Summary

Those health and safety preference forms were way too long and absolutely ridiculous. Most of that stuff isn’t going to happen so Darcy can write whatever wisecracking answer she wants.
This is my attempt at the sex pollen trope. This all came about because I had a stupid joke I wanted to write, realized recently I enjoy a troubling amount of music about drug life and I am incapable of writing anything without longer plots. It wasn't even a sex pollen joke. But here we are.

As Darcy’s phone pinged with another text message, she continued to curse Brock Rumlow and scribble in smart ass answers into the safety and medical forms. He’d ordered her to fill them out or else she couldn’t leave the building. In fact, he was sitting across from her right now as she called him the most colorful names she could think of. Ever since his release from Dr. Cho’s Cradle improvement experiments, he’d been assigned interim head of security for Stark Labs. The previous guy had retired and Brock needed to take some time making sure the Cradle treatment and the Hydra drugs he’d been pumped with had no long-term side effects before he could go back to agent work. So, he became the bane of Darcy’s existence. Bastard took his job way too seriously.

“If you had just filled this out when you were supposed to, we wouldn’t be here,” said Brock, sounding almost smug. Darcy shot him an ugly look and drew a little picture in the margins of him being murdered by a large furry monster. “I’m almost flattered thinking you just want excuses to spend time with me but I doubt you had any idea that I’d replace John 6 months ago. So, we can blame this your laziness.”

“If I’d known you were replacing John, I’d convince Jane to quit and find another grant to fuel her research,” Darcy said confidently but they both know that wasn’t true. Stark Labs paid a lot of money. Like…she almost slapped Tony when he slid the number over. Then actually slapped him when he talked about some of the employee benefits. Team Foster would have to take a serious downgrade if they were to leave and go solo again. As much as Darcy hated Brock’s obsession to detail, she loved Jane more. And okay, maybe a little, tiny bit of her could admit that Brock did a much better job than John Gayle and she supposed that was a good thing for keeping Jane’s research safe. Still, if she weren’t sitting in Brock’s office right now, she’d be in a car driving to a cabin in upstate New York for a much-needed long weekend. That car just so happened to be double parked in front of the Stark Labs building as her friends texted her like crazy to hurry up.

“These questions are ridiculous. No other place asks you what you want if you’re in an alien induced coma versus chemical attack coma. Like, what the hell? Just ask me what I want to do in a normal coma situation. Or no, ask my health care proxy what to do. Jane will make the right decision,” Darcy insisted, finally getting to the final set of questions of a forty-page form in tiny font. She’d only half filled it out when John had given it to her when they’d first been hired. Obviously, John either didn’t care she skipped the ridiculous questions or he didn’t even bother checking. He’d really checked out in his last 6 months as he inched towards retirement. Still, if this form didn’t have so many freaking addendums, she probably would have filled it out when first hired.

“Honestly, I think you should rethink her as your health care proxy. She seems like she’d take the first chance to pull the plug,” Brock said seriously. “But it’s important to get the far-out questions
answered. Most people’s health care proxies don’t have clearance for a lot of these situations or could also be compromised. We just need to cover our bases. I know you’re best friends with Stark but Stark Industries is a multi-million dollar company that does not want to be sued because you couldn’t bother to check off a few boxes.”

“I picked Jane because she can make the difficult decisions. My parents would keep me alive as a vegetable for too long. She also knows what funeral arrangements I want while my parents would stick to a normal burial,” Darcy ignored his statement about Stark Industries covering its ass because that was valid. As much as Tony now tried to think of all his employees and well-being of the Earth, capitalism was king in the world and he cared about profit.

“What kind of funeral arrangements do you want?” Brock asked, crossing his arms and leaning back to put his feet on his desk. His stupid combat boots were near the large booklet she painstakingly filled out.

“I want to be turned into a diamond. Then turned into a family heirloom necklace that haunts my children,” Darcy said automatically and looked up to see Brock roll his eyes. His muscles were smooth and taught in his fitted undershirt. Since it was after hours, he’d taken off his button-up and Darcy had to do her best not to appear impressed. Dr. Cho did a really good job. He had a chiseled jaw covered in scruff, smart mouth and soft amber eyes. There didn’t seem to be any blemish left from Project Insight. Though she did wonder if the tattoos on his arms were before or after the fall of SHIELD. Another part of her that she refused to acknowledge wondered if any older scars had disappeared as well. Ones with stories and character.

Maybe she’d have a crush on him if he didn’t act like he liked to hump the rule book on off hours. There may have been a couple nights early on in their acquaintance where Darcy dreamt up a few steamy scenarios. Then thought about those scenarios during some alone sexy times but Darcy did have to be able to look him in the eyes at work on occasion so she quickly ended those fantasies.

“You can’t be serious,” said Brock but despite his rude delivery, he looked curious.

“Oh, I’m serious. Jane wants to run tests too and see if she can prove the existence of ghosts. She even wrote a hypothesis,” Darcy said, signing her name with a flourish on the last page of the booklet. Freedom at last. As she stood, she threw the finished product at Brock and he caught it as it slapped against his chest. All he needed to do was sign it and she was done.

“You two have a troubling friendship,” Brock said, flipping through the pages as he skimmed. “What about you and Jack?”

“What about you?” asked Brock, clearly offended at her insinuation, even if she wasn’t really insinuating much of anything. Jack Rollins held the title of ‘fun one’ of their duo. As a tall, cheeky Aussie that had taken a shine to interior design, who wouldn’t be charmed by him? Except Tony. He was pissed Jack had rearranged furniture but the Stark Labs team preferred Jack’s new layouts. Although he was technically one of the security crew, he also sat in field work limbo as they researched his Hydra drug blood. He was fun though, and she’d more than once caught him
berating Brock on working too hard. Sometimes, she wondered if they were secretly married.

“He’s pretty much my brother at this point. We’ve been through shit together,” Brock challenged.

“Jane and I have, too. Life threatening things. I mean, yeah we didn’t infiltrate a Nazi organization but we’ve fought aliens together on multiple occasions.”

“Alright, alright. I concede,” Brock raised a hand in partial surrender before going back to the forms and slowly reading them. Darcy waited for him to sign and confirm that she completed the form but he made no move to pick up a pen. She let out something between a huff and a growl.

“I filled it out. Do you really have to do this?” Darcy snapped. Her phone let out another beep. As soon as she got into the car, she was turning that thing off and not turning it back on until she returned Tuesday morning. This was meant to be a complete tech cleanse. Although she loved tech and especially the internet, Darcy liked to spend a long weekend in complete radio silence on occasion. It helped reset her brain and with Brock hounding her about protocol for the past month, she could do with getting back to nature.

“Y’know, protocol says I need to read this entirely before signing. It’s for your safety as much as everyone else’s,” Brock goaded, waving the booklet.

“You have got to be kidding me,” muttered Darcy.

“The moment I sign this, it makes all your answers the legal course for any of these situations unless deemed too high-risk,” Brock said a little more seriously. He dropped his boots from his desk and met Darcy’s gaze, daring her to argue.

“I swear on my dead pet goldfish from high school that everything in that packet is what you should do in the event of my strange, X-File-esque demise,” Darcy put one hand over her heart and the other rose in the air as if she were taking an oath. Brock raised an eyebrow, keeping eye contact for a long moment. Eventually, he sighed and turned to the last page. The moment he began to sign, Darcy let out a relieved sigh.

“What was the goldfish’s name?” Brock asked casually as he began to file the packet in a locked cabinet, catching Darcy off guard.

“What?”

“The name of your pet. We had a Chihuahua when I was growing up. Named him Bear. I thought it was funny,” Brock said with a shrug and Darcy kind of liked that name for a tiny dog. She also couldn’t imagine Brock with a Chihuahua now. It probably wouldn’t even be the size of his bicep.

“I named him Cheeto. I think I was hungry at the time,” admitted Darcy. She’d been fond of that fish. Her mother was allergic to pretty much anything cute and fluffy so she’d had to settle with having Cheeto as her only animal companion. Now that she was making bank, she’d begun considering getting a pet she could cuddle. A part of her wish she could have gone back to New Mexico for that dog she’d saved from Loki’s adoption rage issues but last she heard, the family she found for him was still spoiling him rotten.

Not wanting to engage in more conversation that would make Brock appear more human in her eyes or encourage to talk to her, Darcy offered a short little wave and turned on her heel.

