of Fury and SHIELD, but he knew that all of them, save maybe Clint and Nat, had reservations about them. He would be damned if he let another organization try and control him again.

She shook her head as if telling him it was a surprise to her as well as she sat up. “On it.” The assassin jumped up from her spot and headed towards the computer lab. She thought that she’d
released everything on SHIELD, but maybe she’d missed something… SHIELD was active? There’d never been any reason to suspect that her former organization was still active, she hadn’t seen any red flags when various situation occurred around the world. So… was someone removing any further evidence of them?

Standing up, Steve turned away from his companions and made his way towards the floor length window. A deep frown pulled at his features. Daisy was with SHIELD? What was tonight about? What if he hadn’t approached her, would she have approached him in effort to cultivate a relationship between SHIELD and the Avengers again? Was that all it was? He’d seen how Natasha worked on some of her missions, do whatever necessary to achieve the goal. Was that all he’d been? A goal? It wouldn’t have been the first time SHIELD kept an eye on him. Sharon Carter was proof of that. And if he was honest with himself, it was another reason why he’d been so hesitant to get to know her. Spinning around, he moved to follow Natasha.

“Steve?” Sam asked.

“I need to give Natasha Daisy’s number.” If Daisy was even her name. He’d been such a fool. His friends wanted to know why he was so hesitant to put himself out there, this was why. Granted, nothing too personal had been discussed, but there had been definite interest there, and she turns out to be a liar? “Maybe she can get some more information on her,” he grumbled.

“Damn,” Sam muttered as he watched his friend march out of the room and turned to Clint. “You think tonight was a set-up?”

Clint could only shake his head. “I don’t know.” He supposed there was always a chance that ‘not quite Steve’s girl’ had been completely sincere. “But if it wasn’t, it would be one hell of a coincidence that they met and gravitated towards one another.”

Ignoring the hushed conversation, Steve made his way towards the computers. Since awakening, he’d been learning all of the new technology. However, he had no idea how Natasha could hack into a computer, he mostly just watched her stupidly whenever she did it. Maybe if sat with her long enough something would come up.

When the door opened behind her, Natasha turned around. “I have a background search going, looking for key phrases SHIELD would have used,” she shook her head. “I’ve been getting pings, but everything that I’ve looked into so far goes back to the information that I went public with. It could take a while,” she warned him.

He nodded, he’d suspected as much. “I know, I just… her phone number.” He held out his phone to her.

She slowly reached for the device, taking in his sagged shoulders and the hard look behind his eyes had her tilting her head in pity. “Steve…”

He shook his head. “Not now, Nat,” he sighed. “Just… trace the number.”

She nodded at him.

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When they landed at the base, Coulson greeted them as soon as they exited the jet. Daisy gave him a small smile and turned to the situation at hand. “How’s Fitz?”

He shook his head. “Not good. Is there anything your mother said about the monolith or… Gordon?”
She searched her memory. “No, not to me.” She tried to remember if she’d ever walked in on a
conversation about anything similar to the Monolith, but she was coming up blank. “I don’t know if
it was ever discussed. If it was, it was never mentioned around me. Even before everything went
down, I don’t think Jiaying really trusted me.” Which she hadn’t, she’d proved that quickly enough
by locking Daisy away and then attempting to kill her on the carrier.

Coulson nodded, figuring as much, but he had to ask. “Do you think Lincoln might know
something?”

Daisy considered the question. Until witnessing Jiaying murder two innocent agents, Lincoln’s
interests mirrored the Inhuman leader. “I…maybe,” she shrugged. Then again, he hadn’t exactly
been helpful when it came to Joey… and she didn’t think he’d been a huge help to them with
Simmons.

“I know that you just dealt with him, but do you think you can reach out to him again?”

She knew that he had been attending medical school in Cincinnati and that when he wasn’t at
Afterlife, he was there. “I’ll try, but after his refusal to help with Joey…” She shook her head in
negative. Lincoln had disappeared, and she had no idea where he’d gone. “When he isn’t at the
hospital or at school, I don’t…I don’t know where he spends his time.” She pursed her lips.
“Coulson, there’s…you know how he feels about SHIELD,” she reminded him.

He nodded in understanding. “I do, and if this hadn’t happened, I wouldn’t bother him. But an
agent’s life is at stake and I need as much information as I can get. Do you think you can start a
search?”

She began formulating the best way to do so. “Yeah, I’ll get started in the morning.”

“Fitz is in the common area with Hunter,” he said then, knowing it would be the next question out of
Daisy’s mouth.

Bobbi nodded at their boss. “I’ll walk with you,” she told Daisy.

Before Daisy walked away, Coulson gave her shoulder a sympathetic squeeze. “I’m sorry you didn’t
get more time,” he apologized.

She offered him a small smile. “That’s okay,” she denied. “Shall we?” She asked the statuesque
blonde. “Before we see him, can I see the video?”

Bobbi brought her to the security room and pulled the tape for Daisy.

She wasn’t sure what she’d been expecting, but watching the events fold out hadn’t been it. Though
she knew from other Inhumans that the monolith was dangerous, watching Simmons disappear in it
left her feeling sick to her stomach. Daisy removed her hand from her mouth. “There’s nothing
else?”

Bobbi shook her head. “Nothing.”

“What were they talking about?” Daisy asked then. She knew that her friend had a voracious
appetite when it came to knowledge and learning about new things, alien artefacts included. Had
they been discussing that? Maybe there was a clue somewhere in there?

Bobbi shook her head minutely. “He wouldn’t say, only that it wasn’t about the Monolith.”

Daisy expelled a deep breath before pulling away from the monitor. She and Bobbi made their way
to the common room. Fitz sat on the couch, hunched over, his elbows rested on his thighs and his head in his hands. Hunter hovered behind him but didn’t say anything. As soon as the female agents walked into the room, Bobbi made a beeline for Hunter as Daisy settled her attention on Fitz. Walking over to him, she dropped to the ground in front of him, her hands immediately encasing his.

The feel of someone touching him forced Fitz from his thoughts. His head shot up and he found Daisy’s sad face. Whatever control over his emotions that he had fell to pieces. His head drooped down and he gave into his grief. Daisy pulled him into her arms and tried to comfort him.

“She’s not dead,” he muttered. “She’s not dead, I’d know it if she were.”

She tightened her hold on him and turned to look at Bobbi and Hunter for an explanation. They thought Simmons was dead?

“Well, aren’t you a plucky bunch this morning,” Tony remarked as everyone met at the table for breakfast.

Steve’s frown settled on Tony. “She’s with SHIELD,” he said flatly. He’d waited until all three missing Avengers from the previous night joined him in the common room before saying anything, not wanting to have to repeat himself.

“We think she’s with SHIELD,” Sam clarified, stressing the word ‘think’ in his phrase. For Steve’s peace of mind, he’d hoped that it was all a misunderstanding.

Bruce looked from Captain America to his sidekick. SHIELD was still a thing? “Who is?”

“The girl from last night,” Sam provided.

Steve went on to tell Tony, Thor and Banner their discovery the night before with Clint breaking in every so often to add his two cents.

“Are you sure?” Bruce questioned.

Clint shook his head. “I watched her get into a jet with the SHIELD insignia on the side with my own eyes.” Having been a part of the organization, he was not only familiar with the insignia but with the sort of planes and jets they used.

“Didn’t the government seize everything they could from SHIELD when it fell?” Bruce asked then, frowning. “How could they still be active?”

Clint met Natasha’s gaze as they both shook their heads in negative. “They may have taken some, but SHIELD was much larger than they let on. With different safehouses and bases…there were things stashed everywhere,” he explained.

Tony pursed his lips. “Don’t they realize that we don’t want anything to do with them?” He’d always had an issue with the organization. Hydra had just been the icing on the cake. Even if SHIELD hadn’t fallen, they would have separated themselves from them eventually. No one had been particularly fond of Fury’s machinations and manipulations.

Natasha shook her head upon hearing Tony’s words. Unlike Tony and Steve, she and Clint had personal ties to the organization. SHIELD had saved her from her previous life and she would always be thankful for that. She understood Tony’s issues with the organization, but she didn’t feel the same way. Unfortunately, she couldn’t claim surprise if Steve’s friend ended up being nothing
more than an undercover agent. “I’ve had a search going since last night.”

“What have you found?” Tony asked, turning his attention on the redhead.

She shook her head. “Nothing. I haven’t seen anything new related to SHIELD.” When she’d come to the realization earlier that morning, she’d been surprised. She had expected to find something. Anything.

Tony glanced at her. “Are you sure you’re not doing something wrong?”

She wanted to scoff at his question, but she bit it back when he appeared sincere in his question. “I’m sure.” She may not have been as big of a computer whiz as him, but she could hold her own.

“Any chatter with other agencies?”

“Nothing. If they have reformed, it’s certainly not to the scope it once was.” Either people didn’t know about them, or something had been scrubbed, or both.

“Then that means they must have someone on the inside hacking,” he muttered.

She nodded at him, and a good one too. “That’s what I figured too.”

“Anything on the phone?” Steve asked, looking to Natasha for an answer. He hadn’t been able to stay when she began looking into it.

She shook her head negatively. “It’s a burner phone, paid in cash. If SHIELD is active again, someone’s gone to great lengths to keep it a secret.” If SHIELD had somehow been resurrected from the ashes, who was running it since Fury bowed out and Maria was working for Stark Industries?

“Okay, so don’t call the number she gave you, and she will get the hint that you aren’t interested,” Bruce suggested after a moment of silence.

Steve considered the words. Maybe on a personal level, it made sense. However, now that they knew the organization was back up and running, they still needed to find out what they could about it. Didn’t they?

“Or,” Tony perked up. “You could call her, befriend her, get her to open up and we can find out for sure.”

Steve startled as all eyes turned to him. Could he do something like that? Better, could he do something like that convincingly? He was a simple guy really, what people saw was exactly what he was. His alter ego aside, he didn’t hide who he was, he never had, and he’d prided himself on remaining completely earnest. He didn’t play games, he didn’t like them.

Sam looked from Bruce to Tony and then settled his attention on Steve. “Is this something you want to do?” He ignored everyone else, knowing that Steve wasn’t in a comfortable position at the moment. “Is it really that important that she is with this organization?”

“Yes,” Tony answered as Clint and Natasha shrugged their shoulders.

Natasha didn’t think it was as important as select team members thought, but at this point, she was more curious than anything. Nibbling on her bottom lip, she looked to Steve. “You up for it?”

Was he? He could only shake his head in negative. “I don’t know,” he admitted.

Watching the rest of his table mates chat amongst themselves as they attempted to come up with a
plan. Thor fell into his thoughts. Other than Steve, he’d never come across a SHIELD agent that radiated such power. In the past, SHIELD contained powerful individuals. Steve Rogers aside, they didn’t recruit them. If this maid was powered, would she really be working for them? Was there a chance that she was forced to work for them? He opened his mouth to repeat his questions for the rest of the group, but decided against it for the moment. At this point, it was more personal than anything, and what right did he have to chime in on someone else’s life?

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Coffee cup in hand, Daisy sat in front of the computer screen as she watched for any activity.

“You get any sleep last night?”

She looked up to find Coulson leaning against the door and gave him a tight smile. “Not really.”

She’d tried, but sleep didn’t come easy and once she had drifted off, she woke up every hour. By the time 4:30 rolled around she gave up on her mission for sleep and began trying to locate Lincoln. “I’m running facial recognition software,” she sighed. “But I only have it in the areas close to the college. If he doesn’t show up, I’ll have to expand the search.”

“Okay.”

Setting her coffee cup down, she gave him her attention. “How’s the arm?”

“It’s…I can still feel it,” he admitted. “My hand still itches. Fitz called it Phantom Limb disorder and said it was common in amputees. As time passes, the sensations should fall away, but it could always come back periodically.”

Her eyes fell away from him. “I’m so sorry, Coulson. If I hadn’t gone with Gordon, none of this would have happened.” If she hadn’t gone with Gordon, her friends would never have found the Afterlife in the first place. Jiaying would still be alive, Gonzalez would still be alive and Coulson would still have his hand.

He stepped into the room and approached her. “You don’t know that,” he denied easily. “You left because your life was threatened.” If she hadn’t left, he didn’t want to think about what would have happened to her with the agents loyal to Gonzalez. “This is not your fault,” he told her firmly. “Jiaying was sick and had been for a long time. She had been planning for something like this for years.” Daisy may have sped up the time table, but he was certain that something would have happened eventually. No, the blame didn’t fall on her. Perhaps if Gonzalez hadn’t been hiding in the shadows, both teams would have been able to unite sooner? If that had been the case, then there would have been no need for Daisy to even call for help in the first place.

She couldn’t say she agreed with him, but she appreciated it all the same. The Inhuman pushed the self-doubt down and turned back to the screen. “Do you really think that Jemma’s dead?” She asked, thinking about her reunion with Fitz the previous night. She remembered the way that Bobbi and Hunter had barely met her gaze after Fitz started mumbling his words into the crook of her neck.

“I really don’t know,” he confessed. “I don’t know what else it could be.” It was why he’d wanted to locate Lincoln, the sooner the better. He didn’t want to believe Simmons was dead, but nothing else made sense.

“So, you think that it consumed her?”

“You remember Franklin Hall and the Gravitonium,” he reminded her. He thought back to the moment that the Gravitonium had enveloped the doctor and shook his head. Watching Jemma on the
video, it was almost reminiscent to that.

She considered his point but didn’t make an argument for or against it. “Fitz doesn’t believe she’s
dead.”

He nodded. “I know. I don’t want to believe that she’s dead, but I don’t have anything else to go off
of.” Coulson was also trying to mentally prepare himself for bad news about Jemma so that when it
came to his team, he was better able to help them through whatever bad news he was sure they were
going to discover... though something told him there was no amount of preparation that would make
any of that easier for them.

She nodded at him, understanding his reasoning.

“I’m trying to keep him busy. He’s been working on a new hand for me,” he looked down at the
prosthetic attached to his body. “He’s built a few tricks into it, but he hasn’t gone into specifics.”
Honestly, if Fitz wasn’t keeping busy he’d drive himself insane trying to get Simmons back, if it was
even possible.

When the conversation fell into a lull, Daisy decided to speak up about her time with Steve. “Subject
change, I kissed Steve Rogers.” She watched Coulson freeze up. His eyes widened, and he looked at
her stupidly. If she wasn’t so worried about his reaction, she would have laughed. “I gave him my
number. If he should decide to call, I wanted to let you know.” Given how shy he’d first been
around her, she was skeptical that he would even call her. However, in the off chance that he did,
she wanted to make sure the director wouldn’t be surprised later on down the line.

He blinked twice before mentally pushing away his shock. “You…how did you even meet him?”

“Oh, I met him at a club,” she shrugged.

“Steve Rogers was at a club?” He asked slowly. That didn’t sound like a place he would have
frequented.

“Not by himself, obviously.” Though she had to admit, the idea of Steve Rogers at a club didn’t
sound right. She was sure that if he hadn’t been out with the rest of his team, he never would have
stepped inside. “All the Avengers were there in the VIP section. Thor suggested he talk to me, and
the next thing I know, he approached me.”

“And then you kissed him…”

“Why do people say it like that?” She asked rhetorically. She really hoped he didn’t intend to throw
her past in her face like Bobbi and Mack had.

“Because he’s Captain America,” he explained simply. “What possessed you to do that?” He
inquired after a beat. He would have never pictured Daisy and Captain America together. Not that
he’d ever contemplated either person’s love life, but they were complete opposites.

Daisy shrugged her shoulders. “I don’t know, it seemed like a good idea at the time,” she admitted.
“I was leaving with the uncertainty that I may never see him again. If that is the case, I guess I
figured that I would at least have a good memory.”

Coulson was amused by her answer. It had been a long time since he’d seen this side of Daisy. “You
do realize that this situation could get complicated if things go any further between you,” he said,
hating to burst her bubble, but needing to say it all the same.

“I know,” she replied softly. “I didn’t say anything about you or SHIELD last night. And this isn’t a
‘situation,’” she denied after a moment. “I don’t even know if he’s going to call me.”
Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

Coulson and company are still dealing with the fallout from Jemma's disappearance and he makes a difficult decision while the rest of the world begins to worry about the 'alien contagion' that seems to be affecting random people.

Chapter Notes

I did look up episode transcripts for this chapter. I haven't watched season three of AOS since it originally aired so I apologize ahead of time for messing things up. For arguments sake, I'm declaring now that things will be slightly altered from the show.

Chapter 3
(weeks later)
Disclaimer: I did look up episode transcripts for this chapter, so there are a few things in here that aren’t mine.

“Any word from May?” Daisy asked one quiet night as she sat with Coulson in the lounge. The rest of the base appeared to be asleep or otherwise engaged and it was a rare moment that they could speak alone without being behind his office door.

The director only shook his head in negative.

“You guys up for some more company?” Mack asked, approaching the pair. In his grasp, he held up a six pack of beer for them to see.

Free beer? She wouldn’t say no to that. “Well, come on over,” Daisy greeted happily, patting the seat next to her. “You bought us beer?”

“Technically, it was supposed to be for Hunter and Bobbi, but…” he wrinkled his nose thinking about the scene he walked in on. “Why they can’t keep their playtime to their bunk is beyond me.”

Daisy smirked at him. “Because what would be the fun in that?” She asked with a small wink at him.

The tall man grimaced. Aside from the possibility of getting caught by anyone, what they were doing was very unsanitary. “Anyone seen Fitz tonight?” When both his companions shook their heads in negative, he sighed. “He’s pulling away.”

“I don’t know what to do for him anymore,” Coulson confessed then. It had been months since Jemma had disappeared. Each day that passed was a bitter reminder that they were no closer to solving the mystery of what happened to her. Lincoln was still in the wind and they had no leads to work off of.

It hadn’t been the easiest couple of months. May had gone on vacation with Andrew and hadn’t
come back. He didn’t blame her for taking her chance at happiness and running with it, but he
missed her. She was his second-in-command, had been since he’d recruited her for the Bus. They’d
worked side by side for so many years that they were able to anticipate each other’s moves under
various situations, and it was something that he missed. She almost always knew what he was going
to say before he said it, and her absence deeply bothered him.

Sitting across from him, Daisy reached for the bottle of beer in front of her. “I don’t think any of us
know what to do,” she corrected. She hadn’t been able to find anything on Lincoln over the past few
months, not that she expected to.

Lincoln wasn’t a bad guy, but he didn’t trust easily. His time at Afterlife had both harmed him and
benefited him. By the time she’d met him, he’d had such control over his powers and had been a
huge factor in helping her. However, her mother had managed to encourage distrust for the outside
world. In hindsight, Daisy realized it wasn’t for the sole benefit of warning Inhumans to be cautious
as it was doing what she could to gain more control over them. He may have been willing to help
SHIELD when Jaiying proved her true motives, but that distrust had been deeply engrained within
him and he still held onto it.

“I think it’s time that we…move on,” Coulson tacked on after a moment, thankful for the privacy. It
afforded him the opportunity to be candid with her. It wasn’t the first time the idea occurred to him,
but it was the first time he’d admitted it to someone else. Unfortunately, just because they lost Jemma
didn’t mean the world stopped. While Daisy and Mack had been out in the world helping those
inflicted with the ‘alien contagion,’ Coulson knew more time and resources could have been devoted
to it.

He turned his focus on Daisy. When she’d joined them on the bus, she instantly gravitated towards
Fitzsimmons, which he understood since they were closer in age. Daisy and Jemma formed a very
tight friendship, despite the differences in their backgrounds. The only time they’d ever been on
opposite sides of a situation had been back after the events in San Juan. However, they’d still
managed to come back to each other. He waited with bated breath, wondering how she would feel
about his decision.

Licking her lips, Daisy exhaled heavily and nodded. She figured it was coming, she’d been dreading
it for days now. Despite the personal relationships between the group, Coulson still had an
organization to run. Honestly, she’d been surprised he’d waited this long to say anything. Looking
next to her, she exchanged a glance with Mack.

“We’ll have a service for her,” the director added. “It’s just…the Inhumans and this…ATCU, there
are different areas we need to be putting all of our focus on.”

“You don’t have to explain yourself,” she told him quietly. He was the boss.

“But I do,” he insisted. If she had been anyone else, he may not have, but she wasn’t. “I know how
close she was with you, and especially Fitz.”

“You’re a good man, DC,” she said after a pause. “Unfortunately, you’re right. The real world can’t
wait forever. I…you know I support you and I will follow along with your orders.”

“But?” He asked, anticipating one from her.

She smiled at him. “But,” she emphasized the word, “I hope you know that I still intend to look for
Lincoln.” She hadn’t had any luck thus far, but school was just around the corner. He’d be returning
there sooner or later.
He’d have been surprised if she hadn’t. “If you could keep that to yourself for the time being,” Coulson replied, knowing there would be no stopping her. “Fitz is torturing himself enough as it is.” He knew that if Fitz learned of Daisy’s search, he’d be distracted. It had been difficult watching the hope fade from the engineer’s eyes as the days passed.

“You do realize that he’s going to be upset, right?” Daisy inquired after a pregnant pause.

“Yup,” the director said before tossing back the rest of his beer.

“We’ll help him through it,” Mack added.

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“Can you believe this?” Steve asked, watching the news. Another person infected by…what the news was calling an ‘alien contagion.’ He looked to Nat, wondering if she’d been following along with the recent news. Cases had been popping up everywhere the last several weeks.

Natasha shook her head. “These poor, unsuspecting people…” She couldn’t imagine going through what these people were. Her life hadn’t exactly been easy, however, she’d spent years preparing herself.

“What are we going to do?” Steve asked after a pregnant pause. Would this be something the Avengers would have to deal with?

She frowned, first at the flat screen and then at him. “Does this require us to do something?” Nat asked, considering his question. It had been weeks since the first cases popped up and the government still hadn’t determined exactly what caused it, or if they had, they hadn’t shared yet. Until there were answers behind who was responsible and what not, there was no reason for it to fall to them. “This…ATCU sounds like they have everything under control, or at least getting there.”

He nearly scoffed. Yeah, they had everything under their control. He wondered if these people were actually being taken care of. As an enhanced individual himself, he couldn’t help but feel a slight kinship with these people. There was also the possibility that a not-so-good person could become advanced and use his or her newly acquired ability for something nefarious. “I think we should at least keep an eye on the situation,” he shared. He knew how SHIELD dealt with powered individuals. Who knew what this ATCU was capable of?

“Absolutely,” she agreed easily. She remembered how SHIELD treated powered individuals in the past and wondered what this new organization was doing to control the situation. “Do you know who might know something about this?”

He sighed. Daisy. “Really? This, again?” Her number was still programmed into his phone, but he had yet to dial it, and he didn’t have the courage to erase it completely. He wasn’t sure why he held onto it, but it remained unused.

She could only shrug her shoulders. “I’m not wrong,” she pointed out quietly. SHIELD was always there to deal with any weird crap, this was right up their alley. If SHIELD was back, they would have been dealing with the so called ‘alien contagion.’ “Why won’t you call her?”

“Because she lied to me,” the man out of time insisted. He had enough issues in his life, the last thing he needed was to invite someone into his life that was untrustworthy.

Natasha shook her head. “She didn’t lie, she just didn’t divulge the information.” Unfortunately, her friend could be very stubborn, once his good opinion was lost, it tended to stay that way. It was a shame too, because Steve appeared to be pretty interested in her that first night.
“A lie by omission is still a lie,” he argued.

She shrugged. “And I still think you should give her a call.”

“Duly noted, don’t want to,” he replied flatly. “Now, can we please change the subject?”

She dramatically rolled her eyes at him. “Fine weather we’re having…”

Steve frowned at her. “I actually had a subject in mind. Nat, I was wondering if you could help me with something.” He didn’t wait for her to acknowledge what he said before plowing on. “I think it’s time I look for Bucky.”

She stopped upon hearing the news. She still couldn’t wrap her head around the fact that the Winter Soldier was in fact James Buchanan Barnes. She’d worked with the Hydra assassin in the past and knew exactly what he was capable of. She had nearly been bowled over by the revelation that he was Steve’s best friend from his life back in the 1940’s. “Are you sure that’s the right thing to do?”

She wasn’t aiming to insult him or talk down to him, but he didn’t know the Winter Soldier the way she did. Despite their confrontations, Steve still managed to see the man for what he once was rather than the killing machine he’d been turned into. She just didn’t want her friend to be disappointed if things didn’t work out the way he wanted them to.

“I need to find him, Nat,” he confessed. “I need to do what I can to help him.”

She shook her head. “You know the things that Hydra is capable of, what if he can’t be helped?” She hated mentioning that, but she couldn’t not remind him just how screwed Hydra was and the horrific things they did to people.

“I refuse to believe that,” he breathed. There had to be something they could do, something he could do to help his friend. “It could have just as easily been me that fell off that train and into their hands.”

“But it wasn’t,” she denied. “You haven’t seen him the way I have, you…the things he’s capable of…” Fighting against him a handful of times didn’t provide Steve with the insight that she had. She wasn’t exactly trying to talk him out of his decision. No, she just wanted to make sure that her teammate went into the situation without any surprises.

“He deserves a chance, Nat,” he argued. “We at least need to try.”

She nodded at him. “I’ll start a search, I can’t guarantee anything, but I will at least do that. Just…” She trailed off. “He may be beyond help at this point,” she warned him, not wanting Steve to get his hopes up too much.

He shook his head in negative. “You didn’t see him when we were up on that platform,” he denied, thinking on his last encounter with the man. “He recognized me, at least some aspect of him recognized me. He could have let me drown, but he didn’t.”

She placed a supportive arm on his shoulder and squeezed it in acknowledgement. “I’ll do it,” she said, removing her hand from his body. She looked down at her hands. “Bruce left,” she said quietly.

Steve immediately turned his attention on her. “I knew Thor was going to go off on his own for a bit,” Steve replied, but he’d had no idea about the doctor. “You okay?” He wasn’t exactly sure what sort of relationship Natasha had with Bruce, but he knew it was more than platonic for his female teammate.

Natasha shrugged.
“You want to talk about it?” He offered then.

“No.” At least not at that moment.

Daisy looked between Coulson and Fitz with trepidation. She knew exactly what Coulson had planned to say to the younger man and she was worried about how the engineer would take it. Months had passed since Jemma had been consumed by the monolith and they weren’t any closer to finding answers than they ever were. She’d been unable to locate Lincoln over the summer months. However, since the fall semester was getting ready to start, she planned on attempting again.

In the time that had passed since her first attempt to locate Lincoln, she’d traveled, looking for and helping any Inhuman she could. It wasn’t always easy and she wasn’t always a welcomed figure. However, it had been nice to get off the base for several days at a time. She’d met several people and exchanged contact information with them should they take her up on her offer to help. She tended to dread returning to the base given the melancholy air that had enveloped the place since Jemma’s disappearance. However, with the understanding that Coulson was finally going to approach the subject with Fitz, she wanted to make sure she there to support her friend should he need it.

Looking at the young man in front of him, Coulson spoke softly, but firmly. “You have shown so much heart, never giving up on Simmons, and I will always, always respect you for it,” he began. He’d been trying to work out the best thing to say to the tech genius, and he hoped that his words wouldn’t anger and offend him.

Looking at the director, Leopold Fitz didn’t react outwardly, but panic beginning to seep in inside his chest.

Coulson continued on. “But look around. We need you. We need that big brain of yours and that heart here. Okay? I miss her, too. I’m having a hard time accepting it all of it. I-I’m on my third hand, but nothing feels normal because nothing will feel normal. May took off on vacation and never came back, so I lost my right hand, too. We have got to accept it, to say goodbye. We need to say goodbye. Jemma would want us to do that. Okay?”

Pursing his lips, Fitz nodded slowly. “Okay,” he breathed softly. With one last look at Coulson, he turned around and walk away.

Expelling a deep sigh, the older man leaned against the nearest table top. “Well, that could have gone better,” he mumbled. Even as he spoke, he’d watched the hope drain from Fitz and he’d felt horrible.

“It could have, but it could have also been worse,” Daisy pointed out moving closer to him. “I don’t think it could have gone any worse if I had run over his dog,” the director tacked on in a quiet voice. He’d hated saying that to Fitz.

She shook her head. “You know how close they grew when they joined SHIELD, Jemma has been the one constant in his life,” she reminded him. “Of course, he’s going to be upset, but he…he understands your reasoning. He may not like it, but he understands,” she tried to comfort him. “We’ll get through this Coulson, we always do.” At least Fitz had a support system. Mack, Hunter and Bobbi were always there for him if he needed someone to speak to. And when she was on base, she was there too.

Scrolling through his contact list, Steve stopped on Daisy’s name. His thumb hovered above the
number unsurely. Despite whatever his outward insistence was when he was with his friends, his thoughts did stray towards Daisy every so often. He wished they hadn’t, but they did. Finding out that she’d interacted with him under false pretenses had been a blow to his male ego, it still stung. Until Clint’s reveal, he’d really enjoyed his time with her.

“Hey, Steve? You with me?” Sam asked.

His name being called pulled him from his thoughts. “Yeah…”

“You’re concentrating awfully hard on the phone in your hand,” the black man observed.

Steve pursed his lips and set his phone down. “I’ve been going over the idea of reaching out to Daisy,” he admitted. Unlike the rest of his friends, he knew that Sam would support his decision without feeling the need to chime in. If his friend had been surprised by the admission, it didn’t show on his face.

“What brought this on?”

Steve shrugged. “Nat and I were talking about all this stuff going on in the news and she sarcastically mentioned that Daisy probably knew what was going on.”

Sam nodded. It made sense. “And you want to reach out to her because of it? Find out more information?”

“She had a point,” Steve grudgingly admitted. In all honesty, that wasn’t his only reason for wanting to get into contact with her. “I may have overreacted,” he tacked on. As the weeks passed, his anger about the situation faded. “When I woke up, SHIELD was there for me.” He couldn’t honestly say what he would have done had he been alone. “But it didn’t take me long to realize what they were about. They…at one time, I think they may have thought they were doing right by wanting to protect the world from powered individuals, but somewhere along the way it changed.” It wasn’t so much wanting to protect the general public as it was control those certain individuals. If he, Thor or the Hulk weren’t under their thumb, would they have been locked away?