“You got plans for the long weekend?” Brock asked, tone lighter than usual as Darcy tried to escape. She didn’t bother to turn around when she answered.
“Hanging out with the Mystery Inc. gang out in the woods. Don’t bother trying to call me to
complain about all the other things I do wrong around here. I’ll have my phone off,” Darcy said
and although it sounded like a fake answer, it was kind of true.

With a little laugh at Brock’s scoff, Darcy bounced back to the labs to grab her stuff before heading
out. She sent a quick text to her friends and smiled to herself at all the videos they’d sent to her.
Her local friends really were like the Mystery Inc. crew but much more ethnically diverse. The
‘Fred’ and ‘Shaggy’ of the group even had a dog. A Corgi instead of a Great Dane but still. She’d
met them through Bruce because ‘Shaggy’ (actually named Gareth) helped supply the scientist
with edibles and weed. She’d agreed to go on a weed run for Bruce one day and met Gareth.
They’d chatted about the economic decline of Greece and then made plans to have dinner to
continue their conversation (because the Hulk waited for no one and she didn’t want to be
responsible for the Stark Labs being destroyed).

Skimming over the tightly kept secret that Bruce’s trick was a little baggie of weed, Darcy got
along swimmingly with Gareth and his boyfriend, Raul. Their other friends, Rebecca and Selima
(the Velma and Daphne of the group), also really liked Darcy. As much as Darcy loved her
research family, it was nice to have people in her life that weren’t sucked into all the crazy.
Sometimes, it was good to do normal people things like glamping on the weekends or go on a
donut tour of the NYC.

As she grabbed her weekend bag from the empty lab, she almost missed the vase of roses that sat
on Jane’s desk. Plastic wrap tied with a bow covered the roses, which she’d never seen before. It
definitely wasn’t there before she got dragged off by Brock. A card poked out from the top of the
full bouquet and Darcy opened it out of curiosity. Thor wasn’t one to send flowers since he’d rather
deliver them himself. Also, they didn’t look to be his style. Thor liked more exotic or tropical
looking flowers as opposed to classic red roses.

Still, Darcy didn’t mind being a basic bitch. She carefully unwrapped the plastic and leaned over to
take a big whiff of the roses, enjoying their light scent. It was more complex than any rose she
smelt before. The main floral musk gave way to something deeper, spicier heat with a crisp citrus
note. When she sniffed again, there was even an undertone of...amaretti biscuits? It evoked images
her walking through Sicily on a hot day, hand in hand with a stranger. Weird. Roses weren’t
supposed to smell like that, were they? Or make her think about the trashy romance novels she
secretly read in high school. Also, she had never been to Sicily so had no clue what it smelled like
there.

The card didn’t have any sender name. Only a vague message that read: there are no roses without
thorns but your beauty outshines any garden.

Probably a whackadoo in love with Jane. Gift baskets congratulating Jane’s achievements and
asking if she’d speak at events were the norm ‘round these parts but occasionally a creepy admirer
got through. None had posed any real threat and Thor could take care of them if they did. Maybe
Darcy would use the roses to make potpourri when she got back. The lab next door belonged to Dr.
Maria Lopez. She loved the smell of roses and since she researched lake slime, could use a bit of
extra flair in her labs. Darcy plucked a rose from the vase, deciding she could sniff it on the car
ride to the cabin. They seriously were the best roses she’d ever sniffed.

She dropped the large bloom when a sticky residue coated her hand. She tried to wipe it on her
pants but it wouldn’t come off. Making her way towards the sink, Darcy rubbed her hands together
and was pleased when whatever it was seemed to dissipate. Knowing that Jane would be livid if
the rose gunk got on any tech, Darcy moved the vase off Jane’s desk and onto hers. She risked
going her hands sticky again when she put the flower back with its sub-par friends. The residue
disappeared when she rubbed her hands. Strangest flower fertilizing solution ever. Still, she washed her hands with soap and water just in case.

Maybe she wouldn’t make potpourri out of these roses but she could at least admire them when she got back, daydreaming about someone sending her flowers. Also, she’d have to tell whatever flower company this was about the strange residue. If she were lucky, she’d get another bouquet for free. Or at least a coupon and the species name.

As she turned around from the lab sink, Darcy let out a tiny scream at the shadowy figure hidden in the doorway. Half the lights were dimmed since most everyone had left but Darcy let out a tiny sigh of relief when she realized it was just Brock.

“Geez, what’s your problem?” Darcy demanded. “Are you trying to give me a heart attack and laugh at me if my health and safety answer actually sucks in practice?”

“Sorry, I didn’t mean to scare you,” Brock said, sounding more tired than he usually did. Letting out a long sigh, Brock ran a hand through his hair. Darcy kind of liked his hair. Long on top and shorter sides. Popular hairstyle nowadays but it made him look roguishly handsome. With a frown, Darcy squashed that idea. She almost didn’t realize Brock had begun talking again. “It’s never been my intention to upset you with…with the forms or getting on your case about protocol. I like to do a thorough job and I’ve seen how missing little things can get people really hurt. I’d hate to see you get hurt.”

“Uh…thanks?” Darcy wasn’t sure what else to say. While she appreciated the sentiment, she also didn’t know where this was suddenly coming from. Should she be suspicious? “I guess I sort of understand why you hate my free-spirited ways. I annoy most guys like you.”

“Like me? You meet a lot of guys like me?” asked Brock, obviously amused at the notion and smugly confident that there was no other man like him.

“Y’know, like army-rigid. Loves order and rules. Hates my clutter and penchant for winging things,” Darcy tried to explain but found her brain getting a little fuzzy when he took a step towards her. It brought him into the light and she could clearly see his frown. A scent of spicy amaretto biscuits clung to him.

“All that order was drilled into me by the army and they do it for good reason. I use that foundation for my work but it doesn’t mean I want it everywhere in my life. Besides, I’m Italian. Chaos is kind of our thing. The Bronx blood doesn’t help either.”

“Are you suggesting that you find my mayhem endearing?” Darcy teased, reaching out to push at his arm and not being able to help but give his bicep a tentative squeeze. Although she could not explain the impulse that normally would result in a stern talk from HR, she certainly was not at all ready for the blush that graced Brock’s cheeks. Her chest cinched and she didn’t want to know what that meant. At her most likely startled expression, Brock cleared his throat and stepped back, his body trying to take up more space. Like that would up his macho-ness somehow. The worst thing about it was that she kind of liked it.

“Do you want to grab a drink tonight?” Brock asked, again catching Darcy off guard. Now, she needed a drink but even if she wanted to ditch her friends, it wasn’t a good idea to go out with him. Not in the strange mood he was in and the way her body reacted. A heavier waft of his scent floated towards her and she swore he smelt like walking through Sicily in the summer. Clearly, she was delirious from work stress.

Brock’s next words were blurted out quickly. “Jack’ll be there. And a few other scientists. Just an
“Can’t, I really am going out of town this weekend,” Darcy said, both relieved and disappointed at the same time because it wasn’t an offer for a date. What was that about? She bit her bottom lip in an attempt to not scream at herself.

“Oh…with a boyfriend?” asked Brock, voice casual but curious. His face also changed to a blank slate. Still, his eyes dropped down to her lips for a second.

“No, with friends. They actually are like a diverse, LGBTQ reboot of Scooby Doo,” Darcy joked, suddenly very aware of the scruff on his jawline. And the arch of his Adam’s apple. She needed to leave. Now. Without explanation, Darcy dashed around Brock and ran towards the elevator. When she looked back, she didn’t see any signs of him following Brock. Not sparing another thought to Brock, sticky roses or the fact that Brock kind of smelled like the sticky roses, she skipped out of Stark Labs and met up with her friends, making sure to turn off her phone as she slid into the backseat.

Chapter End Notes

The diamond heirloom thing is actually what I want to do when I die. I told my dad about it and he gave me a look and agreed. So not sure if that’s really gonna happen.
“What’s wrong Darcy? You look like you got ants in your pants,” Raul said, partially amused. He offered her a warm, comforting smile and his teeth shone white against his tan skin. Next to him, Gareth looked at her in the rearview mirror with concern. The girls had driven ahead in their own car since Darcy took so long with Brock. They were about an hour away from the cabin but Darcy couldn’t seem to sit still. Normally, she loved long car rides but she was feeling a little heated and her skin itchy. Even Ezra, the corgi, had noticed her tension and woke from his nap to snuffle at her.

“I don’t know. I just feel like, anxious all of a sudden? But I don’t have anything to be anxious about,” admitted Darcy, pulling Ezra into her lap and scratching his ears.

“Didn’t you say you were caught up with that Brock guy?” Gareth asked, Welsh accent lilting his words. “That he puts you on edge?”

“He doesn’t put me on edge, he just annoys me with his incessant love of rules and explaining why I’m not following them,” Darcy shot back, rubbing her back against the seat. It felt good. She also avoided telling them how Brock acted like he’d almost liked her and that she wasn’t opposed to that.

No, she needed to stick to her guns. She didn’t like him.

“How’s he put you on edge, he just annoys me with his incessant love of rules and explaining why I’m not following them,” teased Raul. The man had a strange theory that Brock liked Darcy and was just finding excuses to spend time with her. She thought that ridiculous and Gareth agreed. Though, Raul was a bit of a hopeless romantic. He said it was the Latin blood of his ancestors thriving off passion, even though he was born and raised in Chicago.

“I do not put anyone in danger. He’s just been on and on about a stupid book of forms I needed to fill out. Stupid questions about hypothetical health care proxy requests if Jane can’t answer. It was like, a thousand pages,” Darcy explained as much as she could. They knew she was friends with Jane Foster and Thor, but she still had to follow some of her NDA. Couldn’t give Brock anymore ammunition. Especially once he read some of her answers. He was going to be pissed.
“Isn’t he that cute Italian guy we ran into last week?” asked Gareth. “ Didn’t I tell you Raul, he was a total daddy. Proper lush, he is.”

“A little too New Jersey for me but yeah, hot silver fox in the making,” agreed Raul and Darcy let out a sound of disgust.

“I do not want to have this conversation,” she begged, tugging up Ezra into her lap so that she could cuddle him better. He licked her face.

“C’mon, you have to admit he’s cute. All chiseled features and sculpted body. Da Vinci would have been all over him,” Raul turned around so he could wink at Darcy. She rolled her eyes. When Raul started bringing artists into the conversation like this, then he was serious. He worked at the Met, restoring collections and sometimes wrote Renaissance fanfiction. Darcy and Gareth were the only people she knew so far that had read his stories. “Also, I think he was checking you out. How do you feel about older, established men? I think you’d make a good sugar baby.”

“Well, that’s never gonna happen,” snorted Darcy, rubbing her shoulder against the car door. “Also, I’d make a terrible sugar baby. I hate being told what to do. Besides, guys that are obsessed with their looks and body like Brock do not date women who would rather spend the weekend lounging on the couch eating cake.”

“Everyone has their kinks,” Gareth joked. “One of my friends, back in Wales, is a gym rat but he loves the big bears.”

“Are you suggesting I am a big, hairy gay man?” Darcy asked, raising an eyebrow and scratching her shin. Seriously, she should have switched from her work pants into her comfy sweats.

“No, I’m suggesting that this Brock fellow likes you. I didn’t believe Raul until I saw this guy checking you out. Would it be so bad to go on a date with him? You were just complaining about how you don’t have anyone to send you flowers or to cuddle with. If anything, he may be a good shag.”

“Not you too,” mumbled Darcy. An image of Brock’s naked torso popped up in her brain and a shiver ran down her spine. Refusing to continue this conversation, she smooshed her face into Ezra’s thick fur.

“You’re not looking too good,” Gareth said, a little more concern in his voice as he studied her in the rearview mirror. “I’ll stop talking about Brock if it’s really upsetting you.”

“I can handle a little bit of teasing,” Darcy said. She thought back to her last conversation with Brock but didn’t want to admit that perhaps Gareth and Raul saw something she didn’t. In fact, she didn’t want to see what they did. “But maybe he really did set me on edge with…those stupid questions. All that thinking about me being in coma or dying might have upset me more than I realized? I don’t know, I just feel anxious.”

“I brought a batch of edibles if you want some. They’re new recipes and I’d like some feedback, anyway,” Gareth offered kindly. Gareth worked as a sous-chief in an upscale restaurant in Manhattan but he also liked to experiment with different edible recipes. He made a decent amount on the side working with a dealer friend to make ‘gourmet’ edibles but began to branch out on his own with hopes of saving enough to start his own restaurant. While Darcy didn’t really have much interest in getting high and was often the sober chaperone, she considered his offer. She knew Gareth only dealt with ‘high end’ products and he was an amazing chef. If it made the weight in her chest untighten then it was a tempting offer.
“Give me another hour and I’ll let you know,” Darcy sighed. An image of Brock’s stupid grin flashed through her mind and she couldn’t deny the tingling sensation down south. Although the concept that he was interested in her was absurd, she could admit to herself that it was still a flattering thought. He was hot. There was no denying that. Except he ruined it when he opened his mouth. If anyone needed an edible, it was Brock Rumlow. The guy needed to relax because there wasn’t an attack waiting to happen at every corner of Stark Labs. Then again, if she really considered his words, she didn’t know what he was like off hours.

The weekend had been incredible and certainly the escape from the reality she needed. They’d hiked, swam in a lake, made delicious food and enjoyed the beauty of nature. Her constant anxiety was the only thing that dampened the getaway but Gareth had a ridiculous amount of weed to get her through. Seriously, she should have been nervous with the amount they’d been traveling with. Now, it was all just a dent in her bank account because she felt bad about wanting to eat all his drugs.

In the past when she’d smoked or had edibles, Darcy lost entire days to highs. It had been why she’d never been all that interested in the habit. But she had to hand it to Gareth. He knew how to make good weed tartlets, truffles and pesto as well as portion it right because all it did was soothe her body and mind enough that she could enjoy the weekend. Or maybe she’d never used it for legitimate medicinal purposes and that’s just what appropriate medical marijuana did. At times, Gareth had been concerned at the amount Darcy consumed but since she showed no signs of acting high, he shrugged it off.

Darcy got back to her apartment Monday evening with a little to-go baggie of edibles for Bruce and a couple for herself as well. The anxiety welled in her chest again but this time, her skin sensitivity worsened and she had a strange ache in her bones. The ache didn’t hurt completely but she felt like she had a food craving she couldn’t quite place. Hoping to deal with the barrage of sensations on her own, Darcy took a bath with candles, calming music and a glass of wine. Roiling water felt nice against her skin but she just got kind of horny and anxious at the same time. Some alone sexy times helped with only half of that and she still felt a painful cinch of dread in her chest, even if the rest of her body floated. When it became obvious that sleep would be difficult to find, she popped a truffle in her mouth and eventually drifted off.

Tuesday morning rolled around and Darcy groaned into her pillow. She’d had strange dreams throughout the night of multiple Brock Rumlows doing unspeakable things to her. Just remembering it made her blush and as she wiggled in bed, she noticed a slight wetness between her thighs. The weight inside her chest was also at full force. Her guts felt twisted and she was extremely aware of her heat beating faster in her chest in almost a painful way. Her skin was hot and itchy too, but the feel of her soft plush blankets alleviated some of the irritation. Her breasts felt swollen and painful but looked like they normally did. She blamed what was probably her
oncoming period since she did get some sensitivity right before as well as some extra arousal.

It took her 45 minutes to find an outfit because everything either felt too grating on her skin or she wanted to cry at herself in it or it was highly work inappropriate because it was technically silk lingerie. Eventually, she settled for a plush novelty hooded bear sweater and stretchy striped wide-legged pants. It looked ridiculous but at least she felt somewhat comfortable.

Then there was transportation. Normally, she walked a few blocks to the subway but the concept of seeing people made her want to vomit. Located in the upper east side on the corner of 1st and East 74th Street, Stark Labs was extremely easy to get to via the subway. Darcy lived in Bushwick and normally enjoyed her morning commute filled with people watching. After about 10 minutes of psyching herself out, she ate the last truffle and made a mental note to ask Gareth for some more. It took about half an hour for the truffle to hit and Darcy was able to walk through the front door. Thankfully, Thor had planned on keeping Jane out for a lunch before bringing her back to the labs so if Darcy was a little late, there probably wasn’t anyone who’d notice.

About half a minute after Darcy walked into the Stark Labs Lobby and scanned her ID, a small group of security agents swarmed towards her. She moved to the side, assuming they were going to go around her to whatever threat they were assigned to. Instead, they veered towards her.

“Darcy! Where have you been? I’ve been trying your phone for hours but it went straight to voicemail,” Jack said, leading the pack and not an ounce of amusement on his face. It made him look intimidating, like a shark going in for attack. If that was his game face, she understood why he’d been able to infiltrate Hydra.