“What makes you think that’s changed?” Sam inquired after a short pause.

“Honestly, I don’t know if it has,” he admitted. It was the main reason why he’d been so against anything related to Daisy. “But Thor seemed so confident that there was something special about Daisy. He said that he could ‘feel’ her,” he shared with a frown. “How could that be unless she had some kind of power? What if she does have powers? That night at the club, she willingly left with that guy, said he was her partner. If SHIELD is working with powered individuals that must mean they’ve changed, right?”

Sam could only shrug his shoulders. By the time he’d met Steve and Natasha, everything had already gone to hell in a handbasket. The only things he knew about the organization were things that the others had mentioned around him. “If you want to reach out to her, then do it because you want to, not because someone said it was a good idea or because you’re trying to get information from her.”

Steve nodded.

“You want to call her?”

Steve considered the question for a moment. Did he want to call her and invite her into his life? He couldn’t rightly say, but he did want to talk to her and at the very least find some sort of closure and wash his hands of her completely if he needed to. “Yes,” he admitted.
“Then give her a call.”

Feeling a momentary flash of bravery, Steve reached for his mobile device and scrolled through his contacts before settling on her name and pushing the little green phone icon and put it on speaker.

“Johnson, here.”

Whatever sudden courage he’d experienced only a moment ago instantly deflated. Words failed him, and Steve began to panic. His eyes widened and he turned to look at Sam.

“Hello?”

Sam, using his hands, prompted Steve to respond.

Clearing his throat, Steve spoke into the phone. “Daisy? It’s Steve…Steve Rogers.”

As cool as she’d tried to play it since parting from him that night, more than once she still found herself wondering why he hadn’t called her. The first few times that she’d received a call from an unknown number, her heart would pound with anticipation, only to be let down when she realized it wasn’t him. She’d pretty much given up on the idea that he would.

“I didn’t think you’d answer.”

If he didn’t think she’d answer, then why had he called? “Oh, uh, hi,” she stumbled over her words. “I didn’t think you’d call.” Though between things at the base and tracking down powered individuals kept her busy enough, she couldn’t deny the flash of excitement she felt when she realized it was him calling her.

“I almost didn’t,” he confessed. He listened to the background noise fade away on the other end of the call. “Did I catch you at a bad time?” He waited for a response. For a moment, he wondered if he’d lost her. “Is everything okay?”

“No, not really,” she admitted before clearing her throat. “My friend is missing and we haven’t had much luck in locating her.”

He filed the information away. “I’m sorry to hear that,” he offered.

“Yeah…” She muttered. “I’m…I have to go. I’m following a lead and I was getting ready to get on a plane when you called.”

“Oh.” He fell silent for a moment. “Uh, long flight?” When he met Sam’s amused gaze, he scowled before looking back at the phone.

“No, thankfully. Steve, can I give you a call back at this number when I get a quiet moment?”

“Sure. I guess I’ll talk to you later.”

From his position across from Steve, Sam could only shake his head. What an awkward conversation. He watched his friend disconnect the call before turning to him.

Steve frowned when he noticed Sam shake his head negatively. “What?”

“You remind me of a twelve-year-old boy having his first phone conversation with a girl.”

Had he really sounded so bad? He knew he’d stumbled over his words a couple times, but surely being compared to a pubescent boy was an exaggeration…
“Things are a little different than they were back in the day,” Steve excused, hating that he’d sounded so unlike himself during that call.

Sam snorted at the excuse. “Yeah, I’m sure that’s the problem.” Amusement set aside, he looked at his friend in all seriousness. “I’m glad you got over yourself and decided to call her.”

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“You ready?” Mack asked, approaching Daisy from behind.

Forcing her thoughts onto the situation at hand, Daisy pocketed her phone and nodded. “Yeah, let’s go.” When her phone chirped, alerting her to a text, she fished the device back out of her pocket and unlocked it. “It’s Coulson,” she told her partner as she read the message. “Fitz discovered something. Coulson wants us to hold off on the trip.”
Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

Thor and Sif have a conversation. The agents catch a break where Jemma's disappearance is concerned.

Chapter Notes

Thank you for all the encouraging words. Also, I've written more of Thor in this chapter than I ever have in any of my AOS/Avengers crossovers. I apologize ahead of time if I've butchered my characterization.

A & M Chapter 4

Disclaimer: I did use episode transcripts for part of this chapter. I don't own anything familiar to Marvel or those transcripts.

“They’re getting ready to head out now,” Agent Davis said, watching video feed of Mack and Daisy preparing the quinjet for their trip.

Phil Coulson nodded at the update, however, before he could say anything, a loud alarm sounded that prompted the pair into action.

“What is that?” Davis asked, the sound unfamiliar to him.

Coulson looked over the control panel before them, reading the screen for an answer. “It's Fitz! Fitz broke into containment!” Without another word to his companion he ran to the room that housed the monolith.

Hot on the director's heels, Davis began calling for his teammate. “Fitz!”

“Fitz, get out of there!” Coulson barked, frowning as the young engineer joined them. “Are you crazy?” By then, the alarm began to gather attention from other agents as they closed in on the area.

While Fitz stood with Coulson, Davis grabbed another agent as they entered the room. “Close it! Close it!” The pair worked together to seal the container.

“I got it,” Agent Prince said as the alarm shut off.

Running his eyes over his agents to make sure they were okay, Coulson shook his head. “You guys good?” He asked.

Agent Prince nodded.

“We’re fine,” Davis answered.
Phil nodded. “Back to work, everyone,” he said, waiting for the area to clear out before speaking again. “Damn it, Fitz.”

He couldn’t even find it in himself to feel bad for ignoring a direct order. “I had to know, had to…” He trailed off.

“Had to know?” Coulson parroted. He had to know? And what was he supposed to tell the engineer’s mother if he’d disappeared? “I already lost Simmons to that thing. I cannot afford to lose you, too.” They couldn’t afford anymore losses. “Are you trying to get yourself killed?”

“Sorry,” Leopold Fitz immediately apologized before exhaling a sigh. “I won't give up. I can't give up,” he told his boss quietly.

He should have known that like Daisy, Fitz would have continued on looking for Jemma, new assignments aside. “None of us want to, Fitz,” he told the younger man quietly. “But Fitz, you tried,” he reminded him, not unkindly. “Okay?” He searched Fitz’s gaze. “You tried your hardest. Everybody knows that.”

Shaking his head, Fitz pursed his lips. “No. I missed something,” he admitted, thinking about the discovery he’d made after Coulson’s last discussion with him. “I m-I missed something,” he said, extending his hand.

For a moment, he thought the agent’s hand was empty. However, upon closer inspection, he discovered…what was that? “What is that?”

“Proof,” Fitz answered flatly.

Coulson turned a critical eye on the hand. Was that… “Sand,” Coulson said. Fitz was basing this on sand?

“Not just sand, impossible sand,” the engineer replied. “The Monolith's case is a clean room, there's nothing in there but that rock. Not even dust.”

Coulson nodded, already aware of that.

“Unless you blast it open with a shotgun and contaminate everything.”

“Okay… and that's not what this is?” Yes, it was supposed to be a clean room, but dirt could easily be tracked into the room.

“Okay, the sand itself not unusual,” Fitz admitted. “Mostly silicone-dioxide particles just like on Earth.”

Reading between the lines, Coulson nodded. “But you're saying this sand is not from Earth?”

Fitz licked his lips. “Sir, carbon dating shows that… It predates the Earth by a billion years.”

Huh. Color him surprised. “So, you think the rock is a portal?”

“No.” He way past thinking at that point. “No, I'm proving that it's a portal, okay, to another planet, a-a very old planet a crack in space-time that carried Simmons away and carried the sand back.”

If that was true, then she didn’t die when she first disappeared. The director shook his head. It didn’t matter though.

“Which means She's out there,” Fitz tacked on, with more hope than he’d had since her initial
disappearance.

As much as he wanted to believe his agent, he couldn’t. “But it's been months,” he reminded him.

“Yeah.” Fitz sighed.

Who was to say that she even survived being taken? What if she died upon landing wherever the monolith had sent her? If it was a portal to another world, who was to say she would have survived on an alien planet? “She could be long gone from wherever this thing dropped her,” he cautioned Fitz.

“Yeah.”

When Fitz still appeared anxious, he tried again. “She could be dead,” he said softly.

The engineer nodded. “Yes.” He supposed she could have died, but she wasn’t. He didn’t know how he knew, he just did. Jemma was alive.

“But we're gonna find out, aren't we?” Coulson asked after giving the man a once over.

“Yeah,” Fitz nodded.

Okay. This he could work with. He knew it wasn’t much to go off of, but Fitz could do it. And, he owed it to Jemma and the rest of their team to bring her home…dead or alive. “You're damn right,” he nodded.

“Yeah,” Fitz said, finally allowing a smile on his face. “Damn right,” he mumbled.

“Yeah. Okay, Fitz. What do you need?” He asked, willing to give the man what he needed.

“Uh, uh, well, uh, more historical data.” It would certainly be helpful. “People have studied this thing for centuries,” so there had to be records somewhere. “I need an expert on quantum mechanics and Einstein-Rosen bridge theory… and a-a sandwich would be nice. I might have an idea about the other things.”

Coulson nodded. “I’ll see what I can do. Daisy and Mack were getting ready to head out. I need to give them an update, I’m sure they’ll be willing to pitch in.”

~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*

“Thor, you have returned,” Lady Sif noted, bowing to the prince.

“I have been away long enough, thought it was time to return.”

The female Asgardian nodded. “And did you enjoy your time on Midgard?”

“For the most part,” he replied, not bothering to expand on his words.

“And how does the lady Jane fair?” Sif asked after a moment of silence.

He shook his head. “I would not know,” he admitted flatly. “Things did not work out with her.” He’d been at a loss when she decided to end things between them. Despite his promises and words, she remained unmoved.

She tilted her head slightly and offered him an apologetic smile. “I am sorry to hear that,” she said earnestly. When she first learned that her friend and love interest had fallen in love with a human,
she’d been more than a little put out. Though no words had been said or promises exchanged, she’d had it on good authority that after so many years, Thor had finally started noticing her in a different way...until Jane. However, as someone who knew how it felt to have an unrequited love, she would not wish it on him. “Have you seen your father yet?” She asked then, swiftly changing the subject.

“I have not. I came here with the intent to search you out.”

“Oh?” She asked quietly, attempting to ignore the flash of excitement upon hearing his admission. He searched her out? Why?

“Something very alarming is happening on Midgard,” he told her then. “Random people are undergoing a transformation of sorts that grants them abilities.”

She found herself freezing momentarily. “What sort of abilities?”

He shook his head. “As far as I know, no two have been the exact same,” he replied. “I know Odin has you keep an eye on Midgard. Have you seen anything? Dealt with Anything?”

Son of Coul immediately entered her mind as she thought back to the last time she’d been on Midgard, remembering the young maid on his team with the power to cause...earth quakes? Is that what they called them? At the time, she had been the only one with an ability...as far as she knew. Once her memory was recovered with the help of SHIELD, Vin-Tak had not mentioned any others being affected similarly.

He’d waited patiently as she thought over his words. However, he’d known Sif long enough to read to her...and well. She knew something. Once upon a time, she would not have hesitated to say anything, and he felt a stab of regret that their friendship had de-evolved in such a way. “I need your candidness,” he told her then.

Sif nodded at him. While she didn’t want to cause issues for Son of Coul, her first allegiance was to Thor and Asgard. “I have been to Midgard twice in the past couple years,” she admitted. “Last year, Odin discovered a Kree had traveled to Midgard and dispatched me to follow him. The Kree was tracking someone that set off a Kree device.”


“Thousands of years ago, the Kree visited Earth and gave a selected group of Individuals powers, intending to use them as an army should they need to.”

A frown pulled at his mouth. Why was this the first he was hearing of this?

“He was alerted that the artefact was activated and journeyed to Midgard to discover the culprit, insisting that he or she had been granted abilities and that without any control, needed to be put down. I...agreed to help him.” After all, Odin made it their responsibility to help protect Midgard.

“And this person?”

“Was discovered,” she replied. “Her name is Skye, she was...is a member of Son of Coul’s team.”

Thor frowned. An Agent Skye? “I don’t recall having met an agent Skye during my previous interaction with Son of Coul and SHIELD,” he admitted.

“She was not with him then,” she replied.

If she had not been a part of the organization then, how did Sif know her? “I must admit my
confusion,” he said. “How are you aware of this knowledge when I am not?” He asked, not meaning any offence, but still confused. “Your words lead me to think that Son of Coul is still active, but that cannot be possible since Loki killed him.”

“Son of Coul is alive,” she denied.

“Impossible,” he scoffed.

“It is true. I am not privy to the details as to how such a thing happened, but he is as alive as you or me.”

“Son of Coul is alive?” He asked once again, as if his ears had been deceiving him. He had harbored a deep remorse for the knowledge that it had been his brother to kill the agent. “And he has a powered individual on his team?” He didn’t feel comfortable with that knowledge. Coulson may not have been like a majority of the SHIELD agents, but he didn’t like the idea of SHIELD harnessing someone’s power.

“The Kree was going to put her down, I was going to put her down, but when things became too much for her to control, she knocked herself unconscious before becoming too dangerous for those around her.”

“What was this power?”

“Son of Coul called it an earthquake,” she said, unfamiliar with the euphemism.

He arched an expectant eyebrow at her. “That sounds like a powerful ability.”

She nodded. “I offered to bring her back here with me, but she refused. As far as I know, it was just Skye that developed an ability. There was no mention of anyone else. If something has happened since then, I have no knowledge of it.”

He considered her words. “You have been to this SHIELD base?” He watched as she nodded in acknowledgement. “Would you be able to find it again?”

She nodded. “I believe so.”

“Would you take me there?”

“You okay?”

In the two days since Coulson and Fitz shared the discovery, almost everyone was put to work. With Fitz having left specific instructions for those agents in his department, he, Bobbie and Coulson left to track down Professor Randolph for any assistance that he could provide on the monolith.

The words pulled her from her thoughts and Daisy blinked twice. “I don’t know,” she admitted, looking at Mack. “For the first time since Jemma disappeared, it feels like we have something to hope for.” Until then, there’d been no answers…no…anything. “But all of our hope is riding on an alien artefact that no one knows how to work, or how it works.” Pausing, she watched the various agents move around the monolith. “It’s just…if this doesn’t work…” She was afraid Fitz would never come back from it.

“Maybe this professor will be able to give us some insight…” He supplied quietly. “Do you think he will be helpful?”
Daisy could only shrug. “I don’t know,” she answered honestly. “When we were dealing with the Berserker Staff I was distracted by the changes it caused in Ward…” she finished guiltily. Most of her attention had been on her SO, she wasn’t concerned with much else at the time.

“Don’t feel bad, you didn’t know he was Hydra back then.”

She exhaled a deep sigh. “But I should have, we should have known that something wasn’t right by his reaction to it. I mean May touched it and she was no different than she usually was back then.” She shook her head clearing her thoughts.

“Hey guys, we may have an issue,” Piper said, approaching the pair.

“What sort of issue?” Mack asked.

“An Asgardian one.”

“You do realize Professor Randolph is Asgardian,,” Daisy pointed out, in case the other woman had forgotten it.

“Yeah, but last I checked, Randolph was on another continent. This issue is on our front door step,” Piper said, holding out a tablet.

Daisy reached for the video feed and winced. “Damn,” she muttered, handing the video feed off to Mack and grabbing for her phone. Spinning away from the pair, she connected a call to Coulson.

“Daisy?”

“Lady Sif and Thor are here,” she said. “I think it’s safe to say that the cat is out of the bag.”

“I think you’re right,” he replied.

“How do you want us to proceed?” She inquired after hearing a few choice words from him.

“There’s no point in lying at this point.” She listened as the others questioned him about what was happening and upon Coulson’s reply, she heard Bobbie exclaiming something about always missing the good things.

“So…tell him everything?”

Coulson exhaled a sigh. “Tell him the basics. I’d like to be there for the long conversation, but it’s gonna have to wait for the time being.”

“Will do,” she said, disconnecting the call. Without a word spoken between them, the three made their way to greet their guests.

“You do realize that it’s only a matter of time now before the rest of the Avengers come knocking on our door…” Mack observed.

Daisy nodded. “Probably.”

While Piper and Mack waited inside the base, Daisy journeyed to the surface in order to greet Sif and Thor. She pasted a smile on her face for them. While Sif appeared to be focusing on her, Thor was busy looking around the area.

“Lady Skye, you look well,” Sif greeted, looking the woman over. “You appear to be in much better spirits than when I last saw you.”
Daisy nodded. “I go by Daisy now,” she said. From the corner of her eye, she noticed Thor’s head
swivel in her direction, but she continued speaking to the Asgardian female. “I am, full control and
everything.”

“Forgive me for speaking out of turn,” Thor began, referring to the fact that he hadn’t yet been
introduced to her. “But you are the young maid Steve met that night.”

Once again, the agent nodded. “One in the same. It’s nice to meet you,” she said, extending a hand.
Instead of a handshake that she’d been expecting, he raised it and brought it to his mouth, placing a
kiss on the back of it. She immediately felt a rush of heat to her cheeks, unsure if it was the action
itself or the fact that it was the God of Thunder who had done it. Clearing her throat, she attempted to
clear back to the business at hand. “Coulson sends his apologies that he isn’t here to greet you
himself.”

“So, it’s true. He’s alive?”

“Yes. We’re dealing with a situation and he’s out of the country at the moment. If you would follow
me…” She turned around and led the pair through the mostly empty top building. “Our main base of
operations is underground, it was actually the main office when Peggy Carter was director,” she said,
though she doubted the name meant anything to him, despite the fact that he was Steve’s teammate.

“If you must know that I am here for answers,” Thor said, not thrilled with the idea of having to wait
for Coulson.

Daisy stopped in front of an elevator. “I’m aware and I will answer what I can. Of course, there are
things that Coulson would like to tell you himself, but it will have to wait until his return.” No words
were spoken once they entered the elevator.

Thor took the opportunity to study the agent. So, Skye and Daisy were the same person, which
meant she had powers. He reflected upon his time out with his team and his selection of Daisy from
the upper level of the club. He knew he’d sensed something about her. He wondered if Steve was
aware of Daisy’s ability, maybe not from her mouth, but from their attempt to learn more about her
and SHIELD. He’d since left New York, eager to return to Jane’s side. However, when their
relationship ended, he’d turned his attention to the world news and the humans that changed.

When the doors opened, revealing two agents, Daisy stepped out first. “Welcome to the Playground.
This is Agent Piper and this is Agent Mackenzie,” she introduced, pointing them out to the visitors.
The group made their way towards a vacant conference room, everyone taking a seat.

“How is it possible that Son of Coul survived Loki’s attack?” Thor immediately asked. He supposed
Fury could have lied to them, but remembering back to that day, he’d seemed rather upset at the time.

“He didn’t,” Mack replied.

“Before SHIELD fell and Fury left, SHIELD scientists developed a serum that could bring someone
back from death, but the trial run didn’t have…favorable results.”

Mack snorted upon hearing her words.

“How do you mean?” Thor asked.

“Everyone that was administered the drug went insane,” Daisy replied watching as the God to
Thunder grew alarmed. “There is a reason for it and suffice to say, that side effect is no longer a
concern. Part of the drug contained blood from a Kree alien.” When it appeared that Thor was going
to break in with a question, she held up her hand. “I don’t know how a Kree alien came to be in
SHIELD’s possession, that happened before I was an agent. The test subjects began incessant
 carving…on anything, bodies included. The project was shelved and Fury decided to use it in only
 the most extreme circumstance…like, if an Avenger died. Coulson had no memory of the experiment
 and when he started exhibiting that same warning sign we went searching for answers. Come to find
 out, what was being carved was a blueprint of an alien city that had been built by the Kree, which
 we eventually found, thus no more need to carve.” She watched Sif and Thor trade a significant
 glance. “What?”

“I’ve been hearing quite a bit about the Kree,” Thor said. “Lady Sif shared the story of her last visit
 on Midgard and your ability. Would I be correct to assume that has something to do with those that
 have been undergoing transformations?”

“The correct term is terrigenesis, but yes. They’re…we’re called Inhumans. Thousands of years ago,
 the Kree came to Earth and gave a group of humans various powers, an additional strand of DNA
 which was then passed on from one generation to another. The gene remains dormant, unless
 activated by a terrigen crystal.”

“Given the amount of time I have spent on Midgard, I would have thought that if people had powers,
 I would have been made aware?”

Daisy nodded, turning her attention to Lady Sif. “After you left, I was introduced to a man with the
 ability of teleportation. He rescued me from a situation and I was brought to secluded community of
 Inhumans. It was there that I learned to control my ability. Until me, terrigenesis was a selective
 process. People trained for years, learning to control their emotions before undergoing the process.
 This community was separate from the rest of the world, so no one knew that Inhumans even
 existed.”

“How did it go from that to a global phenomenon?” Thor asked then.

“The leader of the Inhumans built that community for her…our people. The terrigen crystals were a
 Kree invention and because the Kree never returned, she assigned her scientists to recreate the
 crystals so that the Inhumans would never die out,” Daisy began, leaving out her personal ties to
 Jiaying. “She…”

Mack, having sat quietly through Daisy’s explanation took over then when he sensed Daisy’s
 hesitation. “She grew to hate humans. By the time Daisy met them, she was so deeply involved with
 SHIELD and because SHIELD was alerted to the fact that humans had abilities, they wanted to meet
 her. She took the opportunity to stage a coup. Her plan was to release the terrigen crystals in mass so
 that there would be multiple human casualties, leaving Inhumans the supreme beings.”

“In an attempt to stop her, I used my powers to push a quinjet full of crystals into the ocean,” Daisy
 said softly. “I had no idea that the crystals would react with the water in such a way, tainting the
 fish.”

“Fish? That is what is causing this outbreak?”

Daisy nodded. “Anyone with that dormant gene that consumes the tainted fish, through fish oil pills
 or through consuming the fish directly, will go through terrigenesis.”

“And this leader? What happened to her?”

“She’s dead,” Daisy replied flatly.

“We’ve been keeping a close eye on any news that contains information on those that have gone
through terrigenesis,” Mack said. “However, the government isn’t very keen on our involvement.”

“Which brings me to another question. I was under the impression that SHIELD is no more,” Thor pointed out.

Mack nodded. “And as far as the rest of the world is concerned, that is still the story.”

“Hydra may not be what it was when they initially announced themselves, but they managed to shake people’s faith. The general population isn’t ready for SHIELD yet. We have worked behind the scenes since it fell. When it comes to those individuals that have gone through terrigenesis, we track them down and offer our assistance.”

“And are they receptive to your help?” Sif inquired.

“Sometimes,” Piper replied. “Sometimes they turn Daisy and Mack away, in which case we keep a list to refer back to.”

Daisy looked to the Asgardians again. When she noticed the less than pleased look on Thor’s face, she shook her head. “It isn’t like that,” she denied instantly. When he appeared ready to argue, she spoke up once again. “Believe me,” her voice took on one of earnest. “When Coulson found me I was working with a hacktivist group and had a strong dislike for the organization. If SHIELD was anything like it’s former incarnation, I wouldn’t be with them.”

The silence in the room was broken by the sound of Mack’s ringing mobile phone.

While the male agent talked to whomever was on the other side of the line, Thor turned his attention back to Daisy. “You are aware that Steve Rogers knows you are affiliated with SHIELD and is not happy,” he warned her.

The corners of Daisy’s mouth turned down in a frown. Her thoughts briefly fell on her last conversation with Coulson’s childhood hero. He hadn’t sounded mad… Then again, it had taken him longer to call her than she would have liked. Was that the reason why? “I wasn’t aware, no,” she admitted. Before she could say another word, Mack disconnected the call and stood up.

“That was Coulson,” Mack said, focusing on Daisy. “He’s asked us to bring the monolith to him.”

Daisy frowned, but otherwise remained impassive.

“And where exactly is that?” Piper asked.

“England.”

“I’ll ready the jet,” Piper said, excusing herself from the room.

The Inhuman looked towards Sif and Thor. “Duty calls. You’re more than welcome to wait here for Coulson’s return,” she offered. At least if the pair remained at the base there was less chance of the rest of the Avengers discovering the truth.

“A monolith?” Sif asked. “What sort of case are you dealing with?”

Daisy and Mack exchanged a look.
The agents attempt to bring Simmons back home.

A & M Chapter 5
Disclaimer: I did look up episode transcripts for this chapter. If it is too familiar, it isn’t mine.

“The Inhumans had this in their possession,” Daisy said, escorting Thor and Sif to the clean room that housed the monolith.

“A rock?” Thor asked, frowning in confusion.

Daisy shook her head in negative, watching as Mack and two other agents secured the monolith for transportation. “It’s more than that. I didn’t have a chance to discover what it really is, but I do know that my…the Inhumans were very afraid of it and very cautious. It liquifies at random intervals before solidifying again. One day, the latch that kept the case closed became unlatched somehow the next time it liquified, it absorbed my best friend, a team member of ours.”

As if knowing it was being talked about, the rock liquified before hardening back up.

Sif stared at the item with a critical eye, it was almost reminiscent…

“With nothing to work with and no response to anything we’d done, we thought that she was dead, but…we’re running with a new idea that this is some sort of…transport.”

Sif frowned. “That is a leap,” she admitted. “May I ask why you think it’s a transport?”

“Another team member discovered that when it liquified, it left sand behind. Not enough to be noticeable, but he noticed it because he was looking for something. He ran tests on the sand and it predates Earth.” She watched the Asgardians nod in understanding.

“It’s a portal to another world,” Thor breathed, amazed by the possibility it offered. He wondered where it led to, if it was a harsh planet, no wonder these Inhumans were afraid of it.

Daisy looked at the pair. “Have either of you ever seen something like this?”

Sif nodded. “Once, a long time ago. The…rock was different than this one though, but I believe the concept is the same,” she replied.

Thor nodded. “Chances are that the liquification isn’t random,” he observed.

“But we’ve run various controlled tests…” Daisy denied.

“Whatever is causing the liquification is probably because of something that’s occurring on the other side,” Sif chimed in.

Daisy considered the words and nodded in understanding. However, that still meant that they had no way of knowing exactly when it intended to liquify… She wondered if the Professor had any help to
offer the others, or a way to manipulate it into working, because they’d tried several different things over the weeks and had never been able to control it. She was so caught up in her thoughts that she missed the look that the God of Thunder exchanged with his friend.

“Lady Daisy,” Thor said, garnering her attention. “When you deliver this, we would like to travel with you.”

The words immediately pulled at her attention. “Why?” She asked before she could help herself. It wasn’t that she didn’t appreciate the offer, but neither owed them anything.

“If this is a portal to another world, no one on this one is qualified enough to operate it,” he told her simply.

Daisy frowned at the words. “And the two of you are?” She asked.

“Not exactly, no,” Thor admitted after a moment. “However, extra assistance could not harm the situation.”

Daisy attention fell on the scene on the opposite side of the window, watching as the monolith was carefully located on the jet. She waited until Mack re-emerged from the jet and tapped on the glass to garner his attention and met him halfway. “They offered their help and want to travel with us.”

Mack frowned. He reached for his phone and attempted to call Coulson. When the director never answered, he disconnected the call. “He didn’t answer. What do you think?”

Daisy exhaled a sigh. “If this situation becomes FUBAR it might not hurt to have back-up…”

“Coulson should really have the say so in this,” he didn’t disagree with her reasoning, but it didn’t feel right making such a decision without him.

She nodded. “I know, but this isn’t about Coulson.” His secret was already out, it was only a matter of time before the rest of the Avengers found out about him. None of that mattered, getting Jemma back was their first priority. “It’s about Jemma, and if they can offer any help…getting her back is the most important thing right now.” She watched her partner nod in agreement. “If Coulson gets upset for going over his head, I’ll take the heat.”

“Okay.”

“For Simmons,” she said.

“For Simmons,” he repeated.

Daisy turned around to look at the Asgardians. “Wheels up in five.”

“We’re ready,” Sif replied.

“Okay, I just need to grab one thing,” she said, excusing herself from the pair.

Once they were left alone, Sif turned to Thor. “Are you well?” She inquired, frowning when she realized his attention was on the woman who’d just excused herself from them.

“I am,” he answered, giving his companion his full attention. “I apologize, I was lost in my thoughts,” he said, his eyebrows furrowed together. “Do you have any pressing matters to attend to when we finish here?”

“I do not…”
He nodded once. “I would like to work with her on her abilities,” he said after a moment. “She said she has control, but I would like to expand on them.”

“Anything specific?” Sif asked.

He shook his head in negative. “No. However, if she uses her powers when sparring then you and I are the only ones able to take a hit and get back up. It is only a matter of time before they face something out of their depths.”

“I will extend an offer to her on our return,” the female Asgardian said. 

“My people?” The professor asked. “I meant it when I said I wouldn’t touch it until your agent was rescued, but this needs to be neutralized.”

Coulson looked towards the entrance. The jet had landed minutes ago. “And there they and…Thor are…” Coulson trailed off, feeling complete shock upon seeing Thor and Sif with his agents.

“I said I would not return to Asgard!”

Coulson shook his head. “I had no idea they would accompany my agents,” he told the professor before making his way towards the party.

“Seriously, a castle?” Daisy asked him as soon as he joined them.

Coulson could only shrug. “I didn’t pick the place. Though, we’ve been in worse…” He looked to Thor.

“Son of Coul, it lightens heart to see you alive and well,” Thor greeted.

“Thor,” the older agent greeted. “Lady Sif. I didn’t expect to see you here.”

“Apologies for taking advances,” Sif began. “When your agents explained the situation, we offered our services.”

“Any issues during transport?” Coulson asked, looking to Mack.

“All good.”

“Good. We’re ready, all we need is the monolith. Fitz will show you where to put it.” As Mack turned to leave the area, he turned back to the Asgardians. “I wasn’t expecting your assistance so I looked elsewhere. Through one of our many missions, I met a professor, though when he came to Earth he was an Asgardian warrior and when the rest of his men left, he didn’t go with them.”