“Sorry, I didn’t turn my phone on yet. And I thought it would be okay if I started late since Jane isn’t in till noon. No biggie,” Darcy assured him. The five security guys and Jack surrounded her. They all kept a fair distance but were alert, as if waiting for her to jump at them. “What’s going on?”

“Sorry short stack, but you’re coming with us. It’s a matter of safety and containment. I just need you to follow me,” Jack stepped to the side and gestured towards the elevator. Darcy raised an eyebrow but made no attempts to move.

“And what, pray tell, are you needing to contain?” Darcy challenged Jack with a confidence she certainly didn’t feel. She’d found in the past that if she kicked up enough of a fuss, people got embarrassed and let her go. “I’m just trying to get to the labs. If this is something Brock put you up to because he actually read my health and safety answers, then I want my lawyer present. This is a violation of my rights-”

“Darcy,” Jack interjected before she could get a good rant on. “You need to get tested for toxins immediately.”

“Oh my god, you guys, it was just weed!” Darcy had no idea how they knew she’d indulged at all. Maybe she looked more zonked out than she thought? Either way, there wasn’t a rule that you couldn’t be stoned at Stark Labs. Long as you did your work, weren’t a danger to yourself or others, then it was all kosher. She decided to remind Jack of this (and probably Brock since he most likely was watching on the security feed, if he didn’t have the balls to come down here himself). “There’s nothing in my contract that says I can’t have a little recreational weed on my off
hours. Times are changing. Y’know, it has legit medicinal properties—"

“What? What are you on about?” asked Jack, face screwing up in utter confusion at her reaction.

“What are you talking about?” Darcy shot back carefully, not wanting to implicate herself or Gareth.

“You’ve been exposed to a biohazard. We have to determine how much is running through your system.”

“Again, I’m fine,” scoffed Darcy. “The weed was top quality. Definitely not a biohazard. At least, with the amount I paid for it, Ga- uh, my friend should complain if otherwise.”

“I’m not talking about weed you smoked when you went all Burning Man this weekend,” Jack explained slowly, amusement in his voice and fighting to not break out into a grin. Once he controlled his facial features, a furrow wrinkled his brow and he grew serious again. “I’m talking about the roses that were delivered to Foster’s lab. The roses I saw you touch multiple times Friday evening on the security feed before you went AWOL. They were found to have a toxin on them.”

“Oh. You should have just said that,” Darcy winced, feeling like an idiot for outing her illegal activities but also betrayed by those nice smelling flowers. So, an enemy posed as a creepy admirer? When that realization settled, the repercussions became clear and a terrible weight settled in her gut. “Oh god, am I gonna die? Could it have affected my friends? Do they need to come in for testing? Did I spread a deadly virus everywhere? I took the subway! I’m patient zero, aren’t I?”

“Calm down,” Jack assured her with a soft and steady voice. “Don’t worry about it. We’re fairly certain you’re only affected if you have direct contact with the substance because it needs to absorb into the skin or be inhaled. But we need to run some tests to be sure.”

“Oh, Darcy agreed, letting out a shaky breath because she may have accidently done both, depending on what exactly in the flowers carried this toxin. She let the scientists take her to a sterile exam room reserved for the bio division when they used human test subjects. There, Dr. Nila Patel, who was doing research on creating more efficient antivenins, took blood samples from Darcy. She had a nice smile and calming voice, even complimenting Darcy’s sweater that had a bear tail and ears on the hood. As she filled up multiple vials that were quickly taken away for testing, Darcy listed out how much weed she thought she’d eaten over the weekend and her symptoms as they arose. She even gave them Bruce’s little baggie of treats, commanding they ask Bruce if it was okay before they tried to extract some information about how it had kept her symptoms down all weekend.

One of Dr. Patel’s assistants typed out Darcy’s account, occasionally asking her to clarify details. After they finished with the verbal notes, they placed some patches on her chest, explaining each were wireless electrodes to monitor her vitals. Once the last patch had been placed on her chest, her skin felt irritated again and her chest tightened with the signs of anxiety she’d begun to recognize. When she told them, they shared a concerned look, which did nothing for Darcy’s mood. Just as they were in the middle of a silent conversation, the assistant who’d taken her samples, returned. There was a grim look on his face as well. With a nod, he confirmed that Darcy was indeed contaminated. From the levels her blood and the readings of her vitals, she apparently didn’t have long before something happened.

All anyone told her of the toxin was that it appeared to be a derivative of an alien pollen Dr. Patel saw when she worked for SHIELD. Bad news, they didn’t have an antidote and all the research on the toxin had been done by a Hydra faction that Dr. Patel was rotated out of when it was obvious
she wouldn’t be loyal to them. Super bad news, all the research was in hard copy form in a large storage facility of seized Hydra files and someone had to manually dig through it.

What Dr. Patel did remember was that Darcy’s internal organs could shut down without proper treatment. No one seemed to want to tell her what the treatment was but assured her they would explain everything to her once she was safely contained. Darcy was swiftly led towards the basement floors reserved for the more dangerous things at Stark Labs. Generally, those floors were reserved for terrible diseases used in vaccine research or the occasional radioactive item. There were also some rooms for individuals deemed contaminated or unsafe. No one had yet to use them but it was supposed to be a waiting room until proper transport to a treatment center could be arranged. Realizing that Jack may have been lying about the patient zero thing to keep her calm, Darcy swallowed past a painful lump in her throat and walked towards what she hoped wouldn’t be her death.

When the door swooshed open to reveal a dimly lit room, Darcy walked in and hugged herself at the sound of the door closing then locking. The lights brightened and she saw Brock sitting on a bed. Suddenly, the prank became too clear. She fixed Brock with a glare as he scrambled to stand up.

“You are the worst asshole in the history of assholes,” Darcy shouted, heart pounding in her ears and skin continuing to heat up until that ache returned to her bones. For a moment, Brock looked absolutely crestfallen and she felt kind of bad but she shoved that away. Ignoring him, she looked around the room to find it sterile white with a table, benches and a sturdy queen sized bed drilled into the floor. There was also a tall filing cabinet that looked to be a new addition, as it was red and didn’t match the rest of the décor. The size of the bed also made her want to roll her eyes but she figured Tony wouldn’t skimp in comfort if a scientist accidentally got doused in experimental chemicals. A door to her left led to what she assumed was the bathroom but her eyes darted back to the bed. She was pleasantly surprised to find it piled high with pillows and plush blankets. She desperately wanted to crawl into.

Brock clearing his throat brought her attention back to him. If this was a prank, it was probably going to get a lot weirder. Or Jack had begun furnishing the containment rooms. There was a high likelihood of both. Before Darcy could demand an answer from Brock, a voice sounded from an overhead intercom system, startling her from a great self-righteous tirade.

Chapter End Notes

This whole fic was started so I could write a not even that funny scene of Darcy thinking she was being forced into a drug test for weed when it was actually for a toxin. Next chapter, I have flimsy half science for how this strain of 'sex pollen' works. Hope you guys like discussions about cortisone, dopamine and oxytocin ;) Yeah. It's either all downhill or uphill from here guys.
Chapter Notes

Chapter title are lyrics from Charli XCX's White Roses.

Anyone that actually has a good understanding of science, I apologize for my pseudoscience. But in my defense, sex pollen doesn't exist so I'm grasping at straws here with my lack of science background.

Also, thank you for all the kudos and comments! You guys are the best, as always. <3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Uh, hi Darcy. Can you hear me?” the uncertain voice of Bruce Banner filled the room and Darcy frowned. This really was getting strange. She didn’t realize how all in Brock went in on pranks.

“Yeah…can you hear me?” Darcy asked, looking around to see if she needed to press a button or talk into a tin can or something.

“I can. Um, I’m not sure why they asked me to talk to you since biohazards aren’t my specialty but as you know, you’re positive for this biotoxin.”

“Yeah?” Darcy said, fighting hard not to scoff. While she didn’t think Bruce would participate in a prank…she didn’t know how far Brock would take this. Or what other methods of persuasion he had to get the Stark Lab teams on board.

“Well, they probably wanted me to tell you because you trust me,” said Bruce, clearing his voice. “But uh…well security has been looking into it and it seems that the roses were actually meant for Dr. Lopez. They were delivered to the wrong lab.”