A deserter? Thor peered over Coulson’s shoulder. “There is no one there,” the blonde remarked.

Coulson spun around and discovered the professor was in deed gone. “Damn…” he muttered.

“Is this going to be problem?” Sif asked, ready to assist if needed. “I will find him myself.”

The director shook his head in negative. “He’s harmless…for the most part. Just wants to be left alone.” He shook his head as if he was clearing his thoughts. “He answered most of our questions anyway.” If the man became an issue in the future, they’d deal with him then.

“What do you need us to do?” Sif asked.
“Help Mack get the monolith where it needs to be?” Coulson asked. As the Asgardians turned away, he looked to Daisy. “So…how’d the conversation go?”

“He had a couple questions that I couldn’t answer,” she shrugged. “Mostly, he seemed accepting of everything.”

“Good. I’ll speak to him when I have the opportunity. Follow me and I’ll tell you our plan.”

Daisy followed him into a large circular room, watching Bobbi and Fitz set up multiple…were those speakers? She turned her attention back to Coulson as he explained the idea and how everything worked or should have worked if everything went smoothly.

As soon as Mack, Thor and Sif entered the room with the box, the Asgardians took over releasing the monolith from the container, dropping it into a cylinder shaped hole in the middle of the room before backing up and standing with Coulson and Daisy.

“Okay, here we go,” Fitz murmured, turning on the various gadgets. “Everyone stay clear.”

They watched as the monolith began to liquify and remained so for several long seconds. “It’s working Fitz! It’s staying open!”

The engineer stepped close enough to the cylinder to shoot a flare gun through the alien device.

However, before anyone could say anything else a grinding sound began, signaling that something was wrong. “What?” Fitz asked. “I don’t—I need more light. The gears have locked! Damn it.”

His attention was pulled from the situation when Daisy began to waiver on her feet. “Skye? Hey,” he said, putting a hand on her shoulder. “Skye, you okay?”

“It’s Daisy now, sir,” she reminded him softly. “You’re having a really hard time with this, huh?”

“Yeah,” He admitted. “Daisy, you all right?”

She gave a barely perceptible nod. “I’m better. That pulsing sound was killing me.” She said as the room finally fell into silence. She looked up to find him frowning at her. “What?”

“What pulsing sound?” Coulson asked, looking to Thor and Sif, wondering they heard anything.

They appeared to be on the same page as him.

“Are you serious? It was deafening,” she said, though no one seemed to have experienced the same awful sensation.

“Damn it!” Fitz exclaimed, drawing everyone’s attention. “That flare went straight through…. If we could just send a hard wired probe through, we could see the other side.”

“We’ll fix the machine, Turbo,” Mack said, stepping forward.

“We have to fix it,” the engineer said, frustration settled over his facial features.

Mack placed a hand on Fitz’s shoulder. “You need to chill,” he said softly. Frustration wouldn’t help any of them.

“You know, we’re lucky the room is shaped this way or the machine might have shaken the room right down on top of us,” Bobbi said then.

Fitz continued to stare at the monolith, his mind going a mile a minute as he considered their next
option. “Wait. Wait. Quantum Harmonic Oscillation theory, like the professor said,” he said, mostly to himself.

Mack gave the younger man a keen look. “I know that look.” And he wasn’t comfortable with it at all.

“It’s a strange shape for this time period because it’s made to resonate, uh, to-to…to uh create a quantized field within the stone.”

It was Coulson’s turn to step in. “Fitz, you’re talking, but we’re not totally following,” he said, reminding the engineer that they weren’t all science marvels like him.

Daisy stepped forward then, having understood what her friend had been trying to say. “The room is a speaker. The machine is an amplifier. Uh, a sub subsonic frequency to resonate with the Monolith.”

Bobbi frowned. “Are you saying you figured out a way to fix the machine?”

The Inhuman shook her head. “No. I’m saying I figured out that we don’t have to. I can do it. I can open the portal myself. Well, turns out we’re standing in the middle - of the world’s largest subwoofer.”

Considering her words, Fitz moved around the hole in the ground for a different perspective. “Yeah,” he nodded to himself, thankful that Daisy was able to explain it in such a way.

“If the point of the machine was to resonate the room at a certain frequency, I can do that,” she said once again.

Fitz’s head shot up and looked at her. “And you can replicate it?” He asked, needing to make sure.

The Inhuman nodded. “Kind of drilled into my brain.”

Coulson immediately started shaking his head. “And it could kill you,” he reminded her, thinking on her previous reaction.

“How long do you think you can hold it?” Mack asked, concern written on his features.

She considered her prior reaction. “Maybe a minute,” she nibbled on her bottom lip, turning to look at Coulson.

He was tempted to put an end to the entire thing, but the resolve on her face had him hesitating. “If it’s too much, you pull back,” he ordered her sternly. “I can't lose you, too,” he tacked on in a quiet voice.

She nodded in response. “I got this,” she said just as softly.

“Camera and data sensors are hard-lined back to us through a cable no signal loss that way. If Daisy can hold it, we'll get a visual of the other side. That's what we're looking for,” Fitz said as Daisy moved closer to the hole. She claimed a seat near the edge with a perfect vantage point of the monolith.

“All right, you listen to me. You take care of yourself. We lose that probe, nobody cares,” Coulson tacked on.

“Forgive my confusion,” Thor began. “What exactly is she planning to do here?” By them the rumbled had started once again.

“That’s it, Tremors,” Mack said from beside her. He was her begin panting. “That’s it, just…hold it open as long as you can.”

The director looked from his Inhuman towards Fitz, noticing the absolve in the younger man’s facial features. He began shaking his head before the other man jumped into the cylinder. “Fitz, no!” He watched Thor and Sif step closer to the edge, ready to follow if needed.

Daisy’s hand waivered, not expecting the action and she struggled to keep her hand and focus steady. Time seemed to stutter as she focused on holding the range. Her head started pounding and her entire body was beginning to struggle.

Witnessing her strength give way, Coulson started barking orders. “Damn it. Pull him back! Get him back here.” They couldn’t lose Fitz too!

Unable to discern the words, Daisy cracked an eye open. “Aah! I can't hold it! No!” She warned just as darkness began to close in around her and falling limp.

“Is he there?” Coulson asked, marching forward.

Thor leaned over the edge. Upon seeing two dirty figures clinging together he nodded. “He is back and I believe he retrieved your missing comrade.”

Mack caught his partner, pulling her against him. “You did good, tremors,” he murmured, putting his arm around her shoulders and securing her against him. When he noticed the trail of blood from one of her nostrils he attempted to wipe it away. “You did good,” he whispered.

Thor and Sif jumped into the dirt filled hole, careful not to disturb the pair inside.

“They appear unharmed,” Sif called for everyone else as she separated the pair, reaching for Fitz as Thor easily pulled Jemma into his arms, they jumped up towards the others.

Bobbi rushed forward, running her eyes and hands over Jemma’s body to check for injuries. “She’s perfectly fine…at least physically,” she said turning to do the same thing to Fitz, also discovering that appeared unharmed.

The Asgardian Prince looked down at the remnants inside the cylinder. “The portal is destroyed.”

Coulson nodded. “Good. One less thing to worry about keeping safe,” he said, his eyes falling on Daisy.

Bobbi fished her phone out of her pocket, sending a quick text to Hunter, letting him know about their progress.

Upon returning to the Playground, Jemma, Fitz and Daisy were whisked away to the infirmary so someone could keep an eye on them round the clock for the next twelve hours, at the very least. When everything was settled and reports were finished, Coulson locked himself away with Thor, and by extension, Sif, answering any and all questions the Asgardian had for him.

Though Daisy had touched base on many things during her conversation with the pair, she held back anything that was personal for Coulson; something he was both thankful for and slightly annoyed by. Some of the stories he didn’t mind telling, but he was still dealing with the loss of his limb and...
speaking about it still smarted. By the time the conversation came to end, it was the early hours of the morning and his body was begging him for rest.

“It’s an extraordinary team you have here.”

Coulson nodded. “They are that,” he easily agreed.

“How long until Lady Daisy is recovered?” Lady Sif asked.

“She should be fine tomorrow,” Coulson replied. “She just overexerted herself. After resting tonight and a lot of food in the morning, she should be back to her usual self by the early afternoon. Why?” He was amazed by the amount of food she could put down when it came to replenishing her strength, she could rival Steve Rogers on his best days.

“I would like to train with her,” Sif replied.

The agent tilted his head and looked at her with curiosity. “Daisy has had extensive training during her time with us,” he denied.

“No offense was meant.” The female Asgardian replied. “However, if she is one of the first people to deal with those that have recently transitioned, she needs to be able to protect herself and the rest of her team.”

“I would never send them into a situation they weren’t prepared to face,” Coulson said, feeling slightly offended.

Sensing that Coulson was beginning to take their words personally, Thor spoke then. “We would simply like to work with her and cultivate her powers. You and I both know it will only be a matter of time before you face something out of your depth,” he told him quietly, watching as all argument left the director. “We would simply like to work on her hand to hand combat, help her so that using her ability comes naturally.”

“And she can’t do that against the rest of the team…” Coulson sighed. “If she’s interested in your offer, I won’t stand in the way. However, if a situation should arise-”

“Of course,” Sif said, already having anticipated that.

“Does this mean you will be staying with us for a few days?”

“If it isn’t an imposition. It would make things a bit easier.”

Coulson stood up, his companions following suit. “I’ll show you to your bunks,” he said, exiting the room. However, he didn’t get far before coming to a stop. “Mel,” he said, staring at Melinda May.

“Phil,” the woman said, nodding at him before her attention fell on the figures behind him. “Is everything okay?” The last time they’d seen Lady Sif they ended up fighting a Kree alien.

“It is,” he replied. “Now.” He looked her over, grudgingly admitting to himself that the time off agreed with her. “When Andrew came back but you didn’t…” he trailed off for a moment. “Are you here to stay?”

She nodded. “Hunter and I went undercover,” she said. “Phil, Ward is back,” she told him. “He fancies himself in charge now.”

“Did you just…Ward is the new head of Hydra?” He asked in disbelief.
She shrugged. “Well, no one’s been able to knock him out of the position,” she said. “There have been a few challengers, but…”

There wasn’t anything they could do about it right then. “We’ll talk tomorrow,” he said wearily.

May nodded in response, but otherwise remained quiet.

Stepping up to her, he placed a hand on her shoulder and squeezed it affectionately. “Welcome back,” he told her quietly.
Chapter 6

A & M Chapter 6

Disclaimer: I don't own anything familiar to Marvel.
Author's Note: Thank you for all of the reviews, they really do make my day.

Though her body was protesting, her mind was awake and alert and Daisy gave into the sensation. Opening her eyes, she focused on the ceiling. The lights were dim, but still bright enough if needed. Raising her hands, momentarily ignoring the pinch she felt on the top of her hand, she brushed at the area under her eyes, sure that her mascara had smudged after her display of powers earlier. Speaking of earlier…exactly what time was it? She felt hunger pains, realizing that she’d probably depleted herself, she forced herself into a sitting position. Her eyes traveled from the IV in the back of her hand to the metal equipment holding what she was sure was either saline or pain medication, not quite empty yet.

Slipping out of bed, she stood up and reached for the infusion pole to move it with her when she walked. Her attention fell on the other two beds, first on Fitz, whom was still lost to the waking world. Mentally reminding herself to have a word with him about his impulsive actions in the castle, she looked beyond to Simmons.

Approaching the bed of her second companion, she raised a hand and ever so softly brushed the hair out her friend’s face. She considered sitting with her friend, eager to see her awake, however, the desire for food won out. Leaning over, she placed a kiss on Jemma’s forehead, holding her breath when her friend jostled slightly. When she settled back down into her prior position, Daisy moved away from the beds and out of the room.

“You are well enough to be out of bed and mobile?”

She turned towards the voice, only to find Thor lounging on one of the couches in the outer area of the medical ward. Did no one assign him a bunk for the night?

“Shouldn’t you be in bed at…” her eyes sought out the wall clock, “four in the morning?”

“I did manage to find rest, but sleep is difficult to come by these days,” he replied. “Allow me to repeat myself. Are you well enough to move?”

She shrugged. “I’ll feel better after I eat.”

He nodded, remembering his prior conversation with Son of Coul. “Would you mind if I accompanied you?”

“Knock yourself out,” she replied, making her way into the hallway in the direction of the mess hall.

“Do you always react similarly when overusing your powers?”

She nodded. “When I first got my powers, it seemed like I was always exhausted, but it was from trying to suppress them more than anything. It wasn’t until after I trained at Afterlife that I started building any sort of longevity. The last time I overexerted myself was after my confrontation with the leader of the Inhumans. After pushing the jet into the ocean she tried to suck the life out of me…literally.” As bad as she may have felt earlier, it was nothing compared to the way Jaying left her feeling that day.
“Lady Sif and I held a conversation earlier and we would like to train with you... when you are rejuvenated.”

“Train with me?” She asked. Never in her life would she have imagined she’d get such an opportunity.

He nodded. “Disregard for humans aside, it was wise to create a separate community for your kind where Inhumans could train without worrying about offending humans or possibly incensing them. Your team may not condemn you the way others would, but they are not equipped to help you with hand to hand combat should you use your powers.”

“I don’t want to use my powers all of the time,” she confessed after she processed his words and watched him frown in response. “I don’t want to be defined by them.”

“It is not about being defined, it is about cultivating the gift that has been bestowed upon you.”

“Gift?” She asked. “This gift,” she stressed the word, “has given me more grief than I’ve ever had to deal with in my life prior to them. So, gift is not the word I would use to describe these abilities.” Sometimes she wished she could go back in time, prior to their adventure in San Juan and make a different decision.

“All the more reason to expand them, gain full control at every angle,” he countered. “Your world is forever changed now, it is only a matter of time when the general public comes to the realization that there is no cure for this... contagion,” he said thinking on every news broadcast he’d seen and what they were calling those that were changing. “What do you think they will do then?” He inquired.

She wanted to argue his points, but each one was valid and had crossed her mind at one time or another. The ATCU was handling things for the moment, but even then she didn’t trust them to do what was best for her people. Perhaps since Simmons was home Coulson would put a few people on it, so they could discover exactly how the ATCU was ‘helping.’

“You know, when I first arrived at Afterlife everything was...” Dare she say exciting? “I had no idea what to expect. All I knew was that other than three team members, everyone else turned on me in one manner or another.” It may not have lasted long, but the point was, it still happened. “For the first time since coming out of that Kree city things didn’t feel so hopeless... but I wasn’t one of them. An Inhuman. Not really, because I’d been raised in the outside world with no other Inhumans in my life. Those that had been waiting to turn were resentful of me, like I cut the line or something... More than human, less than Inhuman.” They entered the mess hall and she immediately moved to the pantry and reached for the nearest bag of chips, munching on a few as she rifled through the items. It was then that she figured the IV bag was filled with pain medication, because she hadn’t admitted such since she was at her lowest emotional point.

“You are less than no one,” he denied. “With the right training, people will tremble before you.”

One side of her mouth lifted in amusement over his choice of words. “That’s one way of putting it,” she muttered, grabbing a loaf of bread and peanut butter. “I don’t want people trembling before me,” she said, raising her voice for him.

“Then do not work on your powers. Continue to live your life in a mediocre way.”

After retrieving the jam from the refrigerator Daisy shut the door and turned to look at him. “Wow, you’re kind of a dick.” Her eyes immediately widened and she raised her free hand to cover her mouth. Huh, definitely pain medication then... She opened her mouth to apologize, but when she looked at her companion, she discerned the amusement on his face.
“I’ve heard worse,” he allowed. Sensing that they would not see eye to eye on the subject he pursed his lips. “I will not mention this again right now, but I do need your acknowledgement that you will at the very least consider the proposal.”

“Done,” she immediately agreed, anything to get him to change the subject. She began making the first of three triple decker peanut butter and jam sandwiches.

“You intend to eat all of that?”

She shrugged. “The carbs from the bread and protein from the peanut butter will help and then I’ll probably sleep for a little longer.” Raising her eyes, she looked at him. “Would you like one? I don’t intend on making it for you, but the fixings are out.”

Thor moved around the countertop to join her. “I have had one of these before, but not three layers,” he confessed.

“You’re in for a treat then. The only thing that could make this better was if the bread was toasted, but I don’t have the patience for that right now.”

The pair slipped into silence as they continued to put together their sandwiches. Neither seemed concerned with filling the silence that had settled over them, but that was when Daisy began to lose herself in her thoughts…or more specifically, thoughts of Steve. “Can I ask you a question?” She asked after a moment.

“You may ask.”

“Prior to our trip to England you mentioned that Steve was aware of my affiliation to SHIELD…” At the time, she’d pushed any personal questions away, focused on the situation at hand. However, it had started to creep back into her thoughts. She watched him nod in acknowledgment. “And then you mentioned that he was unhappy about it.”

He offered her a sad smile. “You must understand that when members of Strike team turned on Steve, it was very personal.”

She frowned. “It was personal for all of us,” she denied. Steve wasn’t the only one that lost friends that day, if they ever were his friends. “My own SO turned out to be Hydra and then he kidnapped me…twice,” Daisy tacked on, noticing his frown. “I wasn’t strong enough to fight him the first time, but I took care of myself the second time, shot him four times.” She pursed her lips. “He is the one responsible for Fitz’s sometimes still addled mind and stutter after dropping Fitzsimmons into the ocean. So, while I can understand the betrayal he felt, he isn’t the only one.”

“Have you heard about the way he woke up? He was in a SHIELD facility, however, instead of simply telling him the truth, they went through an elaborate plot to make it seem as if no time passed.”

She frowned. “I’m aware, and normally, I would have found issue with it, however, it was their way of attempting to slowly introduce him to the world so they didn’t shock him outright.”

“Until witnessing the regard that Son of Coul has for you and vice versa, SHIELD used powered individuals for their own needs and if that individual didn’t play nice…” he trailed off. It had been like that for him, for Banner when he first began turning into the Hulk, for Steve. Yes, they helped them, but only when they received something in return. “When Steve was on his feet and able to take care of himself on his own terms, instead of trusting him, they planted an agent in his apartment building that attempted to befriend him in order to keep a close eye on him.”
“I know that SHIELD had its flaws, believe me,” she insisted. “Coulson did as well. That is why things are different now.” It had taken the new director a while to grudgingly admit that they weren’t always in the right, but as soon as he took over, he began changing things, starting by removing levels…other than what the Koenigs had done. No one even knew what the colors were supposed to represent.

“He does not know that, nor does the rest of the team.”

“He called me,” she said after a moment of reflection. “Before you and Sif showed up on our doorstep, he called and acted as if…” She sighed. “If he was angry, it never showed. Why would he…?” Why would he act as if all was right when it obviously wasn’t?

She wasn’t angry so much as disappointed by the revelation. Obviously, their few hours together didn’t afford them an opportunity to get very personal with one another, but it was no secret how the Avengers felt as a whole where SHIELD was concerned, it was why she didn’t mention her affiliation with them. She didn’t make the decision to consciously lie for nefarious reasons, it was simply so that he didn’t immediately turn away from her. Aside from that, given they way he’d publicly disavowed the organization, she owed him no answers or information.

Up until Thor’s confession, she’d been under the impression that she and Steve could have formed a friendship of sorts. And if that had been the case, of course, she would have told him everything… eventually. Romantic aspect aside, between Miles’ lies and every aspect of Ward, she just didn’t have good luck when it came to members of the opposite sex… And then there’d been her mother’s lies.

He shook his head in response, refusing to mention Tony’s initial plan. His companion was already hurt enough as it was.

“At least you went and found answers. You didn’t get mad, you simply approached us and listened to what was said.”

He nodded once. “Ah, but I am not as emotionally invested as the rest of my team,” he reminded her. Steve worked with the STRIKE team, Natasha and Clint had both been high level agents. Howard Stark kept a close friendship with Peggy Carter, and by extension SHIELD, until his untimely death, meaning that Tony had been there as well.

Due to the topic of their conversation, her appetite had virtually disappeared, but she powered through the last sandwich before she picked up the mess they’d made. “I need to go lay back down,” she said then.

“Lady Daisy?” Thor asked, garnering her attention. “I do apologize for upsetting you.”

She nodded at him and offered him a strained smile. It wasn’t him, not really. He had simply been the bearer of less than pleasant news. “It isn’t your fault,” she said softly.

“After facing such situations as we have…he stands as a brother to me. He is a good man, but like many before him he can get caught in his emotions.”

She shook her head. “His goodness isn’t up for debate,” she denied. “Maybe we can discuss training again once I’ve rested a bit more?” She watched him acknowledge her words. “Goodnight, Thor.”

“Lady Daisy.”

~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~
The next time Daisy woke up, she was free from her IV and she was alone in the room. The bed that Fitz formerly occupied was already made up for the next patient which meant he was no worse for wear after her jumped through the portal she’d created. The blanket on Jemma’s bed was turned down, but with her friend nowhere in sight, Daisy frowned. She’d hoped to have some time with Jemma before the real world came knocking once again, because it wouldn’t be long.

“How are you doing, Daisy?”

She looked up at the sound of a voice and immediately nodded as Bobbi entered the room. “Much better,” she said. At the very least, she felt human…or more human than she had since England. “I think I’ll need to eat again, but I’m okay.”

Bobbi nodded. “You were pretty dehydrated after everything. We gave you some saline and once that was finished we gave you some pain medication.”

“Yeah, I assumed as much,” the Inhuman admitted. “I was awake earlier and I ran into Thor,” her brows began to furrow with confusion. Or had that all been a dream? “I think we had a conversation,” she said, trying to remember anything specific. Seriously, what had they talked about?

Upon seeing the confusion on her friend’s face, she stepped forward. “You did,” she assured her teammate. “I don’t know what you discussed, but you did talk to him. This is why they tell you not to make any life changing decisions when you’re on the pain medication.”

“Where’s Jemma?”

“She’s getting dressed, she wanted to bathe.”

Daisy nodded. “How is she?”

Bobbi tilted her head. “You know I can’t discuss that with you,” she countered softly with a sad smile. Though she wasn’t a doctor and hadn’t taken the Hippocratic Oath, she still needed to respect a patient’s privacy. Other than Jemma, Coulson was the only other person who knew the entire diagnosis.

Daisy sighed and looked away, feeling dejected. She knew it was a long shot, but as she hadn’t spoken to her friend since her return…

“I can’t go into specifics, but she’s gonna have a long road ahead of her,” Bobbi allowed then. The pair was interrupted by a gurgling sound coming from Daisy’s stomach. “Sounds like you need to eat.”

“Yeah…” She’d been hoping to see Jemma, but apparently her body had other ideas. “I keep missing her.”

“Hey, she’s home and she isn’t going anywhere,” the statuesque blonde reminded her gently. “Come on, let’s get you some food” She locked arms with Daisy as the pair made their way towards the cafeteria.

Once they entered their intended destination, Bobbi had her patient sit down while she bustled around the kitchen and made the Inhuman a large sandwich with meat, cheese and all the fixings before excusing herself to return to the medical ward. As soon as the plate was set in front of her, Daisy dug into the food, not bothering to take the time to appreciate it.

“You’re looking better.”
Daisy looked up to see Coulson standing a few feet away. She offered him a smile. “I’m feeling better.”

He nodded. “Good. I… I hate to do this to you, but we’ve got a situation. But… before I go any further, I need the truth. Are you up this? Because if you aren’t, we’ll come up with something else.”

“I’m okay.” When he turned up the intensity in his gaze, she met it straight on, hiding nothing. “Really, I’m fine.” He studied her for a moment longer before nodding in acceptance.

“There’s been another sighting of that creature.”

She didn’t have to ask for clarification, she’d already encountered him a couple times previously and they’d been too late to help one poor soul that he’d attacked. “Where?” She asked, swallowing the last bit of her food and taking a sip of water. When he rattled off the place, she froze momentarily. “That’s where Lincoln is… or… should be,” she frowned before standing up.

He nodded. “I know. Wheels up in ten?” He asked, hoping that would be enough time for her to change and meet Mack at the jet.

“I’ll be there.” Lincoln wouldn’t be the next casualty. She owed him that much. He’d helped her when she felt like the whole world had turned against her, she would return the favor, whether the stubborn ass liked it or not.

*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*

By the time they returned to the base that night with Lincoln in tow, it was a weary group that sat down to speak. Not only had their fight against the creature they’d called Lash left them confused but the ATCU had also shown up.

“Do we know if anyone was killed?”

Daisy nodded. “A security guard.” She looked toward Lincoln’s direction. He’d been silent since their confrontation with Lash, but there was no mistaking the wince on his face. “I think he was the only casualty, but once powers were flying…” she trailed off. They had to use everything they could to get an advantage over him.

Mack frowned then, looking from Daisy towards Lincoln. “Did either of you notice that he seemed more focused on Lincoln?” He asked.

Daisy shook her head in negative. “No. He… attacked both of us.”

Mack shook his head in response. “He attacked you both because you were standing together, but…” he’d had a different vantage point.

The female inhuman thought back to their fight. Was Mack correct in his assumption?

“He’s right.” The words were soft, but they were heard all the same. Lincoln looked to Daisy. “He was after me.”

“The question is, why?” Coulson inserted then. “Every person that he’s attacked so far, that we know of anyway, is an Inhuman.”

Lincoln gave his attention to the director. “Who else has been attacked?”

Coulson rambled off three names, making sure to mention the first person that they hadn’t been able
to save.

His eyes dawned with realization as he listened to the names. “They aren’t just Inhumans, they’re people who were at Afterlife.”

Daisy frowned. “Are you sure?”

Lincoln nodded.

“If he’s someone that’s just recently undergone Terrigenesis, then how does he know anyone from Afterlife?” Daisy inquired then. It had to be someone close, someone that knew the existence of Afterlife.

“We could start making a timeline,” Mack suggested. “Look back through each of those deaths and begin marking off everyone that was seen at that time?”

Coulson nodded as he considered the idea.

“I’m assuming that whoever this person is, they don’t look like that all the time…” Lincoln said. “I’ve seen something like this before. You should know that whoever it is…will eventually change and it will stick,” he waited for the revelation to sink in.

After a pregnant pause, Daisy spoke up. “We should also look into the ATCU,” she hadn’t been comfortable with how close they’d been to the situation. “Who knows what they’re capable of…”

Coulson nodded. “I still have one or two connections to the government, I’ll see what I can learn.” He’d start making calls in the morning. “Lincoln, until this is resolved, I think it’s best you stay here. You don’t have to,” he was quick to add. “But at least this way, you’ll be safe.”

Lincoln pursed his lips, not at all thrilled with the idea. “Yeah…” he muttered.

Coulson looked at his watch. “It’s getting late. Mack, if you could get started on that timeline in the morning?” He waited for the other man’s agreement. “Okay, we’ll talk tomorrow.”

Once Coulson was finished, the room cleared out until only Daisy was left with Lincoln. “Look, I get that you aren’t happy about this.”

He nearly choked on a humorless laugh. “Not happy?” He repeated.

“But we’ll figure this out,” she continued on as if he hadn’t spoken. “We’ll figure out who it is and keep him…or her from hurting anyone else.”

He shook his head. “It isn’t just that. My life is pretty much…I can’t return to it.” It was then that he told her how a friend of his had turned on him and informed the ATCU of his existence. “My job, my home…none of it. Don’t you see? This is exactly what your mother was afraid of. Inhumans being exposed to the world and humans trying to kill or control us. And you and your team just came in like a bull in a china shop and ruined that way of life for my people.”

“Your people huh?” She asked, pursing her lips. “First of all, it wasn’t SHIELD that staged that coup. She was the one that took the first shot. She was the one that planned to release all those crystals, killing however many humans she could. And as I remember it, you helped us stop her because you knew she was in the wrong.” She took a moment to catch her breath and calm down. “Now, I know I fucked up by pushing those terrigen crystals in the ocean, but at least we’re trying to make things right by helping these people. No one is forcing you stay here. You want to leave, then go, I’ll show you to the door.”
“Lady Daisy? Is all well?”

Daisy looked to find Lady Sif entering the room. Taking a deep breath once more, she nodded. “Everything is fine.”

“I’m sorry,” Lincoln said then, the apology was clear in his tone of voice. “I’m just…frustrated with the situation.”

“I can understand that,” she said in a much calmer tone than she actually felt. When she noticed her companion’s gaze stray to the statuesque brunette more than once, she made the introduction. “Lincoln, this is Lady Sif of Asgard,” Daisy introduced.

“Asgard?” He asked, looking from one woman to another. “Like the Avenger Thor?”

Daisy nodded. “Yes. He’s around here too…somewhere.”
Chapter 7

Disclaimer: I did look up transcripts for the episode, specifically, the conversation between Jemma and Daisy, some of it’s mine and some of it isn’t.

Author’s Note: Sorry for the lateness in posting this. With Thanksgiving just around the corner, I’ve been busy preparing.

Chapter 7

“Again!” Sif exclaimed, watching Daisy get up from the floor.

Holding in the groan of pain that threatened to leave her body, Daisy squared her shoulders and attacked her opponent. Every punch she threw was deflected and it wasn’t long before she was once again on the matted floor.

“You aren’t trying hard enough.”

“Not hard enough?” Daisy panted. From their very first spar, it painfully reminded her of her initial training with Ward and what a wet noodle she’d been. She’d trained extensively since then. Between Ward, then May taking over, picking up tricks from Bobbi, techniques from Mack and Hunter and insights from her time at Afterlife she’d been able to hold her own and even dominate several fights. However, it was as if none of that meant anything in regard to her sparring against Sif.

“You hold yourself back. The entire point of this is to help cultivate your powers yet you do not use them as you should”.

Daisy hesitated then. She knew she was holding back, she always was. The last time she’d truly used her powers without any restrictions had been when she was at Afterlife. In part it was because she had been out in the open and didn’t have to worry about harming those near her, partly because she didn’t want to be different.

“Why?” Sif asked then. “Why do you hold yourself back? You will never reach your true potential if you do not try.”

“Maybe I don’t want to reach my full potential,” Daisy tossed back, her frustration with the situation boiling over. “I never asked for these powers, I never wanted them. They’ve done nothing but cause me problems since I first developed them. They’ve done nothing but cause me problems since I first developed them. So, yes, I hold back so I don’t harm others. I hold back so I don’t accidentally break this underground base apart with everyone inside it. And when it comes to confronting people, I hold back so those around me aren’t as affected as they could be.” She shook her head, realizing that she’d said more than she ever intended to, things she’d never repeated to anyone. “I’m sorry, but…” she trailed off miserably. “I’m sorry,” she repeated before turning and exiting to the room.

With a severe frown on her face, Sif watched her partner walk out of the room. “Thor said he detected something from a previous conversation they had, but I thought she was simply still healing.”

Lincoln pushed himself away from the wall. “Still healing?” He asked. It wasn’t from their confrontation at the hospital? She’d seemed fine.

“She used her powers to create a portal to another world so they could retrieve their lost comrade. She overexerted herself.”
Lincoln’s gaze fell on the direction that Daisy just walked off in. He’d known from their fist training session together that her ability would have endless possibilities, but opening a portal? Who would have thought…

“You and she are lovers, yes?”

The male’s eyes widened and he swung his attention back to the statuesque woman. “What?” He asked, had he heard that correctly? Lovers? He and Daisy? “No.”

“Oh,” Lady Sif. “I apologize for offending you. There is a closeness that exists between you.”

“I’m not offended,” he denied quickly. “She is a beautiful woman…person,” he corrected himself. “At Afterlife, when someone undergoes terregenesis, they are partnered with someone, a transitioner that helps them through the process and their powers. I was her transitioner,” he explained. “So, yes, you could say that we are close, but we have never been anything more than platonic.” Thinking back to Sif’s prior words he focused on that. “You mentioned that she said something to Thor?”

“She was rather candid in what she said, he believes she was under the influence of pain medication.”

Lincoln nodded, reading between the lines. Daisy probably said something that she would not have normally mentioned to another person. “About her powers?”

“There is a resentment in her heart. If she does not confront it and work on her feelings, she will never reach her full potential.” She tilted her head and she studied her companion. “You said they help someone through the process and with powers, but what exactly does a transitioner do?”

“Under ideal circumstances, when an Inhuman is selected to go through terrigenesis, they go through rigorous mental training beforehand. The transitioner is a guide of sorts, they help that mental training…through counseling and various mental exercises. Undergoing terrigenesis is like undergoing thousands of years of evolution in the span of minutes. It is why there is so much preparation beforehand. With Daisy, she didn’t know to mentally deal with anything, let alone the existence of Inhumans. I was able to help her afterwards…at least to a point and she was able to learn control, but…” he’d never met an Inhuman that resented their ability.

“There is a doctor here.” Sif said then. “I believe he has helped Daisy cope in the past.”

“Yes, I’ve met him. Dr. Garner, he’s a phycologist,” he provided. “However, I don’t think he will be able to help her, at least not about this.” When she frowned, he clarified himself. “There is only so much a phycologist can say. He isn’t an Inhuman, so he will never truly be able to understand her feelings, and because of that, he won’t be able to help her.”

“But you can.”

He nodded. Ideally, he could. “I can try,” he offered. “However, being in the real world…with all of the distractions…” They’d both dealt with situations that more often than not left them on opposite sides. The trust that they’d initially placed in one another had waivered. He didn’t know if she would even be amendable to even opening up to him. “I don’t think this is just about her powers.”

“No?”

“Given everything that I’ve learned from her, I’m betting that her resentment goes much deeper. Her mother was cautious about her arrival in Afterlife and how the others would react when they discovered that Daisy was her daughter. It was part of the reason why Jaying selected me to be her transitioner. She wanted daily updates on her progress.”
Jaying? The leader of the Inhumans? “Daisy’s mother was the leader?” Sif asked. She waited for her companion to acknowledge the question. “The same leader that attempted to kill her?”

“She…what?” Linoln asked then. “Jaying tried to kill her?” That couldn’t…Jaying would never have done that…would she? She’d always hated when the time came for an elder to sacrifice him or herself in order for her to rejuvenate.

“You had no idea…” Sif trailed off. If he was Daisy’s transitioner, how could he have not known?

He wanted to argue against the idea. It was so against everything that Jaying had ever been. However, when the thought back to the fight on the ship and the things Jaying had done… Until then, he never would have thought she’d murder someone in cold blood, but he’d seen it with his own two eyes. “Daisy never said anything,” he denied softly. In the months that passed, his resentment grew towards SHIELD as a whole. Jaying may not have done right where those agents were concerned, but he’d still believed that she was…worth saving, even if the cause hadn’t been.

“Perhaps a conversation is not far out?” Sif asked.

He nodded.

As soon as she’d left the training room, Daisy stopped in her room long enough to change her clothes, before taking off. She knew her parting words were more than likely going to start a conversation that she wasn’t eager to have…with anyone and her room would be the first place that anyone looked for her. Instead, she made her way towards the medical bay, hoping to catch Simmons…awake.

During her trek, she’d attempted to avoid any and every person she possibly could, coming to a stop just outside the intended area. She listened long enough to make sure that she wouldn’t be interrupting anything before peering into the area. Spotting her friend propped up on the medical bed, blankly staring into space, she pasted a smile on her face.

“Knock, knock,” Daisy said, announcing herself, watching her friend blink away whatever it was she’d been lost to. “You up for some company?”

Jemma offered her friend a small smile. “I am.”

Daisy stepped into the room. “How are you feeling today?”

The scientist could only shake her head with a sigh. “It’s…my body is still getting acclimated,” she confessed. “I’m glad you stopped by. I have it on good authority that I have you to thank for my return…well, you and Fitz,” she corrected, thinking on her once potential romantic partner. “So, thank you.”

“Of course,” Daisy waived away. “It wasn’t a big deal.”

“Are you serious?” Jemma asked. “It was a huge deal. I don’t know anyone else could have done what you did.”

The brunette shook her head in negative. “No, I mean…you’re family, you know?” Daisy tried to explain away awkwardly as she claimed a seat on the edge of the bed. “I don’t know how you did it. I mean, how you survived after all that time. From what Fitz has said about the landscape and how unforgiving it was, it’s amazing that you survived alone for as long as you did.” When Simmons looked away from her, Daisy felt a frown slip onto her face. “You okay?”
Jemma considered not saying anything about Will and her relationship with him, but she couldn’t. It wasn’t until her rescue when she learned about how different time was on what they called Maveth. Between attempting to readjust to life on earth and the guilt that she alone was rescued… Her heart, along with the rest of her body, hurt. It wasn’t right that she was saved while he’d been left behind. “I wasn’t alone,” she confessed in a small voice before looking back at her friend.

“What do you mean you weren’t alone?”

Jemma nibbled on her bottom lip. “There was a man there, an astronaut. His name was Will Daniels and he’d been there since their ship crashed.”

NASA sent a team to another universe? Their technology was that good? Daisy frowned in confusion before giving all of her attention back on Jemma.

“He was the only one left, the rest of his team had perished. If… I don’t know if I would have survived if he hadn’t been there.” Tears began swimming in her eyes. Between the extra pain it caused her body and the guilt over him, she couldn’t help herself.

Standing up, Daisy gently scooted her friend over and claimed a seat right next to her. She gently placed an arm around her shoulder and let her cry. When the sound of Jemma’s sobs stopped, she spoke up. “Jemma, did you…? I mean Will, were you two…?”

“I fell in love with him,” she confessed tearfully. “Please don’t tell anyone.” Before she’d been taken, she and Fitz had finally gotten on the same page when it came to their feelings. At the time she thought that their chance had passed, after he’d initially confessed his feelings and she hadn’t felt the same way… By the time she began to regard him as anything more than a partner and friend, she didn’t dare say anything in case his feelings had changed. “I didn’t mean to fall for him,” she tacked on. “Fitz and I…he’d just asked me out.” And she’d been really excited. “I was so discombobulated when I arrived there and Will…he saved my life. He’d managed to survive on his own and he let me live with him and we became friends, but time moved so differently there. Months started to pass and I…I lost hope,” she whispered. “I never thought… I really thought I was stuck there.”

Daisy immediately spoke up. “You have nothing to apologize for, Jemma.” She could only imagine what her friend had to live through. “You did nothing wrong,” she said compassionately.

“But Fitz…”

“Will have to get over it,” Daisy inserted flatly before Jemma could continue with the guilt. “And he will,” she tacked on. If Fitz wanted Jemma as much as she thought he did, he would accept it and move on. He’d been beside himself when Jemma was gone, she knew he would accept Jemma’s relationship with Will if it meant that she was returned to his arms.

She wasn’t sure if she easily believed it, but Daisy seemed so sure of it and she found herself nodding. “Feelings aside, I can’t leave Will there,” Jemma said after a pause. “He had been there for so long and he sacrificed his chance so that I could be saved.”

Daisy found herself nodding along with her friend. It wasn’t right to leave him there, not if she was able to manipulate the monolith enough to possibly send in a search party. If that was even possible, hadn’t someone said the portal had been ruined? “We’ll figure it out,” she tried to reassure her friend.

“We weren’t alone there. There was a thing…a creature. Will called him Hive. He was the one that killed the rest of Will’s team and…he hunted us. We were constantly on guard. He was tracking us when Fitz was trying to save me. Will gave up his position so that I could get away. We have to save him.”
“I’ll talk to Coulson,” Daisy said. She hoped that she’d been right about Fitz before. Knowing that Jemma had found someone else, loved someone else, was one thing but it was completely different to come face to face with that someone.

“And you won’t say anything to anyone else?” She asked quietly.

Daisy nodded in agreement. “Eventually they’re going to have to find out,” she pointed out kindly.

“I know. I…I just have to tell Fitz, he deserves to hear it from me.”

“Oh, but you need to tell him soon…like today.”

“I will.”

“Thank you, Skye…I mean, Daisy,” she corrected.

“You can call me whatever you want,” she told her friend in all seriousness. She knew the name change was a big difference, especially when it came to the original members of the team. “Try and get some rest.”

~*~*~*~*~*~~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~

“Hey, Nat,” Steve greeted, opening his door. “You came over for the game?” Steve asked, confused by her presence.

She listened to the background, hearing Sam’s voice as he criticized the referee. “I found something,” she said, holding out a thumb drive.

“Bucky?” He asked, instantly feeling a flash of excitement.

She shook her head in negative. “Daisy,” she replied, watching his facial features take on a look of resignation. “Steve, it’s so much more than…” she extended her hand towards him. “You really should watch the video.”

“That bad, huh?” He asked. It wasn’t often that Nat had difficulty expressing herself.

Instead of answering him, she’d let him make up his own mind. Unlike the others, she wasn’t nearly as offended as them in regard to Daisy’s affiliation with SHIELD. She’d seen in the past how SHIELD dealt with powered individuals and she’d instantly been worried that SHIELD was using her the same way they’d used Steve, Banner and Thor.

Leaving the door open for his female teammate, Steve turned into his apartment and made his way towards his computer. It wasn’t nearly as sophisticated as those in Stark Tower, but it worked well enough for him.

Looking away from the screen when Steve bypassed the couch and headed towards the computer, Sam spoke up. “What’s up, Steve?”

Steve could only shake his head. Sitting at the desk, he plugged the thumb drive in.


“I came across something,” she said, not giving a further explanation.

It was security feed of some kind, but Steve was easily able to make out Daisy’s form, watching as
she stood next to a man only slightly taller than her. However, it wasn’t until a creature came at them from the opposite direction that his interest was keen piqued.

“What the hell is that?” Sam mumbled, voicing the question for all three of them.

Steve could only shake his head in negative. Instead of running away like most people would have done, he watched as she stood her ground, next to the unknown man as both raised their hands. He watched a stream of electricity flow from the man’s hand, hitting the unknown creature before it flew backwards. He doubted the electricity could have done it, so that meant...Daisy. Was she telekinetic like Wanda? From another angle, he noticed...was that Daisy’s partner, unload a spray of bullets into the creature, only for it to stand back up. Once again, Daisy raised her hand and he watched as the floor below the creature fall, taking the creature with it.

“What was that thing?”

Natasha shook her head. “I don’t know. An Inhuman?”

“Do they go through major changes like that? I mean other than the humanoid shape, there were no human features to it,” Sam inquired.

“I’m also wondering if she’s an Inhuman or a powered individual,” the redhead said.

“She has a lot of control for someone that’s just recently changed,” Steve observed. “They both did,” he tacked on, thinking about the man she had been standing next to.

“They worked in unison,” the female said, frowning. “So, chances are this isn’t the first time that they’ve encountered something together.” However, nothing had popped out during her search. Someone had been meticulous in scrubbing anything to do with SHIELD, which left her wondering how someone could overlook such a thing.

“The other man on the screen is her partner.”

“SHIELD is working with Inhumans?” Sam asked.

“We could continue to ask ourselves these questions, or, Steve could just pick up the phone and ask Daisy directly.” With that, the pair turned to look at Steve.

Hey, you got a minute?” Daisy asked, leaning against the doorframe of Coulson’s office.

He nodded. “We were just finishing up here,” he said as Melinda May stood up from the opposite side of the desk.

“Actually, May, you can stay,” Daisy said. As Coulson’s second in command, she would end up learning everything anyway. She watched the other woman reclaim the seat and she entered the office to join them, shutting the door behind her. “Jemma wasn’t alone on that planet,” she announced.

“What do you mean she wasn’t alone?” Coulson asked.

“There was a man, an astronaut named Will, on that planet. He’s the one that helped Jemma after her...arrival. NASA has the resources to send astronauts to another galaxy?”

“No.”
“Then how did they get on the planet?” Daisy inquired.

“They?” May repeated. “There was more than one?”

Daisy shook her head in negative. “They were all dead by the time Jemma met Will.”

“Given some of the things that Professor Randolph said, I believe it was Hydra that sponsored that trip to Maveth,” Phil said, looking between the two women.

“Will is Hydra?”

He shook his head. “I don’t know,” he allowed. “Hydra has been around for centuries. The most modern reincarnation evolved into what it is prior to WWII, but before that they…worshipped something on Maveth, sending sacrifices to it. If Will isn’t Hydra, then his team were unknowingly sent there as sacrifices.”

“We can’t just leave him there,” Daisy said then, watching as he boss nodded in agreement.

“Thor said the portal was destroyed,” May reminded the pair. “How exactly do we go about rescuing him?”

“We have to do something,” Daisy said then, on behalf of her friend before turning her gaze to Coulson. “You agree with me, don’t you?”

“I do, but like May pointed out; we’ll have to find a new way, which will take time. In the meantime, we still have to focus on finding Lash’s human form, deal with the ATCU and…” He found himself hesitating before saying anything, turning his gaze on May.

“Might as well tell her,” May sighed. “She deserves to know.”

“I deserve to know what?” Daisy asked, peering from one of her mentors to the other.

“Ward’s back,” Coulson said flatly. “Hunter and May went undercover and discovered that not only is he back, but he fancies himself the new head of Hydra.”

“Son of a bitch,” Daisy hissed, flexing her hands into fists. It wouldn’t be long before he came looking for a fight…of revenge. “I should have killed him when we were in San Juan,” she tacked on, mostly muttering to herself.

“Anything else we have to deal with?” May asked then.

“You mean other than the fact that it’s only a matter of time before the Avengers come knocking?” Phil asked. “No, I think we covered it all.”

They were interrupted when Daisy’s phone chirped, signaling a text message. Pulling out her phone, she easily recognized Steve’s number.

We need to talk.

“It’s Steve,” she sighed.

I saw a pretty interesting video feed.

Damn! She didn’t have to ask what he was referring to. “I never scrubbed the video feed from the hospital,” she said aloud to her companions. Between Lash and running from the ATCU… Seriously though, how could she have forgotten? “Somehow he got his hands on it and saw it. I can’t believe I
didn’t scrub it! I’ve been so careful up until now. What was I thinking?”
Chapter 8

After leaving the video in his possession, Natasha left the pair with a sad smile as she reminded Steve to give himself a chance to breathe and process what he’d seen before he took any actions. Of course, she was already gone by the time he’d pulled out his phone and texted Daisy, or she may have stopped him.

Steve looked down at the phone in his hand with a frown.

“What’d she say?” Sam asked, noticing the expression on his friend’s face.

“Nothing,” Steve admitted.

Sam narrowed his eyes on him before looking at the conversation Steve started. “Wow, you really don’t do subtle,” he chuckled.

Steve’s frown deepened. “I should walk on egg shells?” He asked. “She purposely misled me when we first met and hasn’t bothered to tell me the truth in—”

“The few times that you’ve talked to her?” Sam supplied, interrupting his friend. “You tell everyone your life story the second time you talk to them?”

“I didn’t have to,” Steve said. “People have known about me since I first woke up.” In part, due to SHIELD.

Sam offered him a blank expression in response. “Have you ever considered that there’s more to this?” He asked after a moment.

Steve frowned. “What? Like what Nat said?” If Daisy was in trouble and sought them out for help, then why hadn’t she said anything?

“I don’t know about all of that, but possibly,” he allowed. “Look, I get that it sucks when people turn out to be different than what we think they are, but the fact of the matter is, she doesn’t owe you anything.” He watched the indignation fade from his friend’s face. “You don’t know why she didn’t tell you the truth, maybe it isn’t as nefarious as you’ve been making it out to be.”

“Maybe,” Steve grudgingly allowed. “But I don’t appreciate the game.” Try as he might, he still couldn’t get over the fact that she’d so willfully misled him. It wasn’t the first time someone had tried to get one over on him.

“All I’m saying is that you should give her a chance,” Sam said, understanding how his friend felt. He’d been there when Steve began confessing a slight interest in the woman in his building, only for her to end up being part of SHIELD. He’d seen firsthand the way Steve pulled away completely from her, hearing her apology, but not truly accepting it. “Let her explain things and then decide to
be angry if the situation warrants it.”

Steve nodded at his friend. He had to admit that Sam had a point. She didn’t owe him anything and he knew that this anger with her was based on more than just her actions, it was a culmination of all of his frustrations. His fingers flew over the key board on his phone before sending off another message.

*Can we meet?*

He waited for a response. She hadn’t yet responded to anything he’d sent. Had she been ignoring him? Or possibly coming up with a lie to feed him?

*I don’t think that’s possible at this time.*

He wrinkled his nose as he read the response. Just like SHIELD. They had all the time in the world when it suited them, but when someone required answers from them…

*You were with SHIELD, you know I can’t exactly go running off.*

Her words stopped him in his mental tirade. Of that, he was aware. Nodding his head, he considered his schedule for the next several days.

*I’ll come to you.*

He sent the message, wondering if he’d just made a massive mistake. However, his curiosity had gotten the better of him.

*I’ll have to get back to you on that.*

At least she hadn’t downright turned down his offer. He could work with that.

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*Can we meet?*

“I want to meet,” Daisy announced with a weary sigh.

“Of course, he does,” May nearly scoffed, turning her attention to Coulson.

Daisy looked down at her phone. There was no point beating around the bush, he already knew she was with SHIELD.

*You were with SHIELD, you know I can’t exactly go running off.*

Coulson ignored May’s comment, focusing on Daisy. “What do you think?”

She shook her head, mentally berating herself for being so negligent. “I can’t believe that I didn’t scrub that video…”

Maybe he had pushed her too hard too soon? If she’d been at a hundred percent, she never would have left something like that hanging. Oh well, too late to fret about it now. “I actually meant about you meeting with him,” he clarified, offering her a sad smile. There was no point in getting angry over things, and she was already punishing herself for things anyway. “As for not taking care of the video, people would have been alerted any way,” he said, trying to make her feel better. “Lash was
“none too subtle when he chose to go after Lincoln.” Given the amount of time people spent on their phones, if a video hadn’t been taken, pictures would have. “What about meeting him?”

She took a deep breath and considered the question. Personal feelings aside, she liked the possibility it opened up. “I...don’t think it’s a bad idea,” she admitted. “I doubt that the Avengers would ever be willing to work with SHIELD like they did before, but it would be nice to have some line of communication with them.” Of course, that was if they could get over their prior feelings about SHIELD. Thor and by extension, Sif, were helping them...her, but they would need to return to Asgard eventually. At least if the others were aware of things, they would be closer to the situation... if one arose. “With everything that’s going on right now, it couldn’t hurt to have them on our side should something happen that we can’t control.”

“I'll come to you.

I'll have to get back to you on that.

He nodded along with her observation, completely agreeing with her. “I agree, but there are some things that still need to remain secret.”

She arched her eyebrows at him. “Oh, like the fact that you’re alive? Yeah, I wasn’t planning on opening that can of worms.” No, she’d let Coulson deal with that when it was time. “Although, you do realize it’s only a matter of time before they find out, right?” It wasn’t like they could ask Thor to lie to the rest of the Avengers forever.

“I know, but one situation at a time,” Coulson said. He would deal with the Avengers when and if he needed to. He knew that the time would come when he could no longer avoid them, but he hoped he’d have a little more time.

“He offered to come to me,” Daisy said, sharing his last text. Not that Coulson would let the Avengers know exactly where the Playground was... But it would be easier if she didn’t have to travel far.

Coulson looked from Daisy before looking to May. “And what do you think?” He asked, trusting her judgement.

May hesitated as she gathered her thoughts. “I think we have enough on our plate,” she said, referring to the newly changed Inhumans and the ATCU as well as the person still stuck on Maveth. She watched Coulson nod along with her. “That being said, if Steve Rogers and the rest of the Avengers are aware of SHIELD, and you, it would be easier to confront the situation head on, and then once it’s taken care of, we can return our focus on the rest.”

“Where did you plan to meet him?” He asked, looking back at Daisy. When he noticed the too innocent expression on her face, he shook his head at her. “Am I supposed to believe that you haven’t already thought this through?” He inquired with a pointed expression on his face.

She smiled balefully. “There’s a diner in town, a little hole-in-the-wall place that dies down after the lunch rush. I thought I could meet him there so we could speak with a little privacy.”

“Fine,” he nodded once. “Let him know, set an appointment.”

Daisy immediately turn her attention back on her phone and sent off a message, letting him know location before giving him a couple options for dates and times.

~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~
Breathing heavily, Daisy pulled away from the punching bag. Removing the tape from her hands, she grabbed for her water bottle, noticing a lone form standing off to the side of the room. Letting out a sigh, she turned the music down.

“You going to come in all the way, or are you going to just stand there like a ‘peeping Tom?’” She asked.

Realizing he’d been caught, Lincoln stepped fully into the room. “You have some time?”

She shrugged. “That depends. Is this about this morning?” She asked, referring to her sparring lesson with Sif.

He nodded unsurely. “Yes.”

“Then no,” she responded flatly before increasing the volume of the music. She turned back to the punching bag, effectively dismissing him. She spent the next few minutes practicing her punches, attempting to ignore her companion. However, it was easier said than done. Hitting the bag with more force than her previous times, she caught it as it swung back in her direction. “What?” She asked.

“How did you know I was still here?” He inquired, approaching her. He turned the music off, not letting her off the hook this time.

“You mean other than the feeling?” She asked. “Doesn’t everyone usually know when they’re being watched?”

He shook his head in negative. “It’s more than that, and you know it,” he denied, speaking to her with the same calm he had when she first arrived in Afterlife.

She let out a weary sigh. “I felt you, your vibration,” she said then.

“Do you always feel others?” He inquired.

She shook her head in negative. “Kind of. I mean I can feel the vibrations, it’s like a ‘hum.’”

“But you knew it was me,” he said, finishing what she’d left unsaid.

“Yes. Coulson, May…the others, you, Thor and Sif. I’m thinking it has something to do with the amount of time I spend with someone,” she admitted. “But your vibrations are different than my team. And Sif and Thor differ from yours.”

“Interesting,” he said, thinking over her words. Her powers were helping her differentiate between various…species.

She could only shrug in response.

When his companion remained nonverbal, he spoke again. “Why didn’t you tell me that Jaying tried to kill you?” He moved to the nearest chair and claimed a seat.

She finally spun around to look at him. “Despite what you said last night, my team and I didn’t intend to go to Afterlife for any sort of confrontation. I get that my team, that I upset the flow of things there and that was never the intention. Yes, you helped us out when we were on that ship, but your first commitment was to your people.”

“Our people,” he corrected quickly, offering her an apologetic smile when she gave him a pointed
look. “I was running off some heavy emotions when I said that,” he excused. “I didn’t mean to hurt you or imply that you are anything less, so I apologize.”

Unless she was dealing with Grant Ward, she tried not to hold a grudge. Accepting Lincoln’s apology was easy because he was sincere about it. “But I am,” she said, arguing against his words. “I’m not like you or anyone else that lived at Afterlife. I was never taught the way of things, I get that.”

“It doesn’t mean you aren’t one of us,” he tossed back.

She responded with a humorless smile. “More human than my chosen family and friends, and less Inhuman than the rest of you,” she murmured.

“You know, it doesn’t have to be that way,” he pointed out. “You don’t have to be one or the other. I’ve seen the way Coulson looks at you, Mack, May…they will love you no matter what.”

While she wasn’t one to hold a grudge, that didn’t mean she was easily able to forget everything. She never forgot the conversation she walked in on after Sif left with Vintak and the others discovered her powers. And while she would never hold it against Mack or anyone else on the team, it was always there niggling at the back of her thoughts. It wasn’t always there, but whenever her self-doubt flared up, she was reminded of it.

“When we first began working on your powers, I knew there were multiple things you were capable of, but…you helped open a portal to another world,” Lincoln said, unaware of her internal musings. “Because of your ability, you were able to save your friend from a whole different planet, something that may not have happened if you hadn’t been there.” He wondered if Jaying had any idea that Daisy could do that sort of thing.

She nodded at him. “Maybe, but they would have found a way eventually.”

“Eventually may have been too late,” he denied passionately. “When those first people underwent terregenesis, you were there as soon as you found out. You didn’t go there to put them on some list-”

“The Index,” she corrected automatically.

He gave her a flat look in response before continuing on. “You went to make sure they were okay and to offer your assistance in whatever way you could.”

“I remember how terrified I was that I would hurt someone,” she denied. “Others would have done the same thing.”

“No,” he denied quickly. “They wouldn’t have. I didn’t.” As soon as he could, he’d run away, so had the others that spent time at Afterlife. “After everything you went through, you pushed through and helped those that you could.” Even if she couldn’t help them herself, at least she tried to look in other directions.

“Lady Sif ask you to talk to me?” Daisy asked then making her way to the vacant chair to his right, feeling a slight embarrassment over his words. She’d never been very good at accepting compliments.

“No,” he denied quickly, looking away from her.

She pursed her lips, staring intently at his reaction. The fact that he refused to meet her gaze spoke volumes. She watched him, with interest. “Mmm hmm,” she replied, not believing him for a moment. “You have a thing for her, don’t you?”
“No,” again, the denial was instantaneous.

A smile pulled at her lips. “Just so you know, I don’t believe you.”

He rolled his eyes. “She’s…unlike any woman I’ve ever known,” he allowed then.

Daisy nodded. “That’s one way of putting it.”

“I realize that she’s probably older-”

“By a few thousand years,” she tossed back, enjoying his reactions to her words.

He shrugged. “She fascinates me.” He looked over at his companion, a look of contemplation on his face. “Is it that obvious?” He asked after a moment.

She offered him a heartfelt smile. “No,” she said, assuring him. “But I’ve been on the receiving end of your interest, so I know what to look for,” she said, knocking her shoulder into his.

He frowned, looking at her. “This isn’t weird, is it?” He asked, taking notice of the confusion on his companion’s face. “I mean we had a moment…”

“Months ago,” she replied. “Maybe we could have been more if things were different, but…”

He nodded, not needing her to finish her words. “The real world got in the way.”

She responded with her own nod of acknowledgement. He was there, he was on board with everything, but she couldn’t forget the way he’d initially acted and his refusal to help Joey. “That it did,” she agreed quietly. “Besides, since we last parted ways I had my own little, and when I say little, I mean minute, dalliance, so there’s no anger or resentment on my end,” she said, wanting to let him know that he didn’t have to walk on egg shells around her. “So, I guess it’s safe to assume that you’re on board with this training bit?”

He nodded. “Sif and Thor have offered us something that not many have a chance to do.” He included himself in the statement, as they’d also extended their invitation to train to him. “You won’t be the only one training, and if you like, we can take back up our conversations together.”

“That’s what Dr. Garner is here for.”

“I know, but as a human, he can’t fully understand you the way I can. Anyway, you don’t have to decide on that right now, but at least think on it.”

Daisy looked at the empty space before them. “You do realize that we’re going to be walking bruises by the time Thor and Sif are done with us, don’t you?”

He nodded, pursing his lips. “I’m expecting it.”

“Wow, you look…like sh-”

Not giving her partner a chance to finish his sentence, Daisy spoke up. “I feel like it too,” she admitted, attempting to rub the soreness from her shoulder and a frown on her face. “I feel like I did back in my rookie days after my SO wiped the floor with me…on a daily basis.”

“Ward?”
She nodded. “And then May,” Daisy tacked on. If she thought it was bad against Ward, May’s skills were on another level and she hadn’t been prepared for her. “No wonder she could easily kick his ass that time at Cyber Tek…”

Mack gave his companion a once over. If the bruises that decorated her arms were any indication, her legs were probably just as purple and black. “Maybe ask them to take it easy on you until you find your footing?”

She snorted humorlessly. “This is them taking it easy,” she said before immediately groaning at the pain she felt in her stomach, remembering the hit she’d taken that morning. “The only good side to this is that Lincoln’s right there, getting his ass handed to him too.” Her prior training, at the very least, kept her from getting knocked down as much as him. It didn’t make it hurt less, but at least she wasn’t the only unprepared person there.

“Yeah, I wouldn’t mind seeing that,” he snorted with amusement.

“Be nice,” she instantly chided with a side of ease so he knew she wasn’t upset. “He’s trying really hard to play along.”

He held his hands up as if in a surrendering motion. “Fair enough…” He supposed he could play nice for the time being. “So, you’re meeting Captain America…”

She nodded. “Although it isn’t quite what I expected when I imagined seeing him again,” she admitted with a slight shrug of her shoulders.