“Her ex-boyfriend was one of the Hydra scientists hidden in SHIELD,” Brock interrupted roughly. He looked tense, crossing his arms and muscle in his jaw twitching. "They're trying to track him down but he burned down his safe house. Including all the research.”

Darcy realized Brock wasn’t in his normal black button up and work slacks. Instead, he wore matching grey sweatpants and sweatshirt. They both had the Iron man logo. She recognized them the test batch of new swag Tony was trying out. They’d been kept mostly as back up clothes if someone’s outfit got damaged in a lab accident. She wanted to run her hands under the sweatshirt to see if Brock wore anything else underneath. The scruff on his jawline also looked inviting and she knew it would feel even better running down her skin.

Geez, where the hell did that thought come from? Darcy shook her head to shake the forbidden thoughts and resulting images away.

“I mean, Dr. Lopez does like roses,” Darcy said, tearing her eyes away from Brock to focus on the furniture in the room. She began to focus on the bed.

“Well, this guy took some research home before the fall. He also didn’t take his break up with her too well…since he tried to dose her with this stuff,” Brock said and the gruff sound of his voice caused shivers to run down Darcy’s spine.
“What does it do?” asked Darcy, wondering if he noticed the hitch in her voice.

“You mean they didn’t tell you, yet?” Brock asked incredulously but Darcy cut him off.

“What is this stuff, Bruce?” She tried to sound a little more cheerful and encouraging. It wasn’t his fault that Brock was forcing him to take part in this prank.

“Oh, it’s a, uh stimulant, of sorts,” Bruce’s voice was uncertain and Darcy assumed it was because he was making this up on the fly. “Well, it’s kind of more than that. It’s a psychostimulant but it acts more like a toxin in the way the body processes it. We do believe it’s alien in origin and that plant was crossbred with earth plants. It’s actually kind of fascinating but you probably don’t care about the science behind it right now.”

“Yeah, I’d like to get to the ‘how not to die’ part as quick as possible,” Darcy said distastefully, crossing her arms. This was getting ridiculous. Alien plants? She wanted them to get to the punchline already so she could leave.

“As you know, Dr. Patel’s team doesn’t have an antidote for what they found on the roses and in the vase. Still, she does have a solid theory on how to best synthesis one,” Bruce said, clearing his voice again. “They say they’re probably not going to be able to synthesis one for 3 weeks, and that’s utilizing research which still isn’t fully developed.”

“As in almost a month? I’m stuck in here for that long? You guys better get me some movies and popcorn because I’m gonna be hella bored in like, 2 hours,” Darcy sat down on the bench by the table and fixed Brock with a glare. How long of this quarantine did he expect her to serve before he admitted this was a joke to get back at her. To her surprise, Brock flinched at Darcy’s angry stare.

“If we can get a hold of the Hydra research, they may be able to cut down that time. But the natural progression without any form of intervention would result in your organs shutting down in a few days,” Bruce explained and Darcy could practically see his wince, even if she couldn’t see his face.

“What? A few days?” Darcy wasn’t expecting that threat of fake death would be a part of this. That was taking things a little too far. “There better be like, a holistic cure, then.”

“That’s the part you’re really not gonna like,” Brock said. “I’m gonna skip through the science mumbo jumbo but you absorbed a sexual stimulant and the holistic cure is having a lot of sex.”

“This is a shitty prank, right? Because I didn’t fill out those stupid forms correctly?” Darcy scoffed, looking around for the cameras because Brock was totally the type to record this stuff so he could laugh about it later. She saw one in the ceiling corner and flipped it off.

“No Darcy, this isn’t a joke. I promise you,” Bruce said with a tired sigh and as much as Darcy wanted to think that Bruce somehow got pulled into this, she knew that he’d never pull such a mean-spirited prank if he could help it. Her chest tightened.

“Hey Darcy, this is Chelsea from HR,” another voice sounded on the intercom system and Darcy vaguely recognized the name from when she first went through orientation. “Thank you, Bruce for doing this. But, Darcy, I… I really am sorry but this isn’t a joke. This is real. You’ve been in contact with a biotoxin of the H-43 variety and we’ve already begun the appropriate protocols. So, ahem, I need ask, is there someone you are romantically involved with that could assist you in accordance to the appropriate sexual actions required?”

“I don’t have a boyfriend,” Darcy said quietly when the implications sunk in. Was she going to die
from horniness because of some alien plant? She would not let that go into her obituary. “I don’t have anyone who…who would, y’know.”

“Well, in this circumstance, we look to the health and safety protocol you filled out,” Chelsea said with forced cheerfulness, as if she were proudly showing how well prepared Stark Labs were with ridiculous scenarios. “Page 49, section 13, subsection B. In case of sexual stimulant biohazards, you designate a preferred individual if not in a known romantic relationship.”

“Uh oh,” Darcy winced, eyes darting to Brock. He rose an eyebrow but knew what was going through her mind. She happened to remember that answer quite well.

“That’s right Lewis,” Brock said, irritated. “You put my name down. Not so funny anymore?”

“Goddamn it,” Darcy cursed her past, flippant self. She’d put down Brock’s name with a note that ‘maybe he’d finally kiss her ass’. How was she to know she’d actually get taken down by sex pollen? Crap, this probably was going into her obituary. Cue the ‘le petit mort’ jokes. “Just give me a vibrator.”

“That’s not gonna cut it. This stuff is nasty. It affects you mentally and physically,” Brock insisted, taking a few steps towards her. “You’re going to be craving human affection and touch. Getting off isn’t enough. You’ll want someone there to…to hold.”

“What are you gonna do? Cuddle the sex pollen away?” Darcy snapped. This sounded like more bullshit but then she remembered how she craved human contact a little more than usual this weekend. With amusement, Selima and Raul had obliged Darcy in her need to snuggle. But this was different, now. Now she wanted to wrap her arms and legs around Brock, rub her face on his skin and lick his-

“What are you gonna do? Cuddle the sex pollen away?” Darcy snapped. This sounded like more bullshit but then she remembered how she craved human contact a little more than usual this weekend. With amusement, Selima and Raul had obliged Darcy in her need to snuggle. But this was different, now. Now she wanted to wrap her arms and legs around Brock, rub her face on his skin and lick his-

“He’s right, Darcy,” Bruce said, voice apologetic. Darcy jumped up, eyes wide as she tried to reign in her thoughts. “This increases cortisol, testosterone and estrogen levels, eventually increasing your…libido. But it also decreases your dopamine and serotonin levels. It’s why you were probably feeling anxious all weekend.”

“Don’t people take antidepressants and stuff? Just give me some of that,” Darcy suggested.

“Unfortunately, those can take 3 weeks to have a sustained effect. But, this stuff is going to continue to block your neurotransmitters and exacerbate your pituitary gland. From Dr. Patel’s memory and SHIELD Team Alpha’s previous contact with a similar substance, those affected only found relief when in appropriate contact with other people.”

“There’s got to be some other solution,” Darcy begged desperately to the camera.

“If you had listened to me and taken this seriously—” Brock began but Darcy cut him off.

“Well, it’s too late for that now. What am I gonna do? Even if I could designate someone, I don’t have anyone. It’s part of the reason I put a joke answer in. So, go ahead and laugh at my loneliness, Rumlow. I know you’re obviously not gonna have sex with me so we better find a different solution!” Darcy’s voice rose in volume and panic.

“Legally, we both agreed to these terms,” Brock said slowly, as if trying not to spook an animal. “We both signed the emergency protocol.”

“Are you serious right now?” Darcy stood up and took a step back. “Is that why you’re in this room with me? I thought it was so you could gloat or punish me or something.”
“Unless you designate someone at this moment who will consent, I don’t think we have much of an option,” Brock said, still in that slow, almost calming voice. “You lose the ability to consent the longer this stuff is in your system.”

“You know, I don’t feel all that bad,” Darcy said nervously, tugging on her sweater quickly so that cool air touched her rapidly heating skin. “Maybe it was a bad batch of sex hormones?”

“The research team have been looking into it since we discovered the contaminant this morning. It’s similar to some bio attacks SHIELD saw but it’s been heavily altered, so the team’s practically working from scratch to engineer the antidote,” Bruce said. “They’re still looking for the research in the Hydra archives but they haven’t found it yet. That should also help us.”

“I’ve been fine all weekend. I can handle a few more days before things get really bad,” insisted Darcy.

“From the amount we saw you getting on your hands, it would have taken about 2 days to take full effect,” Bruce supplied.

“Yeah, and you’ve been sucking down edibles to numb the effects. Once this thing hits you in full, your health will be in jeopardy.” Brock added. “You’re also going to be in pain if you don’t do anything.”

“Then give me more weed until the team finds a cure,” Darcy demanded, trying to ignore her rapid heartbeat. She’d eaten an entire truffle this morning. The last one that she had left and it was already wearing off a lot faster than it had over the weekend.

“By the afternoon, your body is gonna be burning through it so fast that it’ll be like Cap trying to get a buzz off chugging a bottle of gin,” Brock said, voice gaining an edge. “I’ve seen stuff like this before with SHIELD. If you do nothing, you will go into cardiac arrest and we won’t be able to revive you. Sex won’t cure it completely but it’ll tide you over until they finish the antidote.”

“This sounds like the flimsy plot line of the worse Sci Fi porno, ever,” Darcy wailed. “So, we’re just gonna fuck each other for a month? I know this is a Stark owned business but c’mon! That’s a ridiculous policy.”

“Well, I’m glad you haven’t lost your sense of humor, yet,” Brock offered her a snarky grin.

“How long until I’m humping the wall, then?” Darcy asked, throwing her hands up in the air. She might as well know how much time she had left. Her skin was already hot and she began to pull off her sweatshirt. She only had a maroon lace bra underneath and her nipples were clearly trying to make an escape. The electrode patches were still stuck to her chest.

Brock’s eyes nearly bulged out of his eye sockets but she didn’t care. Actually, she kind of liked the way his eyes raked her skin. For the first time since she walked into the room, she noticed sweat beading along Brock’s brow. It gave her hope that maybe the room was just warm, which was why she was burning up.

“We don’t have exact calculations but Dr. Patel estimated you’d probably be under full effect in another 10 minutes. After that, you won’t be able to consent to other…plans,” Bruce said, clearing his voice and sounding a little more uncomfortable. “You’ll be in doubled over in pain in about a half hour after, if you do nothing.”

“Well, I guess you’re attractive. I could do a lot worse,” Darcy mumbled, giving Brock a once over, even if she really wanted to just rip off his sweatpants.
“Thanks for the resounding seal of approval, Lewis,” Brock said distastefully.

“What? I know you’re not thrilled about this either but you’re not the one dying if you don’t get your rocks off,” Darcy snapped, then winced. An intense wave of sorrow washed over her and she plopped back down on the bench. Tears welled in her eyes and she continued in a smaller voice “Sorry I’m forcing you to downgrade but if I had any other option, I would take it. I really didn’t mean for my joke answer to screw you. Pun not intended.”

“Don’t say that. It’s not downgrading. I promise,” Brock said softly, walking until he sat down next to her on the bench. Even though her skin was burning hot, his heat soothed her. He reached out and lightly pushed an errant strand of hair behind her ear. Darcy leaned into his touch, letting out a moan. When she heard herself, she jumped up from the bench.

“No, no! We are not having warm fuzzy feelings time right before I become a sex monster,” Darcy insisted, knowing that if she were in her right mind, she’d make a joke about her being a terrible porno version of the Hulk. The fact that she’d lost the will to joke was a sobering indicator that this stuff was an actual biotoxin.

“I don’t want you thinking that I’m gonna hate you for this. I just wish I had the balls to ask you out before this,” Brock’s assurance felt like a nice, cool gel pack all over her skin, holding her tight.

“Ugh, if you’re trying to make me feel better emotionally, it’s working even though I don’t know if you’re lying,” admitted Darcy, shutting her eyes tightly. “I’m so confused and my skin hurts and I just want someone to hold me.”


“We arrived as soon as we were told of your ill fate,” Thor said solemnly. “You and Brock touched poisoned roses meant for another? I have seen something like this once in battle. I would do as the scientists suggest. It is not a poison one should jest with. But I shall make haste to Asgard and see if our healers have a cure.”

“Yeah I…wait, me and Brock?” Darcy asked, brow furrowing as she turned towards Brock. A sheepish expression twisted his features. Clearing his throat, he raised his hands up in surrender and took a step towards Darcy. She stepped away from him.

“I dropped the vase this morning and tried to clean up the mess. It set off the chemical alarms, which is how we realized you’ve been compromised,” Brock said, voice calm and steady even though his eyes glazed over slightly before he focused on her neck. She could practically feel his gaze on her skin, like hands running softly along her body.

“If it takes 2 days to affect me, then they’ll might be able to find an antidote for you before it messes you up,” Darcy tried to sound hopeful for Brock, even if the same couldn’t be said about her.

“I got a lot more on me than you did,” Brock admitted, voice going into a low rumble. A shiver ran down Darcy’s spine and she knew he saw it this time. His eyes darkened. “That vase was full of that gunk and I tried to clean it up before the alarm went off.

“Then who’s your sex partner preference?” asked Darcy suddenly, wondering why he was in the same room with her since he probably filled out his form appropriately.
“It’s kind of a moot point,” Brock said but even through the haze, Darcy crossed her arms and glared. Letting out a sigh, Brock looked away and ran his hands frantically through his hair. “Sharon Carter. But given the circumstances I felt-”

“But given the circumstances, you’re stuck with me?” Darcy practically screamed. Glass shards were jammed under her fingernails and her hair was being ripped out from the follicles. At least that’s what it felt like at his rejection. Only this wasn’t rejection. She knew Brock and Sharon tried a long-distance relationship but that didn’t work out. She remembered him being pretty torn up over it too.

Besides, she had no claim or even shown prior interest in Brock, so it didn’t make sense that she would get so possessive over him. She tried to tell herself that but tears still streamed down her face against her will. Is this what they meant by needing appropriate human contact? She didn’t realize just even the thought of being rejected would hurt this much under the influence of this demon love cocaine.

“No, baby,” Brock said, reaching out for her. His gentle voice soothed her like a balm and some of her anxiety eased when he pulled her into a tight hug. She buried her face into his chest, enjoying his spicy amaretti biscuit scent. “I’d pick you over her, every time.”

“That’s not true. You love her. You’re just saying that because you got doused in some stupid alien love cocaine,” Darcy mumbled into his chest. With the same effort it would take her to lift a car, she pulled her face away from him. She practically shook with agitation. Her heart beat wildly in her chest and it hurt to look away from Brock’s eager face. So, she looked him in the eyes and let out a heart-wrenching sob, noticing pain in his own eyes at her distress. Brock caressed the side of her face with his hand and she practically purred.

“I swear, baby,” Brock insisted, voice soothing and full of affection. “It’s over between her and me. It was just a precaution. But I want you. Alien cocaine or not.”

It was like her body didn’t want to feel relief because just as she allowed Brock’s reassurance to calm her, thoughts kept popping up that insisted he was lying. The uncertainty must have been written on her face because instead of arguing with her more, Brock just leaned his head down and captured her lips in a heated, wet kiss.

All doubt flew from her mind and her body began to go limp against his chest. The only thing Darcy knew was that she didn’t want this to end. Brock kissed her roughly and it made her weak at the knees. His words hadn’t been enough to pacify her concerns but the way he nibbled on her lips with raw need made her feel like the sexiest woman alive. That was the last coherent thought running through her head before she stuck her hands down the front of Brock’s sweatpants.

Chapter End Notes

I based the time it would take to make an antidote on the concept that antivenins are made by collecting antibodies from animals that are injected with the toxin. But that can take 8-10 weeks to collect enough for one injection. Just means our poor victims may have to sex it up a little longer.
Go To Town

Chapter Notes

As always, thank you for all the kudos and comments! <3

There is smut in this chapter. But then again, you clicked on a fic about sex pollen so I think you knew what you were getting into.

Chapter title from Doja Cat's NSFW song. Which I felt was appropriate in regards to the deeper themes of this fic.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

7:42AM That Morning

With a glare, Brock stared at the roses sitting on Darcy’s desk. The card had some generic bullshit compliment but no sender, so Brock didn’t have an actual person he could direct his ire at. Instead, he’d come up with an imaginary man who was a young millennial that made loads from a stupid tech start up that ended up being a terrible product. Kind of like that Facebook kid. A bit nerdy but with none of the redeeming qualities the scientists around here had. Also treated Darcy like she was a trophy. Totally wrong for her…except this kid had actually asked her out. For real, not like Brock’s lame attempt to lure her out to drinks with Jack.