“Maybe it won’t be so bad,” he tried to offer.

She doubted it. “I…really liked him, you know?” She asked, though no answer was required. She watched as a look of understanding crossed his features and was grateful that he didn’t say anything. “I didn’t think that it would end up being something serious or that I’d eventually marry the guy.” Because really, between her schedule and his…plus, things like that didn’t happen to her. “But I still liked him, and at least I could still delude myself with stupid, little day dreams,” she tacked on. “And now that he knows I’m with SHIELD…” Daisy couldn’t help but feel disappointed after Thor’s confession upon his first arrival. “I’m sure you know not only how he feels about SHIELD, but the rest of the Avengers too…”

“I bet Natasha and Clint feel differently,” Mack replied.

She could only shrug her shoulder. She supposed he was more than likely correct in that assumption. “Maybe, but I didn’t dance and kiss Clint or Natasha.”

Hmmm, Daisy and Natasha Romanoff… There was an interesting idea. He shook away the thought. “Well, if things don’t turn out well, you’ll always have the rest of us.”

While it wasn’t quite the same, she appreciated his effort. “Thanks.”

When the smile didn’t quite reach her eyes, he spoke up again. “I understand why they pulled away from the organization.” At the time, SHIELD was considered a terrorist group thanks to the actions of Hydra agents hidden among the organization. “It was a confusing time, even for us.” He thought back to Robert Gonzalez and his version of SHIELD. “And between the secrets SHIELD had and Hydra…well, I get it.”

She was already aware of all that.

“But things have changed since then. Maybe during this meeting, you could show him that?”
She highly doubted it would work. Then again, maybe it would? As much as she’d thought about Steve in artificial ways, she didn’t really know him from Bob Nolastname. She was going by things that had been said in the past. Maybe things had changed since then?

“Maybe,” she agreed half-heartedly, though she didn’t want to get her hopes up. “I should go. If I’m going to meet him soon, I should get ready.” Not that she expected it to make a difference, but she’d at least make an attempt to make herself look presentable. Giving her companion one last smile, she turned away from him and made her way down the hall.

“You know, if things always go FUBAR, I’m available if you want to drink it away,” he offered, calling after her.

“I may just take you up on that,” she muttered mostly to herself.
“Hey, I need your opinion if you have a moment,” Daisy said, peaking her head into Jemma’s bedroom.


“I don’t think ‘date’ is the correct word that I’d use, but I am meeting someone,” Daisy easily answered. She caught sight of the wall length mirror in her friend’s bunk and she stared at her reflection. “Do I look okay?”

Jemma nodded.

“Okay, let me just try this other shirt on,” she said, changing her top. When she heard her friend gasp, she looked up. “What?”

“Daisy, you’re black and blue.”

The brunette nodded. “I’ve been training with Sif and Thor,” she admitted. “They offered to help me with my powers and after a little niggling from Lincoln, I stupidly agreed to it.” She turned around. “So, which one?”

“They’re both nice. I guess it depends on what you’re trying to say. Who are you meeting? Fitz has been slowly filling me in on things. Are you meeting someone from the ATCU?”

“Actually, I’m meeting Steve Rogers,” she admitted, looking at her friend through the reflection of the mirror. Jemma’s eyes widened almost comically, and if she wasn’t feeling as downhearted and nervous as she was, she would have laughed in amusement.

“Steve Rogers…as in Captain America? That Steve Rogers?” Jemma asked for clarification. She watched her friend nod in acknowledgment. “He’s aware of SHIELD?” Again, Daisy nodded. “Is he aware of Coulson?” This time, Daisy shook her head in negative. “How did all this come about?”

“Before your trip to Maveth—”

“You make it sound like I took a vacation,” Jemma snorted.

“Do you remember when I left for a few days to check on my father?” When her friend nodded along, she continued. “Well, I went out one night and Steve approached me. We had a nice time together, talked, had a drink…danced,” Daisy recalled, thinking about the night with a fond smile on her face. “And then Mack showed up to collect me because you went missing.”

“Oh…”

“I didn’t tell him anything about SHIELD, figured it was better not to,” she said, watching the comprehension dawn on her teammate’s face. “It was nice.”
“You already said that.”

Daisy nodded. “We ended up exchanging numbers, haven’t talked much, but we’ve texted. I thought everything was fine, but when Thor arrived, he mentioned that Steve, or well the Avengers, were aware of SHIELD and that Steve was upset that I didn’t say anything about it…but the last time I spoke to Steve, he seemed fine. If he was upset, it certainly didn’t show.” She frowned, turning around, she joined her friend on her bed. “I just don’t understand. If he was upset, then why the act?”

Jemma could only shake her head in negative. She’d never met the Avenger. Even before SHIELD fell, she’d never crossed paths with him. “Did you ask Thor? Maybe he can give you some insight?”

“No. I figured going through him to find out what Steve thinks of me was a little middle-schoolish,” Daisy replied. Plus, she was slightly afraid of what the Asgardian had to say in case Steve hadn’t held back. “After the confrontation at the hospital, I forgot to scrub the security feed. So, not only is he aware of SHIELD, but he now knows I have powers and…I’m really dreading this conversation,” she confessed.

“As an enhanced individual himself, I can’t believe that he would use that information to look down on you,” Jemma spoke up.

“But he could always use the SHIELD bit against me,” Daisy reminded her friend with a sigh. “After Thor mentioned that bit about Steve, I felt bad that he was upset over it, but now, indignation is starting to set in. I…we spent one night together, and not even a full night. I…once we exchanged numbers, I didn’t know if anything would come from it, but if it had, I had every intention of telling him the truth…eventually.”

“Then tell him that, tell him all of that,” Jemma said encouragingly. “We’ve lived in the shadows for so long, it’s become second nature to keep the SHIELD thing to ourselves. Are you going to mention Coulson?”

“Probably not. Aside from the fact that he doesn’t want me to and it really isn’t my secret to tell, I figured we’d already have enough to talk about. I should probably get ready to go, I just…needed another woman’s opinion.”

Jemma offered her friend a smile. “Go with the first shirt,” she advised, watching as Daisy changed back into the former article. “You look great, and if you are nervous, it doesn’t show. Good luck.”

“Thanks.” Something told her that she was going to need it.

“When you get back, I want to hear all about it,” Jemma said before her friend exited the room.

Making her way into the diner, she searched through the nearly empty tables, looking for Steve. When she realized she was the first one there, she picked a booth towards the back of the diner, close to an exit with the perfect view of the front door. The lunch crowd had obviously died down and she was thankful that there wouldn’t be so many extra ears around. Hearing the same bell that sounded when she’d entered the building, her eyes fell on the door. When an unfamiliar man entered, her shoulders slumped.

“What can I get you, sweetie?”

Daisy looked towards the voice and smiled at the waitress. “I’m actually meeting someone here, but I’ll have a cola. And…if you could bring a water for my companion?” She smiled appreciatively before putting her phone down on the table and turning her attention towards the door once again.
She’d been dreading this from the moment the plan was made. Gone were the butterflies she’d had after her first encounter with Steve. She doubted that after their conversation, he would let her anywhere near him in an emotional capacity. She felt a momentary sting of mourning over the lost opportunity before pushing it away. It was one night, she reminded herself. She hoped at the very least that the Avengers would one day be able to look at SHIELD as a friendly acquaintance.

“Here you are,” the waitress returned with drinks in hand. “Did you want to look over a menu?”

“I’m not hungry at the moment, but maybe my companion will be. If you could leave one on the table, it would be greatly appreciated.”

When the waitress returned one last time with the menu, she set it down at the edge of the table and told Daisy to call her over if she changed her mind.

Daisy offered the woman another smile just as the bell signaled another patron. Her attention fell on the door and she immediately recognized Steve. She mentally checked herself as she squared her shoulders, watching as he surveyed the room for her. The moment he spotted her, she watched as he straightened up before stepping in her direction. He almost appeared resigned as he approached the table and she couldn’t help but mirror the emotion.

His eyes settled on her face and he found himself studying her features. Her exotic eyes were highlighted by her eye make-up and he found himself caught in her gaze which was full of trepidation and he instantly felt a stab of relief that he hadn’t been the only one dreading this meeting.

Sitting down opposite her, he spoke up. “That night,” he began, “was that all a ruse?” Of the many mental conversations that he’d played out in his thoughts, not one of them started off with that question. He’d intended to keep things polite, but his emotions got the better of him the longer that he looked at her.

Well, hello to you too, she mentally rolled her eyes. “Excuse me?” Daisy asked, offended that he would even ask that.

“You being there when I was,” he continued on. “If I hadn’t approached you, would you have approached me?”

She pursed her lips trying to reign in her temper. While she understood that he really didn’t know her, Daisy couldn’t help but feel indignation. “Yes, in the last year, SHIELD focused their efforts on coming up with a pheromone inducing serum that is target specific and that’s exactly what happened that night,” she replied with a bite to her tone, not bothering to hide her anger over his question.

Getting the point that she was angry, he exhaled a frustrated sigh. “I don’t enjoy being played,” he replied, refusing to apologize.

She straightened up in the booth. “You’re the one that approached me, Casanova, remember?” She watched him look away from her. “I had no idea you or any of the Avengers were in the bar when I went into it. I was on a short leave after dealing with one hell of a situation. And yeah, I was hoping to be approached by someone, but I never expected it to be Captain freakin’ America.”

“Well, hello to you too, she mentally rolled her eyes. “Excuse me?” Daisy asked, offended that he would even ask that.

“You being there when I was,” he continued on. “If I hadn’t approached you, would you have approached me?”

Seeing how he’d been behaving since he found out about her affiliation, she wondered what he would have done that first night if she had informed him she was part of SHIELD? “Because it’s no secret how you, all of you, feel about SHIELD.”

“And if I knew and left, you wouldn’t have had chance to talk to me…” he finished as he tried to
size her up. “Hoping to get information from me? Or were you trying to get a feel to see if the Avengers would be open to working with SHIELD again?”

Wow, she didn’t realize his distrust ran that deep. Her anger started to flare again, but she reminded herself that she wouldn’t get anywhere with him if they were both angry. “No, I was hoping to have a good time,” she said simply. “Did I once dig for information that night?” She asked, watching him shake his head in negative. “Yes, I purposely kept that information from you, but it was only because I enjoyed talking to you and I was afraid that if you knew, you would hightail it out of there.”

He searched her gaze looking for anything contrary to the sincerity on her face. It was then that he noticed how horrible she looked. “You look like death warmed over,” Steve observed, looking her over.

If she hadn’t been on edge before, his words had certainly put her there. “Wow, just what every woman wants to hear…” She offered him a too bright smile. “I’ve started a new training regimen,” that pretty much meant she spent two hours a day getting her ass handed to her. She gestured to the glass of water that had been ignored up through then. “I wasn’t sure what you’d want, so I ordered you a water.” She watched him lift the glass and inspect it. “I didn’t spike it with rohypnol if that’s what you’re looking for.” He had the grace to blush then. “You know, before I joined SHIELD, I was weary and skeptical about them too, but aren’t you taking this a little too far?”

He shook his head, not responding to her words. “I thought SHIELD was disbanded?” Steve asked. “Maria is at Stark Industries and she never said otherwise.”

“Maybe Fury never told her?” Daisy asked with a shrug. “After Hydra came out, my former SO kidnapped me and she helped my team get me back. I don’t think she was aware of Fury’s intention,” she said, thinking on the raised voices she’d heard through the wall at the motel.

He narrowed his gaze on her, having difficulty believing her. Fury and Hill were extremely close, still were to that day. There was no way Fury would have done that without her knowing…

She spoke once more, having easily guessed where his thoughts went. “I may have only been with SHIELD a few days before it fell, but I worked as a consultant beforehand. I remember Fury and his secrets and those damned levels he insisted on, so is it really shocking that he kept SHIELD going?”

“When was this?”

“I assume after his ‘death,’” she replied. “Fury helped two of my teammates and when he saw my director, Fury handed over his ‘tool box.’”

He wasn’t exactly sure what the ‘tool box’ was, but it must have been significant enough for her to say it with such finality.

“So, you’ve been what? Living in the shadows?”

She pursed her lips and nodded. “Pretty much,” Daisy agreed. “The world isn’t ready for SHIELD to be back, so we try to lay low. If we deal with other agencies, I redact any mention of SHIELD.”

“And then you forgot about the hospital feed…”

“Yes.” She wanted him to know what they’d dealt with in the last year and that they’d done that without the resources SHIELD once had. “In the last year, we’ve continuously dealt with Hydra, dealt with aliens, dealt with alien cities, another faction of SHIELD and powered individuals.”

Powered individuals? Did she mean the contagion? “And the alien contagion the news keeps talking
about?” Steve asked.

“That was never meant to happen,” she confessed in a whispered tone.

Steve’s eyes widened. “You mean SHIELD is responsible for that?” He didn’t know why he was surprised. The organization had little regard for those around them.

She immediately shook her head to the idea from planting in his mind. “Not SHIELD, me,” Daisy corrected.

He shook his head in disappointment. “What is wrong with you?” He demanded. “How could you let that happen?”

She shook her head. “Like I said, it wasn’t supposed to,” she replied.

“But it did. Countless people have been affected because of your negligence.”

Growing angry with the blame game, Daisy stood up and tossed a few bills on the table to cover the price of her drink. “I just wanted to let you know that SHIELD is doing fine on its own. We don’t need, nor do we want any help from the Avengers. We managed to survive without any help from superheroes and now that I have powers, I’m more than certain we can survive on our own.” She would certainly make sure of it just to spite him. She’d rather struggle than bow down and ask for help from him or the rest of the Avengers if his attitude was anything to go by. “I would apologize for us not being able to come to an understanding, but I’d be lying since you’ve been nothing but an asshole from the moment you sat down. Do me a favor, delete my number out of your phone. I’ll do the same and we’ll never have to talk again.” Without so much as another look, she spun around and exited the restaurant.

Still stewing about the encounter she’d just had, she didn’t notice when she walked into a solid body. Looking up, her eyes fell on a broad chest. “I am so sorry, I wasn’t-”

“Daisy Johnson?” An unfamiliar man asked, approaching her.

Immediately, warning bells sounded in her head. Her eyes quickly ran over the length of him, noticing the bulge at his waist line, probably a gun. “Who are you?”

“That doesn’t matter. I’m here to retrieve you.”

Retrieve her? “Yeah, sure, I’ll go with you, man I don’t know,” she tossed back, backing away from him. “I’m not going anywhere with you.” She cast a look around the area, noticing that the street had emptied out considerably. She felt arms slip around her from behind, as if caging her in.

“You don’t have a choice,” a voice from behind her spoke close to her ear.

“Haven’t you heard the expression ‘no means no?’” She asked as she stopped struggling against the hold.

“If you just hold still for a second, this will all be over soon,” the man in front of her said as he pulled out a needle.

She narrowed her gaze on him. “I don’t think so,” she replied. Using the tight hold the man behind her had on her as leverage, she raised both of her legs and kicked the man before her, making sure her powers gave a little oomph to it. She watched in satisfaction as he flew several feet away, landing with a sickening thud against a car. Using one of the many techniques she’d learned over the years, she escaped from the hold behind her, turning around, she used her powers to lay a punch on the
second man, watching as he dropped to the ground.

Casting a look around to make sure she was going to be approached again, she pulled out her phone and connected a call to the last person she’d talked to.

“I didn’t expect to hear from you so soon,” Lincoln said, obviously recognizing her number.

“I’ve just been attacked by two goons that tried to inject me with something,” Daisy replied. “I don’t see anyone else at the moment, but I don’t think it’s safe for me to return to base yet.” Her eyes constantly searched out the area for anyone else that may approach her. Just because she didn’t immediately see anyone didn’t mean they weren’t there.

“Are you okay?”

She spun around, making sure not to keep her back in any one direction for too long. “I’m fine. I’ve knocked two men unconscious, but there could be more around.”

“What about Steve Rogers?” Lincoln asked. “I thought you were meeting Captain America? Isn’t he there with you now?”

“Yeah, that conversation didn’t go too well. I left him sitting in the diner and I stormed out. I was already outside when I was approached.”

There was a shuffling sound on the phone before May’s voice was heard. “Remember what I said about Ward,” the older woman reminded her. “This could be Hydra.”

Daisy spun around and noticed a lone figure standing on the opposite side of the street. “Yeah, I think you’re right,” she said before disconnecting the call, staring at her former love interest with a frown on her face.

“Hello, Skye…sorry, it’s Daisy now, isn’t it?” Ward asked, approaching her.

She pursed her lips, but otherwise remained unresponsive. What could he possibly want with her? She braced herself when he stepped into her personal space. “You’re looking a little rough.”

When he raised a hand and settled it on her face, she quickly pushed it away and stepped back from him. “You don’t get to touch me.”

He smirked at her before quickly raising a hand and fisting it in her hair, yanking her head in an awkward position as he pushed his body against hers. “I’ll touch you whenever and however I want,” he said. “A year and a half ago, you were begging for my touch.”

“Yeah, that was before I learned who you really were,” she said, giving into his strength so as not to hurt herself.

“Your friend shot me in the back.”

She wasn’t sure exactly whom he was speaking of, but if they’d shot him, that was a plus in her book. “Too bad he missed your heart.”

He chuckled humorlessly. “So, instead of striking back against him, I’m going to hit the team where it hurts,” he murmured, yanking her head to the side so she was forced to meet his gaze. “Because we know you’re the only real weapon that Coulson has.”

“And we both know I’m not the helpless rookie anymore,” she spat back. She could easily use her
powers to get out of the situation with little to no collateral damage. She assessed the area. From the
corner of her eyes, she noticed one of the men she’d already fought off was making his way towards
them as two other men approached from different angles.

“No, you’re not. But you won’t do anything against me.”

“Oh…you have no idea what I’m going to do to you,” she replied. The next thing she knew she was
being spun around. Just as she stopped, Ward tightened his hold on her, his hand once again fisted in
her hair, holding her head in an awkward angle. Her attention immediately settled on the scene
before her. A bloodied Steve Rogers stood several feet away, a gun settled against his temple. What
the hell had they done to him? How had someone managed to get one over on him?

“Daisy, Daisy, Daisy,” Ward murmured dramatically. “I can see your mind working a mile a minute.
You could make a move against me, but then…what would stop my associate from pulling the
trigger and splattering Captain America’s brains all over the road?” He taunted. “Oh, and before you
decide to use your powers to knock them both backwards, take a closer look at the diner.”

Her eyes immediately moved to the building, noticing the waitress pressed up against the glass door,
a gun to her head as well. It was the same man that had entered the diner right before Steve’s arrival.

“You can’t save them both,” he told her. “Not only do you not want to be responsible for Captain
America’s death, but you’ll do anything to avoid civilian casualties.”

She heard footsteps approach her before she felt the prick of a needle in her neck.

“But what you still don’t understand, is that I don’t care.”

Her vision began to blur slightly, but it was still trained on the diner. She heard the gunshot,
watching the waitress fall to the ground. “No!” She said, struggling against him, kicking out of
Grant’s hold. When she was dropped unceremoniously on the pavement, she did her best to gather
her powers. The light was beginning to fade and she knew she’d be unconscious shortly. “Fuck you,
Ward!” Bringing her hands together, she charged the empty air between them, watching as the air
turned into a pocket of what she hoped would help the situation. Extending her hands out in different
directions, she watched as Ward and one of his associates went flying through the air. Losing the
fight against the darkness, she laid down. The last scene she was able to process was the vision of
Steve fighting off the man that had currently held him hostage.
Chapter 10

Disclaimer: I don’t own anything familiar to Marvel Author’s Note: I used italics in a couple different ways in this chapter. If words are written in just plan italic then know it is a text message. If the italics are written in quotation marks then it’s meant as a flashback. And thank you all for the responses. Questions will be answered in both this chapter and the next.

A & M Chapter 10

As his opponent fell to the ground lifeless, Steve looked back up just in time to see Daisy lay down on the ground. By the time he’d been ambushed and taken outside, she’d appeared able to handle herself for the most part. He hesitated momentarily, trying to decide if he should check on her or head into the diner to take care of things in there. However, thinking back to the distraction she’d provided by knocking those men backwards, he turned back towards the diner to find the last man believing she was able to hold off anything until he returned to her side.

Running inside, he stopped short at the sight. Employees were gathered around the fallen waitress, all of them in various states of shock and sadness. He winced, noticing the blood and brain matter and knew there was no helping the unfortunate woman.

“Where did he go?” He asked, speaking about the gunman.

“He ran out back,” someone answered, not sparing him a glance.

Rushing out of the main dining area, Steve turned cautious as he made his way through the break room in case the gunman had decided to hide. After inspecting every nook and cranny, he made his way towards the back door. He slowly opened it and peered down both directions, finding nothing out of place.

The not-so-distant sound of squealing tires gathered his attention. Taking off with urgency, he ran back towards the main dining area and burst through the front door just in time to see a black car speed off with no Daisy in sight. Making his way towards the spot he’d last seen her in, he looked around. When he spotted a syringe in the gutter he leaned down and picked it up, a heaviness settling in his chest as he thought back on his decision to leave Daisy. They must have injected her when he’d been busy fighting his opponent. He’d assumed that she may have exhausted herself from using her powers, but that she’d been fine overall. If he’d known that she was injected with anything he never would have left her there. Why hadn’t he taken a closer look at her before turning back towards the diner? Breaking the needle tip off, he placed the rest in his pocket.

Standing back up, he looked in other directions, wondering if anyone else was left behind. Off to the side, he noticed a still form. Making his way towards it, he prepared himself in case the fallen form was conscious. However, the body was still as he approached it. Kneeling down, he checked for a pulse. It was faint, but it was there. He pulled out his phone, finding the name he wanted, he connected the call.

“Hey, Steve,” Natasha greeted leisurely. “So, was it a love connection?”

“I was ambushed,” he grunted into the phone.

“What?” Natasha asked, immediately on alert. “How?” Steve had fought plenty of foes in the past, but unless they had mechanical or alien DNA, he’d always come out on top.

“I don’t know,” but he was certainly curious as to how some random human, and he assumed he was
a human because no other abilities had been used, could be on par with him. “Daisy was kidnapped. I’ve got three dead bodies, one civilian and an unconscious suspect.”

“I knew we should have joined you,” she muttered into the phone, mostly to herself. “I’ll call the others and we’ll be there as soon as we can.” She already had Tony and Clint on stand-by, had since she’d explained the situation to them and Steve’s plan to meet with Daisy.

“I’m not sure how long I’ll be here,” he said then, intending to join SHIELD when they returned to their base to devise a rescue mission. “Let me know when you’re close and I’ll send you my coordinates.”

“Don’t worry about that, just turn the location on on your phone and I’ll track it.”

“Will do,” he said, ending the call. When the man next to him moved slightly, Steve tilted his head down at the man and punched him, effectively knocking him unconscious again. Making his way towards the direction he’d seen the other body fly in, he found a mess, but no body left behind. Under closer inspection, he looked over the area, spotting a discarded phone. Snatching it up, he pressed a button, hoping there wasn’t a pin to enter. The screen was locked, but he realized that it required a pattern. Angling the face of the phone towards the sun, he tried to guess the correct one given the finger prints. Two tries later, he was in. Looking under the messages icon, he looked for the date he’d last exchanged texts with Daisy. He noticed a contact named ‘cute blonde.’

“I had a drink, a cute blonde chatted me up and now I want to dance with said cute blonde.”

It had to be her phone! That’s what she called him that night. He clicked on the conversation and felt a sliver of relief when his thought was solidified. He located her call log and read through the most current ones, the very first call on the list had been sent only minutes ago to a Lincoln. That wasn’t her partner’s name, was it? He connected a call to it.

“Lady Daisy?”

Lady-Thor?! Thor was in contact with Daisy? And…Lincoln? What was that about? “Thor?” He asked in complete shock.

“Friend, Steve Rogers,” Thor said. “You are with Lady Daisy then,” he said feeling an air of relief, knowing that Steve would have helped Daisy’s fight. “I know we have much-”

“I thought you were with Jane,” Steve said.

“I know we have much to discuss,” Thor replied. “And we will, but Lady Daisy?” He asked. “Is she well? Her team has already departed for your location.” Even if her powers weren’t cultivated, they were certainly helpful when fighting, but her team still made haste to find her. When they departed, he’d remained at the base feeling very unnerved by their reaction to that group, that man and hoped she was well.

Team. So, SHIELD already knew about her confrontation. “They took her,” Steve answered, ignoring the curses on the other end of the phone. “Who were they?”

“Hydra.”

Steve shook his head. Why was Hydra so interested in Daisy? Sure, she was a SHIELD agent, but it had to be more than that. Their plan was precise and he couldn’t help but wonder why so many people were used to abduct one person. Unless…they knew about her powers. Had it been her ability they were after? “Sirens are approaching,” Steve said then, knowing he’d be questioned as soon as the proper authorities arrived. He needed to come up with something quick.
“Am I to assume that you’ll be returning with her team?” Thor asked.

“Yes.”

“We will speak then,” Thor nodded into the phone.

“You there!”

The voice pulled Steve from his conversation and he looked up to find a middle-aged man looking at him expectantly. “Gotta go,” he muttered into the phone before disconnecting the call and pocketing it.

“From what I understand, you’re in the middle of this,” the officer said, looking him over. “The question is, do you belong behind bars back at the station or-”

Steve stood up straight and squared his shoulders. “Steve Rogers,” he said, holding out his hand, not giving the officer a chance to finish his question. He hoped that the name would be familiar enough to the man that he was given a little slack.

“Rogers?” The man asked, taking a closer look. “As in Captain America?”

Steve nodded. “I was meeting an associate and when we parted ways, we were each ambushed.”

“Excuse me, officer?” A female interrupted.

“And you are?” The man grunted.

“Agent Melinda May, SHIELD,” she said, holding out her badge for him.

He reached for the badge, looking it over for authenticity. “SHIELD, huh?” He asked, handing it back to her before looking from her to Steve. “I didn’t realize that the Avengers were back to working with SHIELD…”

“It…was a recent development,” May excused. “I’ll take it from here;” she told Steve, more or less excusing him from the conversation.

He watched in fascination as she worked over the officer, pulling him off to the side. However, his musing was cut short when he was approached by someone else. “Steve Rogers, I don’t know if you remember me. I’m Daisy’s partner, Mack.”

Steve nodded in acknowledgement. “Daisy was-”

“I know, we were informed after your call with Thor,” Mack supplied. “We’ll talk more at the base.”

“Okay,” he looked around at what he assumed were SHIELD agents. “Did anyone bring a field kit?” He asked, watching Mack call someone over.

“Uh, Captain Rogers, it’s an honor uh-to uh meet you,” the man said stumbling over his words.

Steve nodded at the third agent. “Two men attacked me inside the diner, easily overcoming me.” He watched both men frown, obviously unnerved that he’d been able to be taken down.

“Inhuman?” The recent addition asked, looking at Mack.

“With Hydra?” Mack asked back. “I don’t think so but take some blood so we can rule things out.”
Rounding out the group, Steve followed the agents into the base. As soon as they made their way into the facility, he noticed Thor standing with a statuesque brunette at the end of the hallway.

“Everyone get to work,” May said, turning to face the agents that joined her on the trip. “Director wants results ASAP, this takes precedence over anything else you were working on. Fitz, get started on testing whatever it is inside that syringe, I’ll send Simmons to join you shortly for the blood sample.”

Steve watched as everyone disappeared to their designated areas.

“We’ll do the tour later,” May said, turning to face him. “Would you like for someone to take a look at you?” She asked, referring to the dried blood on his face and hands.

“I’ll be fine,” he dismissed. “However, I should probably clean up a bit,” he tacked on.

“Of course. The rest room is just through there,” she instructed. “I’ll wait here.”

Following her instructions, he made his way towards the sink and washed the blood off his hands before reaching for paper towels. He ran them under the water and stared at his reflection.

“You're the one that approached me, Casanova, remember?”

He blinked several times to clear away the memory. Leaning into the mirror, he began to wipe away the dried blood.

“Yes, I purposely kept that information from you, but it was only because I enjoyed talking to you and I was afraid that if you knew, you would hightail it out of there.”

She was right. If he had discovered she was with SHIELD he would have assumed the worst and left as soon as possible.

“What is wrong with you? “How could you let that happen?”

Once again, he pushed the thought away as he continued to clean off. He’d always had a temper, growing up Bucky used to tease him over the Irish temper that Steve managed to inherit, even if he was in America. Though his time in the military helped curb that temper, it still snuck up on him at times.

“But it did. Countless people have been affected because of your negligence.”

He shouldn’t have said it. As soon as the words were out of his mouth, he’d regretted it. Her own regret was obvious as she spoke of it, but he’d ignored it.

“I would apologize for us not being able to come to an understanding, but I’d be lying since you’ve been nothing but an asshole from the moment you sat down. Do me a favor, delete my number out of your phone. I’ll do the same and we’ll never have to talk again.”

He really had been an asshole. He hadn’t intended to make things difficult. However, seeing her once again only reminded him of the resentment, anger and disappointment he’d felt upon learning the truth about her. When they were fresh in his thoughts, he’d gone out of his way to make things difficult for her. “You really are shit,” he told his reflection. Maybe if he’d managed to reign in his temper they would have been together when Hydra made their move and the outcome would have been different? But that didn’t really matter, did it? He tossed away the used paper towels and
clenched the edge of the white porcelain sink. He’d make this right. He’d help SHIELD retrieve her, whether the rest of the Avengers helped or not. Putting his Captain America persona back at the forefront, he exited the restroom to find May had been joined by Thor and his companion.

“The director is ready to see you, he’s waiting in the conference room. Thor will show you the way,” Melinda said.

Thor would show him the way? That implied that his Asgardian friend had spent time at base well enough to know where various areas were. Just what exactly was Thor doing with SHIELD? Steve nodded in acknowledgement. “Agent May, I should tell you that my team is already in the air.”

“I gathered as much. We’ll be waiting to greet them when they land and bring them to meet you,” she replied before excusing herself.