It wasn’t that Brock couldn’t seduce a woman. He’d done that more times than he cared to count. Both for his own pleasure and for SHIELD/Hydra. Except, Darcy wasn’t a plaything he wanted to seduce. He wanted her to genuinely like him as much as he liked her. But what pretty, vibrant young thing would want to be with an old guy like him, long term? Younger women like that only saw Brock as a night of fun unless they were hoping he could be some sugar daddy. Darcy was too smart to want that. Too independent. She wanted a lame, startup tech guy who probably bragged about how he pushed himself even though it was ‘so difficult’ to achieve his dreams.

The roses weren’t even that nice and they had weird gunk on them. Brock had been examining them earlier and whatever company arranged them probably used some cheap, sticky chemical to help preserve it. Besides, Darcy didn’t strike Brock as a woman who preferred generic red roses. If he had sent her roses, he’d put more thought into it. Some sort of colorful arrangement with tropical flowers or wildflowers. Something as quirky, special and beautiful as Darcy. Also with a cheeky, meaningful message. Not some generic thing you found on the internet or in a Valentine’s Day card. They probably didn’t smell all that nice either.

Leaning down slightly, Brock took a whiff of the roses and frowned. He’d assumed they’d be generically sweet and floral but instead was met with a warm, smoky aroma. Subtle spice but also a hint of vanilla broke through with a calming sweetness. It made Brock think about cuddling in a snow-covered cabin in front of a fire. No rose smelled like that. It must be some weird, genetically modified flower. The thought made him frown.

“Did Hydra give you laser eyes? Because I think those roses are about to catch flame,” Jack teased from the entrance to the lab. He leaned against the doorframe, arms crossed and smirk on his face.
The bastard knew of Brock’s somewhat inappropriate fixation on Darcy. Of course, he used that knowledge to rib at Brock at any given opportunity.

“You went through the same trials as me. Why don’t you tell me?” Brock asked flatly, clearly not amused.

“C’mon mate, why don’t you just ask her out?”

“She thinks I hate her,” said Brock, trying to not sound pitiful but even he could hear it. He knew logically, that he was too old to let a girl in her early thirties get him all in knots. Yet here he was, glaring at some roses because he didn’t ask her out before some hipster startup millionaire did.

“And whose fault is that? Just tell her that you like her,” Jack said as if it were the easiest thing in the world.

“Does it matter anymore? She’s obviously seeing someone else,” Brock sighed, waving a vague hand towards the roses. Maybe this was a good thing. If Darcy was taken, it might snap Brock out of this and he could move on with his life.

“You don’t know that,” said Jack, dismissing the idea all together. “Who signed it?”

“Doesn’t say.”

“See, if it was some bloke she was dating, he’d want to make sure she knew it was from him,” said Jack triumphantly.

“Or he knew he didn’t have to put it down because she’d automatically know who he was,” countered Brock.

“Nah. You gotta be more optimistic,” Jack said easily and pulling out his phone, causing Brock to quirk an eyebrow. He turned to sit down on the edge of Darcy’s desk, next to the roses and crossed his arms. As Jack typed a few things into his smartphone, he continued. “Let’s see. Says here on her Facebook page that she’s single. Sweet sheila like that, always updating her Instagram and such, bound to have a boyfriend listed.”

“Well, supposing she is single, what do you think my next move should be?” asked Brock tersely, a little annoyed he didn’t think of checking her social media. He was losing his touch having to wait before he could get back out into the field.

“Is the legendary Italian lover of the Bronx asking for love advice from me?” asked Jack, voice in feigned awe and a teasing smirk on his face. Mischief shined in his eyes. Brock wanted to punch him. When he just glowered, Jack chuckled. “Well, I wouldn’t be glaring at some roses when she’s not in her office, for one. I’d be doing something. Telling her I liked her. Sending her presents. Maybe nicer flowers then roses. You could even ask her out on a date. She’d not think you didn’t like her if you did that.”

“Why would she even agree to one? I’m an old guy now, as much as I hate to admit it,” Brock grumbled.

“Life’s short,” dismissed Jack in that easy, Australian way of his. “Besides, you’re still a looker. Why risk regrettin’ that you never asked her out? Who knows, maybe you’d be pleasantly surprised at her response.”

With a long-suffering and self-pitying sigh, Brock turned his attention back to Darcy’s desk. It was a cluttered mess, quite frankly. Papers haphazardly stacked in various piles, covered in coffee
stains. Lots of different Post-It note pads filled with notes that were probably no longer valid. Business cards, take out menus and what looked like ground coffee beans completed the scene. It was a miracle that she could find anything.

Yet, he thought it was still fitting for her. He’d seen her work with Jane in the thick of it. Darcy had a chaotic train of thought, constantly moving from one thing to another with lightning speed in response to Jane. It suited her that her work space mirrored her mind. Brock bet that her home was probably similar. Lots of little knickknacks, surrounded by too many throw pillows and plush blankets. Cozy, kitschy fun that he’d not mind at all if it ever spilled into his personal space.

The last thought made Brock shake his head, trying to clear the strong scent of the roses that now caused a sharp pain in between his eyes. It was too strong now, he noticed. Like it was blooming or pollinating or something to attract bees. Before he could question his train of thought, Brock used his foot to push the small black trash bin from the side of the desk so it sat next to him. In a move that filled him with vindictive glee, he pushed the vase of roses over the edge of the desk so it landed in the bin. Except, he’d misjudged the angle and his strength. The vase hit the top of the bin then smashed against the floor. Glass, roses and some thick, clear goop exploded out.

“That right there, is karma,” Jack said smugly but still amused at Brock’s impulsive and immature decision. He made no move to help clean up and since this was Brock’s mess, it would be a douche move to just call a janitor. With a grumble, Brock started to pick up the larger pieces of the vase and toss them into the bin. The sticky preservative soaked his hands as he tried to wipe it up with a roll of paper towels helpfully sitting on Darcy’s chair. Just as Brock started making some headway with the mess, an alarm sounded overhead. An automated voice followed.

“Unknown contaminates have been detected. Protocol 18 will now be in engaged,” the pre-recorded message announced and just as Brock looked up, he saw Jack step back from the doorway as the metal door swung shut. Fucking great. The shitty preservatives were probably some cheap, toxic mix and it set off the lab safety measures. Protocol 18 was for unknown chemical spills. Whatever detected space would be closed off, all inhabitants would need to use the chemical shower and wait for someone to clear them. Since Brock was compromised, Jack would be next in line to ensure all protocols were followed accordingly. One of which included Brock providing a sample of what may have set off the alarm, assuming he was physically fit to do so. Which he was.

“I told you mate, karma!” Jack’s voice could barely be heard through the thick door as the lock engaged. Yeah, this probably was karma. With a curse about shitty Tuesday mornings and the realization that whatever boyfriend Darcy had, probably was just a poor millennial who bought cheap-ass poison flowers, Brock made his way towards the door. Just as he reached it, a small compartment in the wall opened and revealed a kit to collect a sample of the contaminant. Once Brock collected it, one of the Poison Control lab staff would be able to run tests. Since he was going to be stuck in safety limbo for at least a half hour, Brock decided that maybe he should use the lab phone to order some new flowers ASAP. He preferred not to explain to Darcy that he destroyed her roses in a fit of jealousy and then triggered a chemical alarm without something to distract her.

At least he saved her from getting poisoned. He’d just remind her of that.
Brock grunted against Darcy’s mouth as soon as her hand wrapped around his already hard length. The sound sent pleasure rushing down her spine so fast that she shivered. The pain from before practically vanished, replaced by a deep, throbbing need. She rubbed her thumb at the leaking slit of Brock’s length and they both moaned in relief. The sound of his breathy grunts made her legs buckle and she let go of him, stumbling back and trying to catch herself against the table. The room started to spin.

“Oh..um, there are condoms, water and MREs in the filing cabinet,” Chelsea said nervously. Just as Darcy was about to hit the hard surface of the metal table, Brock wrapped his arms around her and tugged her close against his chest. The room stopped spinning. The contact made them both sigh, their bodies exhaling together in pure relief. Soon that wasn’t enough so Darcy tugged up Brock’s shirt so she could run her fingers along his skin. “We’ll be delivering appropriate food for you guys periodically. Um, please stay hydrated. Also, we won’t be listening in but if you call out for us then we will be alerted and will be able to talk to you. The computer systems are set to blur anything…uh, sexual between you two.”