“You’ve looked better,” Thor said, approaching his teammate. “Steve, meet Lady Sif of Asgard,” he introduced the pair. “Lady Sif, Steve Rogers is my teammate and brother in arms.”

Steve did the obligatory introduction before turning to his teammate. “I don’t understand,” he began. “I thought you left New York to join Jane, why are you here? How long have you been in communication with SHIELD? And why didn’t you mention it?”

“Jane and I have parted ways,” Thor began. There had been no point in spending time in London without her. “I believe I have mentioned in passing that Odin has taken it upon himself to take Midgard under the protection of Asgard,” he said, waiting for his friend to acknowledge his words. “When news began spreading of the alien contagion, I returned home to find out if they knew anything. Lady Sif explained two situations that she dealt with involving SHIELD in the last two years and when I discovered—” He cut himself off from mentioning Son of Coul, knowing that Steve would see the man shortly. “I asked her to bring me to SHIELD.”

“How long ago was that?” Steve asked then.

“We have been here for eight days.” Lady Sif said, speaking for the first time since being introduced.

Thor had been with Daisy, with SHIELD for over a week? “And you didn’t think to call us?”

“To be fair, things were busy here.”

Too busy to pick up a phone? His mind flashed back to his conversation with Daisy in the diner as she mentioned the things they’d dealt with since SHIELD fell. “Understandable, but I’d still like an explanation.”

Thor nodded and clasped one of Steve’s shoulder. “When our comrades join us, I will speak of it.” He turned around. “Come, let us join the director.”

Steve followed behind the Asgardians, turning into a room not far from their meeting point. When his phone vibrated his pulled it from his pocket.

Ten minutes out.

“The others should be joining us in about fifteen minutes,” he repeated for Thor.

“Good, then I’ll only have to explain this once more.”

Steve’s head shot up. “Agent Coulson?”
“It’s Director Coulson now,” Coulson clarified. “Hi, Cap.”

“You’re alive.” He mentally rolled his eyes at himself. Way to state the obvious.

Coulson arched an eyebrow at him. “As evidence by my standing here,” he retorted.

“Wait. How…are you alive?”

“It’s a long story that would be best explained when the others join us.”

“So…you were brought back to life by alien blood…” Clint said slowly, speaking up before anyone else.

“DNA,” Coulson quickly clarified, “but, yes.”

“Why wouldn’t Fury say anything?” Nat asked.

“Or Maria,” Tony added, thinking on the woman that had gone to work at Stark Industries.

Steve considered the question. “Don’t you remember?” He asked. “Fury used his death to rally us together.” He’d never forget the vision of his trading card covered in blood being thrown on the table in front of them.

Clint grunted “Fine, but that doesn’t explain why he didn’t say anything afterwards.”

“Other than Fury, Hill and the doctors that worked on me, no one knew. There was no information on it anywhere. I didn’t even know. I was told that while I did die it was only for a few minutes. Some of my memories were modified or removed altogether. It wasn’t until after I learned about the GH-325 and went digging for information that I realized that SHIELD had tried to use the serum in the past with really bad results. The serum was shelved and all information was put in the toolbox, never to be thought of again.”

“Until you died,” Natasha sighed.

Coulson nodded.

“How did we not manage to see you at HQ?” The former assassin asked.

“When I returned to work, Fury gave me a new directive. I was to put a team together and we went mobile, or, well, air-mobile.” He explained the Bus and the members of the team he’d picked. He spoke of their first mission and their introduction to Daisy, who’d gone by Skye at the time and his decision to bring her on as a consultant. By the time he finished, it was clear that Clint and Natasha still had questions. “I know that you deserve answers, and you will get them, but right now isn’t the time.” He looked from one person to another, settling his gaze on Natasha. “When we have a chance, I’ll tell you everything.”

“Everything?” She repeated.

“Within reason,” he adjusted. “My team will be joining us as soon as they have results so if there is anything you need to talk about before they get here, now is the time to do it.”

“I’ll bite,” Tony said, sitting forward. “I get how Steve is involved,” Natasha had made sure to keep them up to date. “What I don’t get is why Point Break was already here.”
Thor nodded. “I did not remain in London.”

Tony responded with a dramatic gasp. “You don’t say…”

Thor ignored the interruption and reminded his teammates about Odin’s decision to protect Midgard. “I returned to inquire if anything was known about those changing. Lady Sif spoke of her last travel to Midgard. A year ago, she was dispatched to track down a Kree alien that was searching for an Inhuman. In the end, it was discovered that Lady Daisy was that Inhuman and I learned about Son of Coul.”

“And you didn’t think to say anything to us?” Clint asked. They would have joined the Asgardian.

“Earlier, you said it was busy around here,” Steve said, hoping it would prompt an explanation.

Thor nodded.

Coulson sat forward and spoke again. “When Thor and Sif turned up, we were attempting to open a portal to another world,” he said, watching as all eyes turned to him with varying degrees of disbelief written on their faces. “No, seriously,” he insisted.

The redhead shook her head. She knew that SHIELD dealt with a plethora of things, but a portal to an alien world? What had Coulson gotten himself into?

“You were-what? Why?” Clint asked.

“After dealing with a situation last year, we took possession of an alien artefact. For the most part is was a solid stone but at random intervals it would liquify. One day when Jemma was studying it, the containment box it was held in was unlocked and when it liquified she was absorbed by it.”

Steve pursed his lips, thinking about the night he’d met Daisy and her quick exit. “That was why Daisy left that night.”

Coulson nodded. “We tried several things in an attempt to retrieve Simmons, but nothing worked. We’d almost given up hope when Fitz discovered grains of sand left behind after it liquified that predated Earth. We eventually discovered that it was a portal to another world and attempted to manipulate it so that we could retrieve her.”

“And did you manage to open it?” Natasha asked, completely interested in the story.

“We did. Daisy was able to use her ability to manipulate the artefact into liquefying and we were able to save Simmons,” the director said, a proud smile adorning his face as he spoke of Daisy’s involvement. “A day or so after that, we tracked an Inhuman that attacks other Inhumans. Daisy and Mack followed him to a hospital and there was a confrontation.”

Tony nodded, thinking of the video feed he’d seen. “I watched her use her ability to push that Inhuman away without even touching him…and it was her ability that caused the floor to give out under him.”

“Yes.”

“How could she do that and manipulate a portal?”

“Everything around us has a vibration and Daisy can control that vibration,” Coulson explained. “When she first developed her gift, she couldn’t control it and caused earthquakes.”
“Thor said those men were Hydra. Is that why they’re interested in her? For her ability?” Steve inquired.

Coulson sighed. “Unfortunately, no. It’s more personal than that. The specialist on my team ended up being a Hydra agent. However, before it was revealed, he and Daisy were on their way to developing a relationship. After the truth came out, his feelings for her never wavered and he became obsessed with her. Since our last confrontation with Hydra, Ward has claimed leadership. I thought his feelings for Daisy had since changed, but apparently, I was wrong.”

“We’ll help you get her back,” Steve said as soon as Coulson finished talking.

“Woah, wait a minute,” Tony interrupted. “Shouldn’t this be a team discussion before you offer our services?” He asked, looking from Steve to Coulson. “No offense, Agent,” he said, using his former nickname for Coulson. “Given your story and the obvious regard you have for your agent, I’m sorry that she’s been taken…but we pulled away from SHIELD for a reason.”

“You’re right,” Steve caved. “I shouldn’t have included all of you in my statement, but I’m not going anywhere.” He looked to Thor and watched the Asgardian nod in agreement.

Clint studied Coulson. “You really care about her, don’t you?”

“She’s the closest thing I have to family,” Coulson confessed, not holding anything back.

Natasha placed a hand on Clint’s shoulder. “Then we’re in too,” she said, speaking for the both of them.

Tony leaned back in his chair and crossed his arms, his annoyance with the situation obvious. He watched as all of his teammates turned to him and blew out a sigh. “Fine,” he mumbled. “I’m in too.”

The lone female removed her hand from Clint. “There is one thing, Coulson,” she said. “And if you don’t agree to it, we’ll still help but-”

“What?”

“We’d like access to any Hydra files you find,” she said.

He considered her words. “I...don’t see an issue with that,” Coulson replied. “Can I ask why?”

“We’re trying to track down the Winter Soldier,” Steve answered. “When I encountered him, I discovered that he was...is...my old friend Bucky Barnes.”

Coulson’s eyes widened. “No way!” He replied, his fanboy side coming out.

“We’ve been trying to locate him, but we aren’t having much luck,” Natasha explained.

“Of course,” Coulson said. “You know, we have some documents that we took after taking care of Daniel Whitehall. I don’t know if it will have what you’re looking for, but you’re more than welcome to look.” His phone chirped and he looked down. “Results are back and my team is on their way here.”
Chapter 11

Disclaimer: I don’t own any characters familiar to Marvel. Also, I did look up specific information about Zabo’s formula and the Patriot Serum that was used on Mace so I could give more information about both. Most of the explanations of those aren’t mine.

Author’s Note: There is mention of rape in this chapter, not the act itself, but it is spoken of. Please let me state that what I wrote in this chapter was written for creative purposes only. I was attempting to write a character’s assumption about the mind of Grant Ward (which could totally be off base). What was written does NOT reflect my personal feelings about rape or sexual assault.

A & M Chapter 11

“How’s our guest?”

“Just as helpful as we assumed he’d be,” May responded wryly. “I wasn’t able to get anything so far, but I’ll try again.”

He nodded in acknowledgement. “The Avengers have agreed to help us retrieve Daisy,” he said, not mentioning their interest in Hydra or the reason for it. He’d pull May off to the side and let her know, but as far as he was concerned, no one else needed to know the particulars. “Before we get started, I assume no introductions need to be made on this side,” Coulson said, gesturing to the Avengers. “Let me introduce my agents.” He went on to introduce all of the agents in the room to the Avengers. “Also joining us is Lady Sif of Asgard and Lincoln Campbell, a friend of Daisy’s.” He waited for both groups to acknowledge one another before getting down to business. “So, Fitz, what was in the syringe?”

“It was uh-uh a variation of the dendrotoxin.”

Coulson pursed his lips. “A couple years ago, Agents Fitz and Simmons created a custom tranquilizer weapon meant to incapacitate someone without the messy side effect of killing them or permanently harming them,” he explained for the Avengers.

“And given the time I spent undercover in Hydra we know that they continued to use some of the same technology that SHIELD did,” Jemma tacked on. “Though I’ve never seen that variation before.”

“And we’re sure that it didn’t hurt her?” Lincoln asked, frowning.

Coulson considered the question. “Despite all of his faults, Ward fancies himself in love with her. I don’t think he’d do anything that would intentionally cause her harm.”

“He does remember that she shot him four times though, doesn’t he?” Hunter inquired.

May pursed her lips. “How much would you forgive for the one you love?” She asked in response. It was no secret how volatile Hunter and Bobbie’s relationship could be for the SHIELD agents.

“Jemma, what about the blood from the man that Steve fought off?” Coulson asked, before his scientist handed him a manilla folder. He looked over the results and nodded his head before closing it and settling it down before him. “Daisy’s father invented a serum that composed of anabolic-androgenic steroids, a liver enzyme blocker, various metabolic enhancers, methamphetamines, what appears to be gorilla testosterone, and a drop of peppermint. However, the formula requires at least one milligram of adrenaline to achieve its full effect,” he said, thinking back on Jemma’s explanation
when she tested the original formula.

“Gorilla testosterone?” Clint repeated. “Why would he do something like that?”

“Because his wife was Inhuman and he thought that was what she wanted,” Coulson answered. “It’s a long story,” he waved away.

Jemma nodded. “In its completed state, the formula grants the user vastly increased strength, allowing him to shatter tempered glass with his bare hands, toss heavy equipment, we witnessed him tear the hood off a S.H.I.E.L.D. SUV. He can even crush bones. While under the formula, he became more durable and remained standing after multiple I.C.E.R. rounds, though he claimed to have lost feeling in his legs. The formula has a number of physiological side effects, including heightened aggression, bulging veins and hands as a result of increased blood flow, and lengthening of the fingernails.”

“And his wife wanted that?” Tony asked. “I’m all for trying new things in the bedroom, but what kind of kinky playtime is that?”

“After being kidnapped, tortured and dissected by Hydra, she changed. She no longer held an affinity for any humans, Hydra or not, and he changed because it was the only way he felt he could hold onto her,” Coulson supplied. “Since discovering the formula, General Talbot has put together a group of scientists and they’ve worked on tweaking it, removing the er…more volatile elements of it. The original intention was to recreate the super soldier serum that Steve was given, however, on a much smaller scale. The side effects fade after a certain amount of time so regular doses need to be taken in order to maintain the increased side effects. He found a volunteer and the serum was supposed to be specifically modified for his DNA.”

“This volunteer, is he Hydra then?”

Coulson shook his head in negative. “I highly doubt it. However, that’s not to say that there isn’t a Hydra agent among the scientists.”

“Or someone in a high position of the government,” Bobbie tacked on.

“That would explain how Ward got his hands on it.”

“And why they were able to gang up on Steve and overcome him,” Natasha tacked on. “They weren’t expecting him, so why juice up so much?”

Mack shook his head in negative. “I think it’s fair to say that Daisy was the only intended survivor. Chances are, if it had been anyone else that person would be dead right now.”

“He’s been planning this for a while then,” May nodded.

Lincoln looked from May and settled his gaze on Coulson. He cleared his throat. “Do we have to worry about…is there a possibility that…would her rape her?” Lincoln finally managed to get out, asking the question that had been on all of their minds. He watched the older agents exchange significant gazes.

“The truth is,” Coulson began stiffly, “we uh, we don’t know. I wish I could say differently, but the line blurred for him a long time ago.”

From his position across the table, Steve bowed his head and closed his eyes. Upon waking up seventy years into the future and learning his friends were dead and the woman he’d loved was an old woman, he’d stopped believing in any sort of God for allowing him to experience such a thing.
But he’d gladly recant everything if it meant that Daisy would be spared from such a fate.

Bobbie looked from Coulson before settling a compassionate gaze on Steve. No words needed to be said, he blamed himself in one way or another. “He won’t rape her.”

Lincoln frowned at the woman. “How do you know?”

“If he loves her as much as he claims he won’t take that choice from her.” Of that much, she was certain. “However, it’s still a time sensitive case. He’ll manipulate the situation in anyway he can so that in the end she’ll agree to whatever he wants and he’ll take delight in lording it over her and everyone else.”

“That’s still a form of rape, or sexual assault, at the very least,” Jemma argued.

She shook her head in negative. “He won’t see it like that. So long as she gives him the okay, by whatever means, it isn’t rape…at least, not to him.” When it looked like the other woman was ready to argue again, Bobbie held her hands up in surrender. “I’m not saying it’s right, I’m just trying to express his thought process,” she reminded the group.

“What about the papers we retrieved in Puerto Rico and from Whitehall?” Mack asked. “There’s nothing in there that could give us an idea of where he took her?”

“I doubt it,” May denied. “If Ward knew any information that was on those documents, he’d avoid any of those locations at all cost knowing we had access to them.”

“He’s got to be relatively close,” Natasha said then, thinking about the situation that Steve had dealt with.

Steve nodded. “He intended for bodies to be left behind, both civilian and whomever Daisy was with. How long does the dendrotoxin remain active?” He inquired, looking to Agent Fitz.

“It uh, I guess it would depend on the dosage amount.” Fitz allowed. “When subjects have been shot in the past, they’ve remained incapacitated long enough to be secured.”

“And he knows of her abilities?” Sif asked, picking up Steve’s line of thought.

“I doubt he knows how they’ve evolved, but yes,” Jemma replied.

“Other than being unconscious, is there any way to suppress her abilities?” Tony inquired then.

“Not that we know of,” Coulson admitted as he stood up and made his way towards the computer in the room.

“We should also consider Jaying’s ability,” Lincoln spoke up. “Nothing was confirmed, but it was considered that Daisy has her mother’s healing ability. Obviously to a severely lesser degree, but still a possibility. And if that’s the case, the toxin wouldn’t have lasted as long on her.”

“What about when Quinn shot her?” Mack inquired.

Jemma shook her head in negative. “That was pre GH-325. No, if we’re working focusing on the Kree DNA then it would have to be post Puerto Rico.”

He pulled up a location map of the area. “Under the assumption that he wouldn’t want to chance moving her when she’s conscious and able to access her powers, I say we work with…a window of an hour and a half,” he said, circling an area of the map that fit the time window.
“That’s still a large grid,” Mack pointed out.

Coulson nodded. “But I’m sure that once our guest becomes more helpful it will narrow our search.”

A knock sounded at the door. “Come in.”

“Uh, sir, Grant Ward is on the line,” Agent Davis said, peaking his head into the room.

Coulson pursed his lips. “Mack?” He asked.

“Got it,” the agent responded, turning on the large screen so that Coulson could connect the call to it so everyone in the room had a view of the video call.

As soon as the video was connected, the attention of the assembled group immediately fell on a bloody scene behind Grant Ward. Chains dangled from the air, but it was the puddle of blood that was gathered on the floor off to the side behind the unhinged man that alarmed everyone.

Jemma stared at the mess, taking notice of the shirt haphazardly tossed on top of it, also drenched in blood. She gasped, Skye’s…Daisy’s shirt! She’d know it anywhere after helping her friend select a top to meet Steve. “You…her shirt,” she mumbled.

On the screen, Ward rolled his eyes. “Relax, Simmons, she’s fine. I would never hurt her,” he said, as if speaking to a child. “No, no, this is what happens when someone touches something that doesn’t belong to him.” He zoomed out and showed the dead body of a male, obviously the man responsible for all of the blood. “Good help is so hard to come by these days. See, Coulson. I take care of what’s mine.”

“You’re insane, Ward,” Jemma replied.

“You know, because you were just recently rescued from another planet, I’m going to let that slide,” he responded. “I see the whole gang is assembled, oh…and you called in the big guns,” he said referring to the Avengers. “Gotta tell you, I’ve been extremely disappointed. When you and May met that rogue agent and he said that death followed Skye wherever she went, I really thought she’d end up on the right side of things. I was even further encouraged after Raina introduced me to Cal. There wasn’t anything he wouldn’t do for his daughter…but then he turned a leaf. Losing Zabo was a disappointment. I think for a while there, he was all for our relationship.”

“He may have been unpredictable as Zabo, but I doubt he’d cheer for his daughter to end up with psycho like you,” Coulson replied. “After all, considering what Hydra did to his wife, how could he?”

Ward pursed his lips and considered the words. “True. But like Cal, I was stayed with Hydra after Garrett died because I had no where else left to turn.”

“And who’s fault is that, Ward?” May asked.

“And now I’m leading. And as soon as I square things up with Skye, I’ll be unstoppable.”

Coulson hesitated. Square things how?

“Captain,” Ward said, focusing on Captain America.

Steve straightened in his seat.

“I’d apologize for earlier, but you really were in my way. If it makes you feel any better, it wasn’t personal. In fact, I was expecting the boyfriend,” Ward finished, his eyes settling on Lincoln.
Steve crossed his arms as the man addressed him. However, when he’d said ‘boyfriend,’ Steve’s attention followed Ward’s gaze and he looked to Lincoln, the man Coulson introduced as Daisy’s friend.

Lincoln pursed his lips and crossed his arms, not deigning the label with a response. He remembered his last interaction with Ward. However, when he felt the attention of various members of the Avengers look to him, he quickly looked down.

“I have no problem with you,” Ward said, turning his attention once again on Steve.

“Maybe so, but you shouldn’t have had your men attack me. Because now, I have a problem with you,” Steve replied flatly. And if he had a problem then his team had a problem. “And even if you didn’t make a move against me, do you really think we’ll just walk away and let you keep Daisy?”

“I really don’t think you have another option,” Ward replied as he began walking through the building. “Coulson, I just wanted to let you know, that I will take care of her.” He stopped and turned into a room. “Also, while you and yours are still trying to track me down, I just had to let you know how late you are to the party.” He turned the phone on Daisy, whom was chained to a school desk, her eyes propped open as she stared at a screen.

“You son of a bitch!” Coulson said, jumping out of his seat. He balled up his prosthetic hand and punched the table under him, leaving a sizeable dent and ignoring those that jumped in surprise from his actions.

“Why, yes, she was,” Ward replied.

“I’m going to find you, Ward and then I’m going to kill you,” he vowed, simmering with anger.

“She’ll never allow it, but you’re welcome to try,” Ward replied, smirked. “Bye, Coulson,” he taunted before disconnecting the call.

Coulson picked up the phone, staring at the device for a long moment before standing up and throwing the device on the ground, watching it shatter. “Mother Fucker! That son of bitch!” He turned his back on the rest of the room.

No one had been prepared for that reaction. The Avengers, never having seen that side of Coulson fell into shocked silence.

May approached him cautiously. “You need to reign this in now,” she whispered harshly. “You’re no good to anyone like this, Phil.” She turned around. “Search through everything we managed to get from Whitehall,” she ordered. “Anything on behavioral modification that we may have missed.”

Steve looked to Natasha. Behavioral modification? Like…what had been done to Bucky that enabled Hydta to use him as the Winter Soldier?

Hunter nodded. “On it,” he said as he, Bobbi and Mack walked out of the conference room.

When May followed behind them, Jemma spoke up. “Where are you going?”

“To get some answers,” May replied without turning around.

Natasha looked from Coulson to May and stood up. “Would you like some company?” She offered. May hesitated. She turned to look at the redhead for a beat before nodding.
As Natasha moved to follow May, Clint stood up as well.

“Legolas?” Tony asked.

“I’m gonna go watch the show,” the archer replied, interested to see May and Nat in action as they question Ward’s lackey.

Tony remained in his seat. “So, you turned into the Hulk when, Agent?” He asked, referring to the dent that Coulson left in the table.

Steve turned to look at Tony and shook his head in negative.

“Lady Sif,” Lincoln said turning towards the brunette. “Are you up for training?” He asked.

She nodded. “Perhaps we should,” she agreed, standing up. “Thor?”

The blonde shook his head in negative. “I will join you at a later time,” he replied before looking at Jemma. “What is this behavioral modification?” He inquired as Lady Sif and Lincoln left the room.

Jemma nibbled on her bottom lip. “Hydra managed to find a way of brainwashing those that they find useful but are not…sympathetic to their cause. It’s called the Faustus method, named after the scientist that invented the conditioning. When Hydra came out and attempted to take over, they either killed SHIELD agents or attempted to recondition them.”

“Is that the only kind of conditioning they do?” Steve inquired, listening in on the conversation.

“It also involves hypnosis and mental reprogramming. The hypnosis uses very specific words. It isn’t unusual for a subject to break from the control and when that happens, all Hydra has to do is say those words and the subject slips back under the collusion.”

Steve nodded in understanding. “So, you’ve seen this then?”

Jemma nodded in acknowledgment. “A few times.”

“Is there any chance of reversing it?”

“Not that we’ve seen, which is why finding Daisy as soon as possible is important,” Jemma replied.

After the rest of the group dispersed, Steve exited the conference room. Unfortunately, they were stuck waiting, hoping that May and Natasha could extract any information from Ward’s associate. He’d gone to the interrogation area, taking up position next to Clint as they watched the two women attempt to work their magic. However, upon joining the archer, he watched as the older agent left the interrogation room, hitting the door on her way out. She brushed past him without a sparing a glance and a moment later another door slammed closed, signaling her exit.

“Not going well?” Steve asked, his mouth turned down into a frown.

Clint could only shake his head in negative. “Not yet,” he allowed. Though he was sure it wouldn’t be long before the man began cooperating. “You okay, Steve?”

The question pulled at his attention and he could only sigh. “All I keep thinking was that I shouldn’t have let her walk away,” he confessed. “I keep thinking about the things I said to her. I let my emotions get in the way. I…I can’t help but wonder if I managed to control my temper and she was with me, would they have been able to take her?” He shook his head. “And then I get frustrated for
even letting my mind go there, because it doesn’t matter. She’s gone and there’s no going back to change that.”

Clint pursed his lips has he listened to his friend. “You’re right, it doesn’t matter. But…given what we learned, I think that if you had been together when they made their move that more civilians probably would have been killed.” All Hydra cared about was the end game, no matter how they got there. If Daisy had resisted going with them, they would have used any and all innocent people they could to persuade her. “Why were you so angry?”

“All of the resentment I’d been feeling just bubbled forth and when she was talking, I was…less then receptive. When she told me that she was responsible for the alien contagion, I just…I didn’t hold back. It was after that, that she stood up, asked me to lose her number and walked away.”

The archer’s eyes widened. SHIELD was responsible for that? How? What had Coulson and his team been getting up to? “SHIELD is responsible for the contagion?” Clint repeated.

Steve shook his head in negative. “Not SHIELD, her,” he corrected. “She was very insistent on that. And I just…berated her for that, ignoring the fact that she was already blaming herself. She called me an asshole, and she was right. I was acting like one.”

“Did you ever occur to you that Daisy didn’t tell you the entire story?” A voice piped up from a few feet behind them.

Steve turned around to find Agent May standing before them and he hesitated. He’d thought she left the area.

“Well?” She prompted when he didn’t open his mouth to answer her.

Steve shook his head in negative.

“Then maybe you should have asked before jumping to conclusions,” May said. She considered telling him the story, but in the end, decided not to. She needed to get back in the interrogation room.

“You’re right,” Steve replied.

She nodded at him. “As for everything else, this isn’t your fault.” If anyone was to blame, it was them, for not putting a bullet in his head sooner. “We thought he was over his obsession with her, but…” She trailed off, thinking about his relationship with Kara Palamas. “Ward would have found a way to take her eventually, and it was better that you were there instead of anyone else, because Mack was right before. Anyone else wouldn’t have walked out of the diner alive.” She turned around and returned to Natasha, leaving Steve and Clint to their thoughts.

“Have theyh managed to find out anything?” Coulson asked, walking up behind the pair of Avengers.

“Not yet,” Clint grunted. “But it’s only a matter of time.”

“Time we don’t have,” Coulson said, stepping past them to join May and Natasha in the room. The pair appeared at ease, compared to the rough shape the man appeared to be in. He couldn’t help but wonder if May had a major hand in his current status or if it was the pair of them. “Ladies, I hope you don’t mind, but I thought I’d help out.”

“Oh, is this the part where you play good cop/bad cop?” The man taunted. “You come in here promising sunshine and rainbows compared to the two of them?”
Coulson smiled in response before shaking his head. “They were the good cops,” he replied before he grabbed the man by his hair and smacked his head into the metal table before yanking him out of his seat and pushing him against the wall, his robotic hand on the man’s throat, blocking air. The man attempted to push his hand away, but it didn’t budge. “It’s a robotic hand, so fat chance moving it,” he told the man, watching the struggle leave him. “That sensation you’re experiencing right now is because I’m blocking any air from getting to your body. Blink once if you understand.” He watched the man respond. “Now, I have to find out where Ward took my agent and you’re the only one that can help me. So, the way I see it you have two choices.” He made sure to add a little extra strength to his hold. “You can help us and live a little longer while you’re at it, or I can let you die right here and now.” He minutely loosened his grip on the man’s neck to give him the smallest about air so he didn’t pass out on him. “Since I’ve put it into perspective for you, what’s it going to be? Help?” He asked, watching the man blink. “Good choice,” he said removing his hold on the man, watching as he fell to the ground, gasping for air.

Natasha looked from May towards Coulson. “What happened to your…human hand?” She asked, unable to contain the question.

“I touched a terrigen crystal. It’s what generates an Inhuman’s transition. They’re harmless to anyone with the Inhuman gene, but deadly for humans that come into contact with them,” he replied. “Now…getting down to business,” he said, turning back to the Hydra associate.
Chapter 12

Author’s Note: Thank you all for the encouraging words. Sorry to have left you hanging for so long, but I had issues writing this chapter. After several re-writes and edits, I hope this will suffice. Disclaimer: I don’t own any characters familiar to Marvel.

Wrenching his arm back, Coulson hit the man once again, delighting in the crack he heard in response. Even if he wasn’t the main target, he still felt vindication for the man’s actions against Daisy in town. When the man didn’t instantly put up a fight, he knew he was finally breaking him down. However, the crack of the intercom pulled him from his fiery haze.

“You do realize he can’t tell us anything if he’s dead right?”

He reeled back from the man when processed the words. Usually, he was the level headed one. No matter how angry his opponents made him, he was able to contain that anger. However, the idea that Ward had Daisy, that he’d used the machine to modify her memories had Coulson more upset then anything he could remember in recent history. When the door opened, he nodded at May and Natasha.

“We’ll take it from here, Coulson,” Natasha told him, looking at the man on the floor.

Coulson nodded in response before giving the man one last look, pleased with his work. Maybe he’d be more willing to cooperate since the ‘good cops’ were back? He exited the room, closing the door behind him and immediately turning to the window into the room.

“So…robotic arm, huh?” Steve asked, looking at the appendage he spoke of before meeting Coulson’s gaze.

“Fitz built a few features into it,” Coulson replied. “It even comes with a holographic shield that has come in handy a couple of times.”

“And you said it was a crystal that caused it to happen?”

The director nodded. “While the Kree were responsible for the first Inhumans to change, there weren’t many crystals left. The leader of the Inhumans was afraid they would die out eventually, so she had scientists recreate the crystals. The version that was created was almost exactly the same except for the fact that they were deadly for humans if they came into contact with one.” He explained the process someone underwent when going through terrigenesis. “Even if they haven’t gone through terrigenesis, an Inhuman’s DNA and body is already prepared to handle the evolution they undergo.”

“And humans aren’t,” Steve finished.

“Correct. It’s too much for the human body to handle and it breaks down.” Coulson paused. “Daisy’s mother was the leader of the Inhumans,” he shared.

Steve paused, not having heard that revelation before. Daisy’s mother was a leader of a group of people? What did that mean for Daisy? Was she a leader of sorts? That couldn’t be though, she was still with SHIELD…

Coulson waited for his companion to process the words. “After witnessing Jaying kill someone,
Daisy saw her mother for what she really was and tried to stop her, but she was taken prisoner. At the time, Jaying and her most loyal followers had taken control of one of SHIELD’s ships with the intent to use the quin jet on it to release the terrigen crystals in mass which would kill all humans where Inhumans would be the surviving species. By the time Daisy had been freed from her containment, Jaying’s plan was already underway. When Daisy couldn’t get through to her by talking, she used her powers to push the jet into the ocean.”

Looking away from Coulson, Steve pursed his lips. So, that’s what happened… And instead of questioning Daisy calmly or letting her explain the situation, he’d assumed the worst and sent accusations flying. He’d let his anger get the better of him, expecting the worst of her.

“While Daisy learned a considerable amount of control with her powers when she was with the Inhumans, she wasn’t nearly as strong or able to manipulate them for fighting, as some of the other Inhumans had. So, she did the only thing she could to ensure that the crystals wouldn’t be used against the rest of humanity. We didn’t know the effect it would have on the fish or that it would cause a global chain reaction.”

“Coulson,” Steve sighed. “I-

“I know what you thought,” he interrupted before the Avenger could say anything further. “Several witnesses in the diner mentioned your argument with Daisy,” he explained matter-of-factly. He hadn’t been happy that Steve had immediately assumed the worst, but he couldn’t blame the man for feeling such. While he had never had an issue with the way SHIELD ran things, he understood that others did, Steve among them. “I also know that despite your anger, you would have helped Daisy if you realized their intent to take to her. It’s why you’re here now. That’s the kind of person you are.” He studied his childhood hero, easily discerning the guilt that had settled on Steve’s shoulders.

“I can’t help but to feel guilty,” Steve said then. And though he’d voiced that to others, it hadn’t helped the emotional burden he’d felt. However, voicing his concern to Coulson afforded him a slight reprieve. “When I found out she was SHIELD, I was confused and angry. I thought she only wanted to use me as a way for SHIELD to bring us back into the fold. After the weeks passed, my anger faded, or…I thought it had. But when I saw her at the restaurant it all came bubbling to the surface.”

Coulson nodded. “SHIELD isn’t what it used to be,” he told his companion.

Steve looked down at the pass that he wore around his neck. “Yeah, I’ve noticed,” he said, thinking on the Koenig sibling that had given him the lanyard. “As much as I didn’t agree with the organization as a whole, SHIELD did have some fine points. I’m glad that you were able to keep it afloat.”

“Like a Phoenix rising from the ashes…” Coulson wryly muttered.

Breaking through the hold of sleep, Daisy felt an intense pain in her temples and head and groaned. What the hell happened? It almost felt as if she’d spent the previous night attempting to drink her weight in alcohol. But that couldn’t be right…

“Easy now.”

“Ward?” Daisy blinked away the fog and sat up.

“Hey,” he responded, using his gentlest voice. “How are you feeling?”
Daisy raised a hand and pressed it against her forehead. “I have a splitting headache,” she confessed. “What happened?”

“What’s the last thing you remember?”

Daisy frowned. “I was angry. I’d met with…someone. I…I can’t picture who, but I know I was angry.” Her eyes squinted as she tried to recall the memory, but it was nothing more than a blank. She had no memory of whom it was, why or where she’d been, but she still felt anger.

He nodded.

“And what’s the last thing you remember about me?” He watched the expressions on her face give way from confusion to alarm.

She tried her hardest to picture him in her thoughts, focusing on their interactions together. For a brief second, she remembered being tied up and him releasing her. However, that was as far as it went. Had they been taken? “I…” She shook her head. “Were we taken?”

“What’s the last clear memory you have of me?” He asked then, hoping the machine worked the way he’d wanted it to.

She played back various memories, but nothing that included him. “Uh…we were trying to break into the HUB because we discovered that Victoria Hand was the Clairvoyant.” She watched his reaction, hoping that the situation wasn’t too FUBAR. Her lips pulled into a frown. FUBAR. The phrase almost felt familiar, but not to Ward. She shook the thought away. “What? Was that not right?”

He nodded. “No, it is, but…some time has passed since then,” he offered her a sad smile.

Time had passed. How much time? She closed her eyes and tried to recall her memories. Several immediately popped into her head, but none of them contained him. It was like he hadn’t existed since before their confrontation with Hand. “Ward—”

“I know you have questions, but this is going to be a long conversation. You really should shower,” he advised.

Looking down at herself, she frowned when she noticed she was wearing a man’s dress shirt instead of her own clothes. She grabbed one of the buttons and used it to pull the article of clothing away from her body to inspect her body beneath it, and was that…blood? “What happened?” She asked, looking at him wide-eyed.

“You’re fine,” he soothed automatically.

“But the blood—”

“Isn’t yours,” he supplied. She closed her eyes and tilted her head, understanding that what he’d left unsaid, that he’d killed whomever it was. Raising a hand, he cupped her cheek. “Someone attacked you. Your shirt was ruined so I put you in this,” he replied as his thumb began to stroke the skin beneath it before he pulled his hand away from her. “You should shower off and by the time you’re done, I will have fresh clothes waiting for you.”

“Are you sure, because I can just easily get changed and—”

“Shower first,” he replied. “Besides, maybe it will help with the headache. The restroom is right through there,” he pointed to the door at the far end of the room.
“Okay…” She disentangled herself from him and made her way to the door and opened it. She looked around the bathroom before looking back at Ward. “Ward?” He turned around to look at her with a small smile on his face. “My headache…last night, we didn’t go get that drink we talked about, did we?” She watched his eyes soften before regret settled in behind it.

“No,” he denied softly. “We didn’t.” He offered her a smile. “Shower now, questions later,” he ordered with a soft tone.

With her smile never wavering, she closed the door behind her. Making her way to the shower, she turned it on before approaching the mirror. She remembered making the conscious decision to change her hairstyle and how long she’d been wearing it like that, but she couldn’t remember a conversation she had with Ward a week ago? That made no sense. She looked at her hands then, recalling the first time she realized she’d been causing the earthquakes they’d been experiencing and how terrified she’d been. She remembered the team’s reaction, recalling everyone but Ward’s.

Undressing, she frowned at the blood-soaked bra and hoped that Ward meant that she’d have all fresh new clothes when she got out of the shower. Getting under the spray, she quickly washed off the foreign bodily fluid and lathered herself in body soap. It wasn’t until everything was cleaned off that she’d noticed the bruising on her body. How had she gotten those? Closing her eyes, she searched through her memories, a quick glimpse coming to mind. Opening her eyes, she tried to make sense of it. Had she been training? Her outfit was similar to something she’d wear when working out and training. But the fist that came at her hadn’t been gloved…

~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~

After their guest supplied Daisy’s location, Nat didn’t waste any time pulling up blueprints of the building. The Avengers would go in through the front. Hunter, Bobbi, Mack, and Davis would go in from the back while Coulson, May, Piper, Lincoln, Sif and Agent Prince would be the ones to retrieve Daisy.

After finishing going through everything, Coulson paused. “Everyone know what they’re doing?” When he received various nods from the people gathered around him he nodded in response. “Good.”

“Before you leave, please be cautious. From what intel we were able to gather, we don’t know exactly what Ward was planning in terms of the reconditioning. Daisy may view us as the enemy,” Melinda cautioned.

“And what do we do if she refuses to come with us?” Lincoln asked.

“Incapacitate, don’t kill,” Coulson answered. “Even before she gained her powers, she was trained under May and picked up various tools and tricks along the way. Try not to engage her.” If, when, they were able to break her from the conditioning, she’d never forgive herself if she killed a team member or friend. He looked around at the group. “Any other questions?” When no more came forth, he dismissed them. “Wheels up in twenty.”

Clint and Natasha sidled up to May. “You trained her?” The redhead asked, impressed.

“I never thought you’d get out from behind desk duty, and not only did you do that, but you took on a rookie?” Clint tacked on.

Melinda May nodded. “I did.” And Daisy would be the last, as far as she was concerned. “When Ward ended up being Hydra and took an unhealthy obsession with her, I offered. If things were different, I probably wouldn’t have,” she admitted. Of all of the members on the bus, she’d been the
last one to warm up to the young woman. However, Daisy had certainly proved herself time and again and Melinda agreed to Coulson’s suggestion with an air of skepticism. It worked out in the end though, and she’d never regretted her decision.

“Do you really think she’d view you guys as the enemy?”

May thought back to her experiences with Agent 33. “I think there’s always the possibility, specially with Ward in charge of the modification.”

The female Avenger noticed the look of confusion on Clint’s face. “You…haven’t seen the things that Hydra is capable of,” Natasha tacked on, thinking about the Winter Soldier and what Hydra had done to him.

“Maybe not like you two,” Clint gave in. “But he’s only had her for a couple hours at this point. I would assume that for this reconditioning thing to work, there’d have to be more than one session for it to be a success.”

Following behind the trio, Steve considered Clint’s point and silently hoped that they would retrieve her before too much damage was done. Making his way to the locker room to change, hesitated momentarily when he found Lincoln standing before his own locker. Lincoln…the boyfriend. When the blonde turned to him, Steve inclined his head slightly in acknowledgement as he approached an empty locker.

Eyeing the other man, Lincoln thought back to the attention he’d garnered when Ward called him Daisy’s boyfriend. Despite the severity of the situation, he’d been confused and curious about the interest a couple of the Avengers had reacted with. It wasn’t everyone dispersed when he remembered his conversation with Daisy and her mention of a small dalliance. He’d easily put two and two together, realizing that Captain America had been that dalliance. Clearing his throat, he waited for an acknowledgement before speaking. “I’m not her boyfriend.”

Steve met the man’s gaze evenly. “I didn’t ask,” he said, silently wondering why he’d divulged such a thing.

Lincoln nodded. “I know, but I wanted to state a general disclaimer,” he replied, smiling awkwardly.

Steve returned the gesture with one of his own. “Noted.”

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“You look better,” Ward observed as Daisy joined him in the bedroom. His eyes raked down her body. “You feeling better?”

Daisy stopped towel drying her hair and looked at him. “I am. Thank you for the clothes,” she replied, her heart beginning to pound by the way his eyes trailed over her body. She’d spent months wishing that he would look at her like that.

“They fit good. I knew they would.”

She felt her cheeks heat up in embarrassment and tried to ignore it. She licked her lips and tried speaking. “You shouldn’t look at me like that,” she denied.

“Why not?” He asked, a smirk growing on his face.

“Because…” Though she didn’t offer a reason.
He arched a single eyebrow at her. “Why? Does it embarrass you?”

Embarrass? She turned the word around in her head. That wasn’t the word she’d use. More like… uncomfortable, but she knew she couldn’t tell him that. “It’s just we’ve never even kissed, and I really like you, Grant,” she said using his first name, something that she didn’t do often. “I don’t want to just jump into bed with you.” Thinking that she’d managed to make the situation awkward, she spoke again. “I mean I do,” she hesitated when she witnessed the beaming smile on his face, “but I…I want it to be more than that.” She wanted to mean something more to him than what his relationship with May had been. “And when you look at me like that, I seriously consider changing my mind.”

He closed his eyes and leaned his forehead against hers as he did his best to tame his prior reaction to her. Realizing then that he needed to be cautious so as not to spook her, he pulled away from her. “I’m sorry,” he apologized with sincerity. “I didn’t mean to make you uncomfortable.” He pulled away from her and met her gaze. “I’ll go along with whatever you want, but just so you know, the feeling is mutual.”

She couldn’t help but smile, comforted by the fact that he’d admitted having feelings for her. But the moment was short lived as she thought back to her silent reflection while showering. “There’s…” She cleared her throat. “Ward, something’s wrong.” She began to pace around the room. “When I was in the shower, I was trying to remember the last…however long and it’s like there are gaps.” She met his eyes briefly before looking around the room. “And I don’t understand—” She’d thought they’d been taken, between the brief flash she’d had earlier and their unfamiliar surroundings, but he was so calm and collected. She supposed that being trained for ops, meant there was plenty of mental exercises to do so as not to panic when in such situations, but his reactions were…off. They’d faced various situations together, so she knew what to look for, but she’d never seen him so relaxed during one.

He sighed wearily. “It’s to be expected,” he said soothingly, watching as she frowned in response.

“What do you mean it’s to be expected?” She parroted. “That makes no sense. I tell you that I have gaps in my memories and it’s—” She stopped short, staring at him as she backed up several feet. “You. You did this.” There was no accusation in her voice, only realization.

From the moment she began speaking, his anxiousness had grown. He knew she’d piece everything together, he didn’t expect otherwise. “Skye…”

She ignored the slip of her old name. “Why would you do something like this?” She asked then. “I trusted you. After everything we’ve been through and you do something like this to me?”

“I didn’t do it to you, I did it for us,” he spoke up, standing up and approaching her with caution. “I did it because they tried to take you away from me. They wanted to stop us from being together. I love you, Skye.”

“It’s Daisy now,” she corrected him flatly, not at all pleased with the situation he’d placed her in.

Unaware of her reflection, he continued on. “I…I never intended to fall for you, you were so different from anyone I’d ever met and we…but then everything happened and…” he trailed off.

Not buying his story, she began backing away from him again. “What did you do?”

Still sitting down, he peered up at her with sincerity. “I’ve made mistakes, I admit that.”

Daisy pursed her lips. What mistakes?
“But you were just so stubborn and wouldn’t even listen to what I had to say. And I just wanted to give us a chance.”

“What did you do?” She repeated, her voice intensifying as she realized that he was solely responsible for her predicament.

“I’ve recently acquired possession of a machine,” he replied. “I thought that you and I could finally have a chance if there weren’t so many things in the way.”

She scrunched her nose in confusion. Who was in the way? Her head began to ache in the worst way, more so than before. “You…” She heard a ringing in her ears and her vision began to tunnel. “I don’t believe you.” Turning away from him, she ran towards the bathroom and locked the door behind her before he could follow her. Immediately, she heard him calling out for her, but she did her best to ignore it. She couldn’t look at him. Leaning back against it, her feet gave out and she slid down the door.

“Damn it, do you think I wanted things to be this way?” Ward called through the door. “I got over you, I had a relationship, like a real relationship and I was happy enough, but you guys just couldn’t let me be.”

 Couldn’t let him be? You guys? Her and…the rest of the team? They’d turned on Ward? Why? She frowned. No! He was the one that did this to her, she would not feel bad for anything. “If you were so happy then go find her,” she called through the door.

“She’s dead.”

His words were flat and she found herself almost feeling bad for him…almost. However, something told her that it was more than that. She wasn’t sure why, but she knew that much.

“Despite all of that, I forgive you, Skye.”

“Yeah? Well, I don’t forgive you,” she replied loud enough for him to hear. She paused wondering what his reaction would be. When he beat his fists on the other side of the door she almost jumped away from it.

Ward shook his head in disappointment. Obviously, the machine hadn’t worked quite how he’d wanted it to. He straightened up. “If you don’t come out, I’ll come in there after you.”

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“This was easy, almost too easy,” Natasha said, looking around the room as she tried to catch her breath.

“Coulson said they’d been fighting Hydra off and on,” Clint supplied then. And it didn’t hurt that there was a second team at the back door taking care of whatever Hydra agents on that end of the building.

She inclined her head as she considered the excuse. “Plus, with Ward at the helm…” She said, remembering the couple times she’d crossed paths with him. If he was just as mental as Coulson’s team said, she couldn’t imagine many people wanting to pledge their allegiance to him, Hydra or not.

“Jemma, we found her,” Coulson said over the com for everyone to hear.

“May, you need to be careful when you disconnect her from the machine. If you jostle her too much, she could go into shock when she comes out of it,” Jemma said from her location on Zephyr One.
“You remember the instructions I told you earlier…”

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“Got it,” Melinda said, concentrating on her task. She carefully unscrewed the fasteners that held Daisy’s eyes open before removing the head piece. However, when Daisy made no move to get up, her panic increased. “Something’s wrong,” she immediately said into her com. “She isn’t speaking, isn’t moving.”

“He must have given her something,” Jemma murmured while trying to mentally compare various toxins and drugs that had the ability to render someone in such a state.

May looked back down at her rookie with a frown. The only thing that Daisy was able to move were her eyes. May watched as they darted around, looking from one person to another. It appeared that she was at least mentally alert. When she felt a small tremor in the room, her attention fell on Daisy, having noticed that the younger woman’s breathing breathing stuttered. Following Daisy’s line of sight, she noticed Ward entering the room from another door. Straightening up, she prepared herself for a fight. But before she could take a step forward, the sound of a gunshot rang through the room. She turned slightly to see Coulson holding his gun, his arm still outstretched before him.

Recognizing that Coulson was dealing with the man responsible for Daisy’s situation, Sif approached Daisy, whom also appeared to be watching the confrontation if the steadily increasing shaking was anything to go by. “Do you remember any of your breathing techniques?” She asked, watching as panic settled behind Daisy’s gaze. No, then. “Lincoln, as Lady Daisy’s transitioner, do you have an exercise she can do to calm herself?” She moved to the side as the Inhuman approached Daisy, talking in hushed words. The Asgardian turned towards the direction where their adversary had fallen, watching as Coulson approached him.

“Are you guys okay?” Tony asked through his ear piece. “There’s an awful lot of shaking on our end.”

“It’s Daisy,” May replied for him. “We’re trying to calm her down.”

A sound of a large crash was heard over the calms. “You might want to try harder,” Tony grunted.

“You know, Ward, I would love nothing more than to draw this moment out. From the moment John Garrett hitched himself to the Bus to pick up Quinn, you’ve been nothing but a cancer for us. However, unlike the uncertainty of chemo and radiation, I can make damn sure that you never bother us again.” Unflinchingly, Coulson fired another shot, that one striking the younger man square in the forehead and killing him instantly. His knees nearly buckled when he felt a violent tremor. He turned to find Sif and Lincoln attempting to talk to Daisy in effort to calm her emotions.

“Ward’s down,” Coulson said into the coms.

“She needs to calm down or we might never make it to the jet,” Piper said, moving to safety as the various computer screens in the room tipped over.

Sif gently moved Lincoln away from Daisy before she leaned down to meet the young woman’s gaze. “I apologize in advance for this,” she said, reeling her arm back before punching Daisy in the face with enough force to render her unconscious and steadied her before her head hit any surface. Leaning down, she easily picked Daisy up, cradling her in her arms.

“Coulson, you have men heading in your direction,” Bobbi advised, looking at the security feed they’d managed to find.
“We’re on our way out,” Coulson said, rounding out his group.
Chapter 13

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: I don't own any characters familiar to Marvel
Author's Note: I apologize for taking so long to get this out. I'd hit a wall and had decided to focus on OF & DM in hopes that it would get the creative juices flowing again, but it didn't work out the way I'd wanted. I would like address a couple things. Yes, Grant Ward is dead. I thought about keeping him around longer, but Grant Ward (as Grant Ward) was hardly the most difficult foe the SHIELD team faced. I plan on working on the emotional side of things. Also, if anyone did read OF & DM, I do plan on a sequel, but since I already have two stories in progress, I'm going to try to focus on those first.

Chapter 13

“Is all well?” Lady Sif asked as Lincoln made his way out of the room he’d previously been occupying. She watched as he dropped into one of the chairs lined against the hall. He looked worse then than before they’d rescued Daisy.

Instead of offering her a verbal response, he shook his head in negative as he leaned forward and rested his elbows on his thighs. Clasping his hands together, he leaned his forehead against them.

“It’s okay, Daisy. He’s gone now,” Jemma’s soothing words were easily overheard as the door closed.

The Asgardian tilted her head in consideration before she kneeled in front of him. Placing her hands around his interlocked ones, she offered him a sad smile when he raised his head and met her gaze.

“She’s never been afraid of me,” he said. “Even when we were on opposite sides of a situation, there was never… You should have seen the look she gave me.” Even though she was still affected by whatever toxin she’d been administered, the fear behind her eyes spoke volumes. And he wouldn’t be forgetting it anytime soon…

“We do not know what she experienced when she was captive,” she reminded him softly. “It is probably not specifically you that she fears.”

He nodded shallowly. When he felt her thumb begin rubbing the back of one of his hands, his attention fell on the movement. He’d expected it to stop once his attention was brought to it, but when it continued, he looked up in search of her gaze. It was sympathetic and comforting and he swore the world melted away until only the two of them existed. “Sif, I-” He stopped himself short when she blinked several times and removed hands from his.

Standing up, Sif cleared her throat. “She will recover, Lincoln,” she said before she rested her hand on his shoulder. “She has overcome worse situations than this,” she said as she offered him a sympathetic squeeze. Hearing a rustling from the opposite end of the hall, she noticed Son of Coul and May rushing towards them.

As soon as he returned to the Playground, Coulson went in search of Daisy and Jemma. With May at
his side, they rushed through the halls. Realistically, he figured that it was too soon to learn anything, but he’d been unable to concentrate on anything other than her wellbeing. He’d expected that he and May would be the first to wait for any word on Daisy’s diagnoses, so he was surprised to find Lincoln and Sif out in the hall.

“This doesn’t look promising,” May said, obviously thinking similar thoughts.

He shook his head in response before announcing his presence. “I thought you were helping Jemma?” He asked, taking notice of the hand Sif had placed on Lincoln’s shoulder.

The question gathered his attention and Lincoln shook his head in negative. “My presence was upsetting Daisy,” he replied, his voice cracking with emotion.

May exchanged a significant glance with Coulson.

“We thought it would be better if I waited out here,” he finished, feeling Sif’s hand squeeze his shoulder before she let go of him entirely.

There was no mistaking how much it bothered him to know that his presence upset Daisy. Momentarily hesitating, May claimed the open seat next to him. Lincoln wasn’t one of her favorite people, but his regard for Daisy was obvious and she couldn’t help but feel bad for him. “I’m sure it will blow over,” she said softly. “We don’t know what happened to her when she wasn’t hooked up to that machine. She may not be feeling comfortable around men, period, for the time being.”

Lincoln nodded along with her words, but something was wrong. He just knew it. “Everything else settled?” He asked. As soon as they’d heard Bobbi’s warning over the com, he and Sif returned to the jet with Daisy while the others fell back to take care of the group they were warned of. Piper had been the only agent to join them with the instruction that they return to the Playground and the others would follow when they could.

“Getting there,” Coulson replied. Once the building was secured, the team and the Avengers split up to look for any information they could find while the FBI was called in to transport the remaining Hydra agents. “The Avengers are still at the base along with a few of our own.”

“Any news yet?” Bobbi called as she turned down the corridor.

Coulson looked up to find Hunter and Fitz on either side of her. He shook his head in negative.

“I...I think I’ll offer my services to Jemma,” Fitz said after a moment.

Just as the younger man was preparing to step past him, Coulson placed a hand up and stopped him from going further. “Let’s hold off on that for now, Fitz.”

Fitz frowned at Coulson. It wasn’t the first time he’d assisted Jemma on something like this. “I’ve seen Daisy in worse shape,” he told Coulson, in case he’d forgotten.

Bobbi looked between the young man and the director before looking at Lincoln, whom was clearly bothered by something. Of any of them, Lincoln was the one with the most right to be in there helping Jemma, considering his medical training. So, the fact that he wasn’t, spoke volumes and understanding dawned on Bobbi. “I’ll let Jemma know I’m here if she needs help with anything,” she told May before moving past the group.

When no one argued against Bobbi’s offer, Fitz’s frown deepened for a quick moment. “But...” He trailed off then, understanding why they were cautious, and disgust settled in the pit of his stomach. Had Ward actually violated her?
“She just isn’t comfortable right now,” May told him softly.

The engineer looked at Lincoln before pursing his lips. “With him or any male?” He asked then, putting Coulson’s fear into words.

“Not sure yet,” Coulson answered. “If it is the latter, we don’t want to make the situation worse.”

No further words were spoken among the group. As everyone moved to find a comfortable position, they all slipped into their own thoughts.

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“Any luck?” Clint asked as he approached Natasha, whom was glancing through a file.

“Half of the things I’ve found are written in German,” she answered as she set the item back where she’d found it. “If there is anything worthwhile in here, I wouldn’t be able to tell you.”

Having approached them from behind, Steve heard the entire conversation. “Pack them anyway, we can look through everything later when we have time. Where’s Stark?”

“He’s working on the trying to break through their firewall so he can copy their hard drive,” Nat replied. Usually, she could hold her own when it came to computers, but Tony insisted that he could handle it. “Any issues with the remaining Hydra agents?”

“Nothing that I was made aware of,” the first Avenger said.

Clint frowned as he looked at Steve. “Was turning the remaining Hydra agents over to the FBI the best call?”

He looked at the other man and shrugged. “It wasn’t my call,” he answered, not willing to speculate over Director Coulson’s decision. Personally, he wouldn’t have gone down that road, but SHIELD didn’t have all the resources that it used to. “Are there any other rooms that we haven’t explored?”

The archer shook his head in negative. “I don’t think so.” He looked to Thor, watching as he quickly packed away everything in sight. “Was German included in the multitude of languages you learned?”

“It was. I will be glad to offer my services when we return to base. Lady Sif has also studied the language and will be of use.”

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Inside the room, Jemma pulled the blanket back up around her patient. “There, all done.” She hung up bags to the IV before attempting to hook them up to the catheter she’d previously inserted into the back of Daisy’s hand. She met Daisy’s gaze, noticing the slight alarm she tried to smile before she rattled off what each bag contained. “I know you’re uneasy, but you’re safe now. No one here is going to hurt you.” She waited a beat, hoping that her words would offer her friend some sort of comfort. When the brunette remained unmoved by them, she offered her a sad smile. “Try and rest. The others are outside waiting for an update, but I’ll be back shortly.” Closing the door behind her, Jemma turned around to find an anxious group waiting for her.

“How is she?” Coulson asked wearily as Jemma closed the door to Daisy’s room. “We weren’t…I mean he didn’t…” He couldn’t even bring himself to say the word.

Jemma immediately shook her head in negative. “He didn’t,” she assured him. “Physically, she
appears fine. There are a few bumps and bruises, but I can’t rightly tell if those are because of her work outs with Lady Sif and Thor or if they happened during the fight. Honestly, I suspect it’s probably a bit of both.”

“And the cocktail that Ward gave her?” May inquired.

“Is still in her system. Other than the immobility factor, it isn’t harming her,” Jemma sighed. “We’re going to have to wait until it passes to hear anything from her.” She nibbled on her bottom lip as she thought back to the various emotions she’d seen behind Daisy’s eyes as she’d followed all of Jemma’s movements, or as well as she could have given her situation.

Coulson, witnessing the brief worry on Jemma’s face made a mental note to speak to her privately. “Until then, I have her hooked up to a few IV’s that should help flush the toxin out of her system quicker. I’m afraid there’s nothing else I can do at this point,” she said softly. Once the group realized she had nothing more to offer, she watched as almost everyone dispersed.

Coulson and May remained behind as everyone else left the corridor. “What’s wrong?” Coulson asked when he was sure they had no extra ears around.

“It could be nothing,” Jemma began, letting them know she had no concrete proof of anything. “But it’s almost like there was no recognition behind her eyes when she was with me,” that was the only way she could explain it. “She watched every single thing I did, as if she didn’t trust me.” Again, nothing could be confirmed until all of Daisy’s faculties returned to her, but she was left feeling very unsettled.

May frowned as she listened to Jemma. She’d noticed the same panic behind the woman’s eyes when they’d found her hooked up to the machine. At the time, she’d assumed it was because they still weren’t out of danger regardless of the fact that she knew she was being saved.

“Lincoln mentioned that his presence upset her?” Coulson said, the statement turning into an inquiry. He’d seen Daisy mad at the male Inhuman, but she’d never reacted to him in fear.

The Bio-Chemist nodded. “We were surprised too,” she admitted.

“Did she improve once he left the room?” May asked.

“A little. The panic that had been behind her eyes faded, but she never actually relaxed.” She rubbed her eyes then, the light finally becoming too much for her.

“You should go sit down for a bit,” Coulson told her in concern. Jemma had improved a little bit every day, but she still wasn’t fully acclimated.

Jemma shook her head in negative. “I told Daisy I would be right back.”

“You aren’t going to be of any use if you’re too worn down,” May chided the younger woman in a soothing voice. “I know you want to be there, but if she’s still feeling the affects from the toxin, you won’t miss much.”

May had a point, but she still didn’t feel comfortable doing so. Her eyes fell on Coulson, whom immediately nodded along with May’s order.

“You know that once she’s feeling better, she’ll feel bad if you relapse because you were so concerned for her,” he reminded his agent. “Go,” Coulson ordered gently. “We’ll sit with her.”
Jemma hesitated for a moment before nodding. “Fine,” she grudgingly said, “but I’m going to let her know.” She returned to the room with company in tow. “Daisy, I have to take care of something, but May and Coulson have offered to sit with you, if that’s okay?” She watched Daisy’s eyes fill with recognition and an invisible weight was lifted off her shoulders. Maybe she had just been overreacting…

Coulson remained several feet away from his agent, not wanting to get too close in case his close proximity set her off. He watched as May cautiously approached the bed.

“You had us very worried about you,” May said softly, making no attempt to touch the younger woman. “We’re glad you’re safe,” she added, offering Daisy a small smile. With careful actions, she made her way to the chair nearest to the bed and sat down.

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“Will?” Jemma asked, looking at the man in front of her.

“You were supposed to come back for me.” The words were soft and full of sadness.

She stepped up to him and placed both of her hands against his chest. “I’m trying,” she replied in a soft voice. “I didn’t want to leave you here,” she added.

“But you did. I’ve waited here all this time. You never came back.”

“No, I am going to come back for you. It’s just…traveling here with intent is more challenging than accidentally transporting,” she told him.

“Jemma.”

Wait, was that Fitz? What was he doing on Maveth? Jemma looked around, watching as the cave began to flicker. She looked into Will’s eyes. “I’m going to come for you, Will. I promise. I’m going to come for you.”

“Jemma.”

Sitting up in bed, Jemma looked around disoriented. “Fitz?” She asked. She watched as her best friend claimed a seat on the edge of the bed. “Is something wrong?” She asked, frowning at him. “Is Daisy-”

“She’s fine…or, well, she’s the same as she was when you left her,” he answered quickly, before she had a chance to worry. “You were talking in your sleep.”

“I don’t talk in my sleep,” she denied quickly. She never had.

He licked his lips. “Well, you were just now,” he supplied, thinking on the things he’d heard uttered from her slumber. “Jemma, who is Will?”

She closed her eyes in defeat, knowing that there would be no getting out of the conversation. She’d been working up her nerve to tell him about Will Daniels when Daisy had been taken, which put their impending conversation on the backburner. She’d been dreading the moment, not wanting to hurt him more than she already had. Taking a deep breath, she opened her eyes and met his gaze. “Will is an astronaut that was also stranded on Maveth.”

“There were other people there?” He asked, her revelation both unsettling and soothing him. He’d been desperate to find her because he’d thought she’d been alone all that time. Jemma didn’t speak
much about her time on Maveth. As curious as he’d been, he never wanted to push her for
information. Instead, he’d bided his time and waited for her to come to him when she was ready, but
she hadn’t. And until she’d whispered another man’s name in her sleep, he’d been willing to wait for
her to broach the subject.

She shook her head in negative. “No, just him. The rest of his team had since died,” she answered
softly. “There was something else there, something…far from human. It killed and inhabited the
bodies of his team. When it came for me, Will saved me.” There’d been no doubt in her mind that if
he hadn’t been there, she would have been killed and inhabited by whatever that thing was. “He
opened the home he’d created to me,” she said, looking away from him.

His friendship with Jemma had grown exponentially in the first two years that they’d gotten to know
one another. It had been easy for him to learn to read between the lines, and he often knew what she
left unsaid. “Who is Will to you?” He asked when she slipped into silence. When she didn’t
immediately answer him, he settled a hand on top of hers. “Jemma?” He prompted softly. When she
looked up at him, tears were swimming in her eyes and a dull ache settled in his chest.

“I didn’t mean for it to happen,” she whispered. “After the first couple months passed and you guys
didn’t come for me…” she looked down at the hand that covered hers. They’d been trapped in that
area. Between the entity and the unforgiving terrain of the planet, they couldn’t travel far, not on
foot. “I realized that given the alignment of the moons and stars, I could predict when the portal
would open, but the entity knew it too and was between us and the portal. And when we were
prevented from reaching it…I turned, we turned,” she corrected quickly, “to each other for comfort.”

Fitz nodded and offered her a sad smile. “That’s not all it was though…” he finished for her.

“I fell in love with him,” she confessed. “I didn’t mean to.”

He shook his head in negative. “I know,” he said sadly. He couldn’t blame her, considering the
situation she’d found herself in. “I’m…I’m relieved to know that you weren’t entirely alone,” he said
sincerely. Fitz cleared his throat. “What…what does that mean for us?” He asked then. “I mean there
is an us, isn’t there?”

“There is,” she assured him. “Or, I’d like there to be. If I’d never been transported, I never would
have…” She turned her hand over and laced their fingers together. “It’s always been you, Fitz. I was
just too blind to see it before.”

Encouraged by her words, he eagerly leaned over and kissed her. “I love you, Jemma Simmons. You
have no idea how happy you just made me,” he whispered against her lips, smiling. He pulled away
far enough to meet her gaze. “I…this was okay, I didn’t hurt you?” He asked, worried that his
eagerness may have caused her unintentional physical harm.

“You didn’t,” she replied smiling at him.

“I know this isn’t the most romantic of moments to have declared my love for you-”

“It’s perfect,” she denied.

He shook his head in negative. “When you’re back to feeling a hundred percent, I want to take you
out on a date. A real date.”

“You don’t have to.”

“But I want to. Our lives have been far from normal since we joined Coulson, and I know you
understand that. But that doesn’t mean we still shouldn’t have it every once in a while. I want to bring you flowers and pick you up at your door and then take you to a nice restaurant where we can forget all about SHIELD for the night.”

She offered him a smile. “It’s a date then.”

He watched as her smile dimmed. “What’s wrong?”

“We weren’t the only ones that saw the flare you sent up. By the time we made it to the area, that being was there too. Will distracted the entity, enabling me to reach you in time,” she explained. “We need to rescue him.”

How could they possibly rescue him? “I…how would we even go about doing that? Daisy destroyed—”

“I don’t know,” she admitted with a shake of her head before he could finish his statement. “But I can’t just leave him there.”

He hesitated and then nodded. “We’ll come up with something,” he replied. He didn’t know what, but they would.

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Coulson was called from his vigilant beside duty when the Avengers returned with what they hoped would be a wealth of useful information.

Upon Coulson’s entry into the area, Steve stepped forward as Thor gave his full attention to the director.

“How does Lady Daisy fare?”

“How is she?”

Coulson looked between the two of them. “The same. Simmons has her hooked up to an IV that should flush the toxin out of her system faster. Jemma did an examination and physically, she seems to be fine,” he answered as he led them through the halls. “We won’t know anymore until she regains use of her voice.” He stopped inside a large room. Other than a large table in the middle of it with a few chairs pushed in and a whiteboard, it was bare. “This is the largest conference room here,” he informed them. “Once my people join you they’ll be able to open up the room next door if it’s needed.” When Steve inclined his head in acknowledgement, he spun around. “Tony, you’re going to be across the hall.” He opened the door and flipped on the light. “I know this isn’t as fancy as the toys you have at the tower, but you should have everything you need here.”

Tony peered inside. He scanned the posters on the wall before his attention fell on a table with various machines and devices on it. He began perusing them as he made a mental checklist of what he’d need. “I think I do,” he agreed. When he noticed a shelf full of picture frames above the electronics, he took a closer look. “This is Daisy’s domain.”

Coulson immediately nodded. “Yes, she calls it her safe place. She’s usually on top of computer maintenance so there shouldn’t be any issues on that front,” he explained as he made his way to a small end table and opened the drawer before pulling out a composition notebook. “She keeps passwords in here,” he informed the man setting it down next to the computer. “Oh, and she’s got a wicked playlist put together if you want to fill the silence.”

The techy billionaire nodded in response. “Go get back to your agent. We can handle the rest here.”
“If you guys find anything of use, you’ll let me know.”

Tony met Coulson’s look with one of earnest. “We will,” he agreed easily.

“Where do you want us?”

Coulson spun around to find Lincoln and Sif in the hallway. “You volunteering?”

“Thor explained that I was needed for translating,” Sif replied before she looked to Lincoln.

“I need to do something,” Lincoln offered shortly, watching as Coulson nodded minutely.

“Well, unless you’ve been hiding a computer savvy prowess, they can use the extra help in there,” he said pointing to conference room. He poked his head into the room. “Lincoln and Lady Sif are here.”

“Good,” Thor said, turning his head over his shoulder. “Lady Sif, I could use your assistance here.”

The female Asgardian nodded and moved closer to him. He quietly explained his process as he separated various pages and files.

“Where do you want me?” Lincoln asked then.

“You can start with these,” Thor answered, turning to hand the other man a small stack of items.

Lincoln claimed a seat across from the female Avenger and looked at the top document. “Uh…this isn’t English,” he said. “I don’t know how much help I’ll be.”

Clint pointed to a whiteboard. “Thor has written down key phrases to look for and the English translation. If you find something that you think may mean something, let him know and they will double check.”

“When we have completed our task, we will join your search,” Thor added.

Coulson pulled his attention from Thor. “You’ll let me know if you find something?” He asked, moving his gaze from Clint to Natasha.

Natasha looked up from the paper she’d already settled down to look over. “Of course,” she responded easily as her attention slid back to the information in her hands.

A violent tremor was felt throughout the room and those that were standing had to catch themselves.

“Damn it,” Coulson muttered as he steadied himself, instantly alarmed by the event. He looked to Lincoln, who appeared apprehensive upon the realization that Daisy didn’t appear to have control of her powers.

“I can go with you,” Lincoln offered quickly.

Though he knew that Lincoln was the first person to help Daisy with her control, Coulson hesitated. Another quake was felt, though smaller than the first, it was still disquieting. “Not yet, not after what happened last time. May’s with her now, she should be able to help her with some breathing exercises.”

Steve frowned as he looked from Lincoln towards Coulson. “What happened last time?”

Not answering the inquiry, Sif turned looked to Coulson. “You know where to find us if we are needed for assistance.”
After processing the words, he spun around. Without a backwards glance, Coulson rushed from the room.
Thank you all for the well wishes and your understanding. I'm sorry I kept you guys waiting so long, but hopefully, this chapter will make up for it. I had trouble writing this chapter before I even had my aneurysm and after a lot of editing and re-writes, I'm leaving it at this. Hopefully you enjoy it!

Chapter 14

After Coulson’s hasty exit, Steve turned his attention on Lady Sif before shifting it towards Lincoln. “What happened before?” He asked, repeating his prior inquiry, as he settled his attention back on Lady Sif. She made no effort to look at him. However, he knew the question was heard by the way her back straightened and her body became tense. He also noticed that the rest of his present team members were looking between him and the newest additions to the room.

“She did not have a favorable reaction to Lincoln’s presence,” Lady Sif answered after a pregnant pause, giving Lincoln a sad gaze as she said so.

Steve’s jaw ticked in response as he turned his attention on Lincoln. Coulson had told them she was fine. Had he lied? “What exactly does that mean? Did he-”

“No,” Lincoln interrupted, understanding where the other man was headed. “There’s no evidence of that.”

Steve felt his emotions calm slightly, albeit he was still feeling a massive wave of guilt. She still reacted in such a way to a man that didn’t deserve it. What had that monster done to her?

Unaware of the other man’s internal thoughts, Lincoln continued on. “Ward and I met months ago. At the time, Daisy and I were…” he trailed off, unsure of what word to use to describe their almost pairing.

“You were involved,” Natasha supplied for him, taking an interest in the conversation.

He shook his head in negative. “Nothing ever progressed that far, but there was an attraction,” the Inhuman corrected. “I suspect that he was at least aware of that. When I was assisting Jemma in helping Daisy, she…it was like she was afraid of me,” he admitted, the tone of his voice conveyed his distress.

Lady Sif cleared her throat. “What we do not know is if it was Lincoln’s presence that caused her reaction or if she has an aversion to members of the male sex in general,” she tacked on when Lincoln didn’t make an effort to speak again. Taking pity on him, she hoped to move the situation along. The sooner they searched through everything, the sooner they would hopefully find something to help. “Now that everyone is aware of the situation, might we continue our search for answers?” She asked, though the tone of her voice left no room for argument.

With a side glance at his companion, Thor considered her words and actions. He’d known Lady Sif long enough to easily discern her actions. He’d known that she was spending quite a bit of time with
Lincoln, in fact, she was the one to suggest he join Daisy for training. However, he thought she’d been thinking on a wider scale of things. Had his friend fallen for the young man? She certainly appeared to be concerned for him, worried for him. How had he missed her initial interest in him? Casting a quick glance at the Inhuman that currently occupied the room, he noticed the man’s appreciative expression on his face with tenderness easily discernable behind his eyes. Perhaps the attraction went both ways?

~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~

“Daisy, I need you to breathe with me,” May said soothingly before she began a breathing exercise that she’d shown the younger woman when her powers first manifested. When the shaking continued, and her companions’ eyes widened in alarm she shook her head. “Daisy,” she repeated her rookie’s name. “Daisy, do you hear me?” She watched the younger woman respond with a slight nod. “Okay, listen to my breathing,” she urged as she set into a pattern. “Do hear that?” She asked.

Daisy nodded jerkily.

“Okay, breathe with me,” she said, finding relief when Daisy finally began to follow the exercise. The slowly began to subside, but she continued the entirety of the pattern. As they fell to a stop, the door bust open and the pair turned towards the clatter.

“Is everything okay?” Coulson asked, looking from May towards Daisy. He felt his gaze softening as he met the younger woman’s gaze.

“I think so,” May replied. “Are you okay?” She asked, looking towards Daisy.

Daisy pulled her gaze from him and then nodded. “What?” she fell into a coughing fit, the words tickling her throat. “Water?” She asked, the word breaking.

“Of course,” May replied, turning to pour her a small cup before handing it off. “I know it isn’t much, but I don’t want you to get sick by drinking too much too quickly. If you want more, just let me know.”

Daisy nodded as she took several short sips, her throat instantly finding relief from the liquid. “What happened?” She asked.

“Ward kidnapped you.”

Daisy’s hold on her cup faltered and she struggled to set it down. “Why?” She asked, looking at May. “I don’t understand, why would he do that?”

“Don’t worry, Daisy,” Coulson said, stepping forward. “He won’t hurt you ever again,” he told her, watching as she frowned.

There was no denying the meaning behind his words. She frowned at him. “You killed him?” She asked, her voice shaking as she leaned further back against the bed. How could he have done that?

The question caused both agents to pause, the tone of her voice alarming them. “Daisy,” May said, with an air of caution.

The younger woman held her hand up in effort to stop May from saying something further. Running her other hand through her hair, she shook her head, she covered her eyes. Bringing her knees up to her body, she leaned her forehead against it, calming her nerves. “I…he…what the hell happened?” She asked then. “I can clearly recall all of us with the family vibe thing going on and then…” She trailed off.
“Then?” Coulson prodded when she stopped.

“I remember meeting Daniel Whitehall and being in a race to get to the…deviner. And I remember my terrigenesis. I remember another faction of SHIELD. I remember meeting Inhumans…”

May frowned, that still didn’t help them in regard to Ward. “Daisy, what is the last clear memory you have of Ward?” She inquired then, wondering exactly how much damage Ward had managed to inflict.

A bittersweet smile lit her features. “He saved me from Whitehall.” When May threw her hands into the air and stalked off, she frowned. “Was that the wrong thing to say?” She whispered at Coulson. Had she upset the other woman for smiling about her lover?

Coulson smiled sadly and offered her a negative shake of his head. “He was the one that kidnapped you and took him to him in the first place,” he replied softly before swallowing with difficulty.

“No,” it was an instant denial. Ward wouldn’t do that to them. “He wouldn’t do that to us, to me.”

“I don’t know what to tell you, Daisy, but he did,” Coulson replied simply. “I just…let me speak to May for a moment.” He turned towards the door, making sure to lock it behind him.

“You locked her in there?” May asked turning around upon hearing the noise.

“It was either that or constantly keep her drugged,” he responded defensively with a shrug. After hearing some of the things she’d said about Ward, there was no telling if he would have her kill them…

She tilted her head in consideration. “You know that she’s going to pissed when she snaps out of this, right?”

If they managed to snap her out of it. They’d had no luck in helping Kara Palamas. “I refuse to be backed into a corner with killing her as the only option.”

“We’re going to need to talk to her…figure out how deep this runs,” she cautioned.

He nodded, wondering if it was too soon to bother the Avengers yet. Even though he knew the answer, he checked the time piece on his wrist anyway.

From her position, Daisy was clearly able to see that the pair were talking about her. Stepping gingerly towards the door, she grabbed the door handle, quickly realizing that it wouldn’t budge. Had she been locked in? “Coulson?” She asked, garnering his attention. “What the hell? Why am I in locked in here?”

Taking a deep breath, Coulson turned towards the door, towards Daisy. “Because I can’t trust that Ward didn’t do anything to your mind,” he answered her, as he approached the door. “I’m sorry, Daisy, but until things are settled, you’re probably not going be very happy.”

She opened her mouth to argue, but immediately shut it. “Is it because I didn’t believe he would hurt me?” She asked quietly.

“Oh, Daisy…” he tried to smile at her, but it fell flat. “I’m afraid that it’s so much worse than that,” he told her. “Do you remember dealing with the behavioral modification machine?” Coulson asked her after a pause.

Behavioral machine? She frowned, nothing coming to mind.
“It was created by Hydra, and it can remove or change memories.”

“Do you remember Agent 33?” May asked. “Kara Palamas?” She tacked on, wondering if the name would jar her memory. “She was a SHIELD agent until Hydra used the machine on her, she wore my face…”

There was… Daisy squinted her eyes. She could vaguely make out a brunette, but that was… She narrowed her gaze on him. “And it was used on me?” She asked quietly. Ward used that on her? Why?

May nodded. “I’m sorry, Daisy, that we couldn’t save you before being placed in it. But…until we’re sure exactly what he did to you, it isn’t safe for you to be free around us.”

Daisy nearly scoffed. “Oh, you mean so I’m not tempted to sneak in your room and kill you in the middle of the night?”

“Yes,” the older agent admitted in all seriousness.

When the expression on May’s face never wavered, her own smile of amusement quickly died. “You can’t be serious?! I would never!”

“You wouldn’t, no. But I’m not taking a chance on the fact that you may or may not be under Ward’s control. Until we know how deep this goes…”

“So, this is it then? I’m back to being locked up?” She asked sadly, remembering the solitude she’d been placed in when she first developed powers.

“For now,” Coulson began, “yes,” he finished regretfully.

Closing her eyes, she leaned her forehead against the wall. She couldn’t believe the situation she found herself in. How could Ward do something like that to her? He was her SO. He’d always been such a…boy scout. How could he have gone from that to harming her in such a way? And why would he potentially want her to harm Coulson and May? May was his lover and Coulson had depended on him, on Ward’s skills.

The tremors had long since stopped, but Steve was unable to concentrate. All of the pages he looked over had started to run together and every word that he read over became more foreign with each passing minute. Growing frustrated with the lack of answers they were finding, Steve pursed his lips. He’d hoped that something, anything, would have popped out at them. However, more time that passed, the more restless he grew. How could he help Bucky or Daisy when there was nothing about the behavioral modification? Pushing his chair back from the table, he stood up to stretch his legs. “I’m going to see if Tony is having better luck than us,” he announced to the room, not bothering to wait for a response. Once he was across the hall, he leaned against the door frame. “Having any luck?”

Tony shook his head in negative. “Not yet. You?” He asked, referring to everyone else.

“No,” Steve replied as he stepped forward. He looked around at the posters and pictures littered around the room. Picking up a framed picture of Daisy with Jemma and Fitz, he couldn’t help but notice how young they all looked in it. It must have been when she first joined Coulson’s team.

Watching the way his companion studied the photo, Tony pursed his lips. He wasn’t normally an emotional person, and there were very few people that he allowed to see that side of him. Despite the
fact that he and Cap had fought side by side, he’d never allowed the man to get close on an emotional level. However, it was plain to see that his companion was full of self-doubt. “It isn’t your fault,” Tony said after a beat.

“She was taken. I was there and she was taken,” Steve said. “She was there to meet me, and instead of letting her speak, I argued with her. I said horrible things to her. She found herself in that situation because I was being a dick to her, and she wanted to get away from me.”

Tony nodded. “Yes, you have been known to be self-righteous from the moment I met you,” he said flatly, watching as the other man shook his head. Unable to kick Steve when he was down, he spoke again. “But from what Coulson has said, this guy had it bad for her and has already taken her multiple times. He would have found a way to make another attempt, with or without your presence,” he reminded his co-captain. “You made a split-second decision to check on innocent bystanders, trusting that she was able to take care of herself. Don’t blame yourself for that. You protect people, we protect people and I bet she understands that.”

“How do you know? You’ve never even spoken to her.”

“Because she’s a SHIELD agent,” Tony shrugged. “They’re all about saving the world. She probably would have done the same thing if the situation was reversed.”

“I suppose it’s too soon to hope that you guys found answers…” Coulson said, announcing his presence.

“How is she?” Lincoln immediately inquired.

Coulson shook his head in negative as the occupants of the room turned to look at him for information. “There are definite signs that her memory has been altered. However, there are gaps.”

“She does not remember anything from these gaps?” Sif asked.

“She does, but it’s selective…” Coulson trailed off. “She is able to remember some things from one week, but not everything that occurred during that time.”

“Where is she now?” Steve inquired then. When the other man refused to meet his gaze, he pursed his lip.

“You locked her up,” Natasha spoke up, having read the emotion behind Coulson’s facial expression.

Coulson broke eye contact with Steve before looking at Nat and nodding. “Ward wasn’t opposed to killing me and he’s got bad blood with May,” he added, alluding to the fact that Ward wouldn’t have hesitated to kill May if given the chance. “At this time, there isn’t any guarantee that she won’t come after us if an opportunity arises,” he explained. “Have you guys managed to find anything?”

Clint shook his head in negative. “Not about reversing the effects of the machine, at least, not yet,” he said, feeling bad that they weren’t able to help Coulson.

“I didn’t think you would have, but I needed to check.”

“So, what does this mean for Daisy?” Steve asked the question that had been floating around in his head since Coulson’s revelation. “Does she remain locked up indefinitely?” Because that hardly seemed fair.
Coulson shook his head and exhaled a deep breath. “I don’t know what else to do,” he confessed. “Unless there’s a way to undo what’s been done, I don’t see a better option, for the time being, anyway.” They still needed to determine if she was a threat or not.

“We’ll keep looking,” Natasha reassured him then. It was obvious that he hated the situation that they were working with, locking up his agent in a preemptive move.

Coulson offered her a smile in response to her words. “I know.” And they would, if not for her, then for him.

“Do you think she’d be up for visitors?” Steve inquired quietly.

Coulson hesitated. “Honestly, I’m not sure how she will react to you,” he admitted. “She didn’t react negatively to me, but I’ve been with her since the beginning.” Not even Fitz had seen her.

Steve nodded slowly. He understood that his presence could be upsetting for her and the last thing he wanted to do was to contribute to her troubles. Despite knowing that she was physically okay, he needed to see it with his own eyes. Even if it was done while she was unaware of his presence, he just needed to see her.

Watching as the other man deflated slightly, Coulson exhaled a small sigh. “You’re more than welcome to see her when you finish up here. She’s in a containment pod. Come find me when you’re done here and I will take you to her,” he said, curious to see how she would react to Steve.

“Sir, May said you wanted to see me,” Jemma said as she approached the pair.

Coulson nodded. “Steve, I’ll be in office for the time being,” he informed the other man so he knew where to locate him. “Jemma, if you’ll follow me.”

Waiting until they were further down the hall, Jemma pursed her lips. “This isn’t good, is it?”

“There are definite signs that her memory has been modified,” he replied. “We need to find out how deep it goes.”

“Of course,” she agreed quickly. “I’ll talk to her,” she offered.

“I hoped you would say that,” he admitted.

“Ward did all of that?” Daisy asked when Simmons finished talking.

Smiling sadly at her female best friend, Jemma nodded slowly. Upon May’s insistence that they try to find out the extent of damage done to Daisy, Jemma volunteered to speak to her. She didn’t want Daisy to feel as if she was being interrogated, sure that her friend was already feeling the separation from everyone else. She showed up to the containment pod with two spoons and half a gallon of ice cream for them to chow down on as she tried to get a feel for Daisy’s status.

“And you’re sure that it was meant to be done with the intent to kill you?” Daisy asked, that didn’t sound like the robot she’d gotten to know. Even if he hadn’t been as personable as the rest of the team, she couldn’t imagine him doing something like that, not to Fitzsimmons. She thought back to all the time they’d spent together on the bus. “How do you know he didn’t do that to make it seem like he was following Garret’s orders?” What if he’d done it in effort to keep them safe from someone else that wasn’t as close to the situation?
“He dropped us into the ocean without a care to what would happen to us,” Jemma answered softly but firmly. She understood the reason why her friend was attempting to explain away Ward’s actions. Until she and Fitz ran into Ward at that airfield, they’d tried to explain away his actions too.

“It’s what Hydra did at the time. They blended in so effortlessly, befriended people knowing that in the end they’d betray them. He was meant to get close to Coulson so that he could find out exactly how it was that he managed to survive the attack on New York.”

Daisy shook her head in negative, surely, they had to be wrong. “He had Fitz’s back when they went out for Hand. He jumped out of a plane for you. And you’re saying he did things like that to gain our trust?” She didn’t give her friend time to respond before she began speaking again. “I know I called him ‘Robot,’ but he was never—” Daisy tried again.

“It’s what he was trained to do,” Jemma denied. “He had us all fooled,” she added softly, easily able to discern Daisy’s confusion. “The only one he didn’t know if he could get to was May. That was why he went for her.” She considered telling her friend that there was a chance that Ward had been completely honest in regard to his feelings for Daisy but thought better of it. Instead of helping the situation that Daisy found herself in, it could make it worse.

“Why would he do this? I mean you say he was the bad guy, fine. Why take me? Why did he single me out?”

“We don’t exactly know,” the other woman admitted. “We don’t know if he meant to do it in order to get you to turn on us or if he was trying to change the way you viewed him.” Considering the things that Daisy had said since she first started talking, she suspected that maybe it was both.

Daisy contemplated the facts that Jemma had told her. Her friend appeared to be completely sincere in her regard and she had no reason to lie about anything. If that was the case, then Ward had modified her memory. At what point was it that her feelings for him changed from her own to what he wanted her to believe?

“Daisy?” Jemma asked, biting her bottom lip as her friend slipped into silence.

“I’m just trying to process everything you’ve said,” Daisy excused. “I don’t want to believe you, any of you, but you can’t all be lying to me.”

Jemma settled her hand over Daisy’s and smiled sadly. “I’m sorry that it’s come to this,” she apologized.

“It isn’t your fault, any of you,” the Inhuman said, knowing that if Jemma was blaming herself then the rest of the team probably was as well.

Looking down at the soup their ice cream had turned into Jemma nodded slowly, both, accepting Daisy’s words but unable to believe them. She set the carton down and turned towards her friend. “We talked about Coulson keeping SHIELD going and a few of the cases we dealt with, what about your father? Do you remember meeting him?”

Her father? She could see a vague picture of him in her thoughts. She remembered vehemently denying the opportunity to meet him upon learning what a monster he was. “Ward was there when I met him. We were…” Daisy frowned. He had been one of the bad guys, that part she remembered clearly. However, instead of thinking about any of the awful things he’d done, she remembered seeing him in a facility of sorts and they were talking about…dogs? It was one of the least evil discussions she’d ever had with an opponent.

Jemma watched as her companion’s complexion turned pale. “Daisy?”
Raising her hands, Daisy rubbed at her temples. “My head is pounding. One minute I was fine and the next…bam! It just came out of nowhere.”

Jemma wondered if it had anything to do with Daisy’s situation. She made a mental note to mention it to others. “I think that’s enough for tonight,” she said, standing up and reaching for the carton of ice cream. “I’ll get you something for the headache and a bottle of water. Oh, and I’ll stop by your bunk and grab a change of clothes. Is there anything else you need?”

She thought about asking for her laptop, but something told her it would be a wasted request. “I don’t think so.” Closing her eyes, she listened to Jemma exit the containment pod and attempted to mentally prepare herself for her solitude.

How had things taken such a turn? How could Ward have turned on them? After everything that Coulson had done for him, and he ended up being Hydra? How could they not have known? Jemma said that was what Hydra did, befriend those they would end up betraying. But he couldn’t have been that good of an actor, could he? Maybe with the others, but they’d had something.

“You can’t choose to feel.”

“Usually, I can.”

As the memory assaulted her mind, she was hit with an intense wave of physical pain. She closed her eyes, but even then, the darkness was still brightened by the light of the room. Whimpering, she threw her arm over eyes, completely blocking the faint light and pressed her forehead into her forearm, seeking relief from the pain her headache produced.

“Daisy?”

“My head,” she murmured in response to Jemma’s prompt. “I...had a moment, a…I think it was a memory, and ever since then…”

“And this memory, you had it while I was gone?”

Daisy nodded before instantly realizing what a mistake it was. A wave of nausea crashed over her and she attempted to push it away. “I had a headache before you left, but it multiplied like a quadrillion after I had it.”

Just as she suspected, which was a good thing...aside from the negative physical effect is appeared to be having on Daisy. It meant that there would more than likely not be any lasting damage. Claiming a seat next to her friend, she gently pulled Daisy’s forearm away from her face, placing the headache medicine in her hand. “I think that it may be a side affect of the machine,” she said as Daisy met her gaze. “Your mind is fighting against the false memories that were implanted.”

Opening the bottle of water Jemma brought, she swallowed down the medicine. “Is that normal?” Daisy asked.

Jemma could only shake her head in negative. “We’ve only dealt with people that have undergone the Faustus method, so I can’t say. Maybe the machine needed more time for the false memories to implant themselves…” She trailed off.

Switching her position, Daisy glanced outside the window of the pod before closing her eyes. Wait, was that-? Throwing open her eyes, she looked out the window, briefly wondering if her mind was playing tricks on her. “Jemma, am I seeing things or is Captain America standing outside the containment chamber?”
Jemma turned to look in the direction of the window. Upon seeing Steve, she nodded with a frown on her face. Daisy had called him ‘Captain America,’ as opposed to the ‘Steve’ that she’d previously used. That was not a good sign. She didn’t remember meeting him? How was it that the machine managed to erase, even if it wasn’t permanent, months’ worth of memories?

Daisy stood up and began to approach the window when Jemma didn’t answer her. Was she delirious? Having a psychotic break? Because for the life of her, she couldn’t figure out why she was seeing him. Like most women, she found him aesthetically appealing in a physical sense, but she liked to think she wouldn’t embarrass herself if they were to meet.

“Jemma, please tell me I’m not suffering from a psychotic break,” Daisy said then, doing her best to ignore the throbbing in her head.

“No, he’s there.”

Daisy’s head swiveled back to the window. “Why is he here?”

“Daisy.”

He said her name! Captain America knew her name? How did Captain America find her? Her mouth began to water, and not in the good sense. She knew she seconds away from throwing up. She needed to get to a toilet or trashcan as soon as she could! Covering her mouth, she spun away from him. The first moment the bile hit the back of her throat, she pulled her hand away, spewing all of her stomach contents.

“Oh, Daisy…” Jemma rushed to her side and attempted to pull Daisy’s hair out of her face and out of the path of the excrement.

When the storm in her stomach settled down, Daisy wiped her mouth. “I’m sorry, Jemma. I couldn’t.”

“It’s okay,” Jemma interrupted. “I’d rather deal with this than have to resuscitate you,” she said recalling the horror they’d dealt with after Ian Quinn’s shooting.

Taking note of her surroundings, she noticed that she hadn’t gotten very far from her initial spot in front of the window. “Oh, God. I just…threw up in front of Captain America.”

If her friend was concerned about vomiting in front of Steve, Jemma knew the worst of it was over… at least for the time being. Giving her friend a pitied look, she nodded. “Yes, you did.”

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