“Given that this is a Stark building, I’d assume he’d create an algorithm to do the opposite,” Jane scoffed. Darcy only partially listened to the voices overhead, mostly because they were loud and she didn’t have much of a choice. Either way, she stopped processing anything that was said when Brock’s lips dove back in to suck on her neck. Brock gripped her ass roughly then lifted her and sat her on the table. Darcy gasped then moaned when he settled in between her legs. Her hands ran up and down his sides and stomach where she had bunched up his shirt. “But uh…Darcy, have good sex? If you need to talk to me, one of the techs will get me.”

“I still have more things I have to tell them for legal purposes,” Chelsea said weakly.

“Y’know, they’re not listening anymore. You can tell them when they’ve…cooled down a little,” Bruce said, resigned at another chaotic day at Stark Industries. “We’re setting the privacy protocols up now- you guys don’t care.”

“Yes, may your coupling be blessed and your backs stay strong,” Thor added cheerfully but Darcy was too focused on Brock’s mouth to spend any time wondering if Thor was inadvertently blessing them with his fertility juju. When Brock grabbed her breasts with a firm tenderness, she became extremely aware of the pooling slickness between her legs that was leaking through her pants. Also of the overwhelming emptiness there. Ugh, this alien sex cocaine was turning her into a trashy romance novel cliché.

“Okay, enough foreplay,” Darcy said, voice breathy and frantic. She began to try and tug down Brock’s sweatpants. “I need you inside me right now.”

“Fuck, yes,” Brock grunted into her neck, he seemed only capable of single syllable words. They worked together to slip off Darcy’s pants and lacy thong. The metal table was cold against her bare ass but her body heated up when they lost contact for the brief moment that Brock stepped away so they could actually get her clothes off.

“CONDOM!” Jane’s voice boomed so loud that the filing cabinet shook. It was enough to shock Brock and Darcy into some sense. Jane continued, intercom volume still on high but no longer vibrating the furniture. “Use condoms. Though both of you are currently STD clean. Okay, we’re really leaving now.”

Without a word, Brock pulled up his sweatpants and ran to the filing cabinet, tearing through the drawers like a starving man searching for any signs of food. She started feeling lightheaded once
again and her muscles clenched uncomfortably. Once he found a roll of condoms, he ran back to Darcy, already opening one foil packet by the time he reached her. As he slid the condom on with more precision than Darcy thought he’d have right now (bonus points to him), she nipped at his peck, pulling on the fabric of his sweatshirt with her teeth. He didn’t offer any warning before pressing his length into her.

They both moaned in pained relief when he slid in all the way, not meeting much resistance. Darcy’s legs wrapped around his hips as he moved in and out of her, fingers reaching up to slide through his hair. Brock held one of her thighs to help piston himself with force but his other hand held the back of her neck so he could kiss her sweetly.

About 9 thrusts in and Darcy came, toes curling as she moaned around his tongue. Hot pleasure rocked through her entire body, filling every vein and artery she had. Brock groaned as he quickly followed but didn’t break their leisurely kiss. His thrusts slowed then stopped as they made out like a couple of messy teens. The afterglow of her orgasm still pumped though her and she knew Brock was feeling the same thing. Butterflies floated in her stomach and Darcy stopped their kiss just so she could giggle. From the silly grin on Brock’s face, it appeared he wanted to do the same. He kissed her forehead, reaching to take her hand in his.

Although the frantic urge from before had ebbed, Darcy still wanted to be in Brock’s arms. She wanted to cuddle him, make out a little and maybe fuck at the same time if he were still up for it. All while listening to her “Sunday Morning” playlist. Or even her Netflix queue playing in the background. Seriously, she just wanted to Netflix and Chill right now. Emphasis on the ‘chill’ being both literal and figurative.

As Brock began to place little kisses on each of Darcy’s fingers, that overwhelming, itchiness started to creep up on her again. This time though, she knew what it meant. Brock’s hand on her thigh clenched, his fingers started to dig into her skin. Instead of saying something snarky like she’d usually want to, she just moaned in encouragement. When he started to rock into her body again and the itchiness began to recede, she knew this was going to be a long 3 weeks.

Chapter End Notes

Not sure how many chapters are left of this. I honestly haven't planned very well ahead. It just kind of depends how much smut I want to write. Or how much smut you want to read. Let me know!
Oh, hey beautiful people. I'm back with another chapter. Also, I don't entirely know where I'm going from here so let's take the journey together, shall we?

As always, I feed off your comments and kudos like a joyful, friendly neighborhood fandom dementor.

Rating warning: There's some smut smattered around this chapter. It kind of creeps up on you. So does the emotions.

Title from Ariana Grande's song, Needy.

“So, he plied me with compliments about how cool it was I was working with Jane and how I must have been a genius,” Darcy said, recalling a story from a year ago when she and Jane had gone to a conference in Boulder, Colorado. There, she ran into an old high school classmate, Mike Sansone. “All night, complimenting me and trying to reminisce about high school. Then, the asshole puts his hand on my thigh and asks me if I wanted to go back to his- the moment Jane goes to the bathroom! Just ditch her and fool around with him ‘cause he thought the power of his dick would get him some and a job. As if I ever forgot that he told me I had a gingerbread man body. Ha! Like I’d ever sleep with him after that? I don’t care how well he kept his physique, he never apologized. No way. Just absolutely no way.”

“Did you Taser him?” Brock asked.

“No, I wish. I left it in the hotel room by accident. I threw my drink in his face and told him he could go fuck a gingerbread man if he was really interested in me. And the next day he still had the nerve to email and ask if Jane was hiring- for my position!” Darcy said, burying her face into the pillow as Brock ran a hand down her spine. The drink in the face wasn’t full revenge but it still felt good…but not as good as Brock felt at the moment. Except, he may not have shared that opinion with the huff he let out. Rolling her eyes, she looked over her shoulder where he was holding himself up above her with his arms. Her legs had gotten tired so she lay on her stomach, propped up by a few pillows as he thrust steadily in and out of her. “What’s wrong?”

“Nothing’s wrong,” Brock insisted in a flat tone but a week of being with him 24-7 and she began learning to read the very slight undertones in his speech pattern. Right now, littles bit of dejection could be heard.

“No, something’s wrong. Tell me,” Darcy commanded gently. Reaching back, she grabbed his hip and ordered him to stop. After a frustrated grunt and a low curse, he did. She waited for him to pull out of her slowly and she turned over to see a pout on his lips. Propping her back against the pillows, she wrapped her legs around his hips and pulled him down for a quick but sweet kiss. Brock’s body melted on top of hers and he buried his face in her neck when their lips broke apart.
She continued in a soft voice, running her fingers through his hair. “You’re not jealous of Mike, are you? I wouldn’t have considered sleeping with him, even if he apologized.”

“I just don’t like thinking about you with anyone else. Even hypothetically,” Brock admitted and Darcy’s chest cinched. When the lab techs first went in for new blood samples after they’d been quarantined, a male lab tech had tried to go near Darcy. If Jack and some of his team hadn’t been there, Brock could have easily hurt the tech. They only allowed female techs near Darcy after that.

But she understood why he did it. Sharon Carter had been contacted when they initially couldn’t find Darcy and she traveled up to NYC. When she requested to talk to Brock through the intercom, Darcy had broken out into sobs. That was about a day into being quarantined and as Brock assured Sharon he was fine (alien sex pollen situation aside), he also cradled Darcy through her tears. Despite a quiet, logical voice in the back of her head telling her she was being stupid, she’d not been able to help the swell of jealousy whenever she thought about Sharon. She no longer broke out into tears over her but there was still a residual gut reaction of jealousy.

“I know and I am definitely not one to judge. But also, I’m really glad out of everyone that could have gotten contaminated with me, it was you. And I’m also glad they found me before Sharon rolled into town,” Darcy said, tightening the grip of her thighs and shifting so the head of his cock rubbed against her opening. Not needing any more persuasion, Brock caught Darcy’s lips in a rough kiss and slid back in with more force.

She moaned into his mouth when they both eventually finished. As Brock moved to lay beside her, he gathered her into his arms and placed a kiss on her shoulder. His come dripped out of her and onto the towel she’d put down before they’d started this round. They’d ditched the condoms after the third broke. The med team confirmed they were both clean of STDs and Darcy’s birth control shouldn’t be affected by the contaminate, which was enough for her. She’d also requested a lot of towels because she did not like sleeping in a wet spot.

“I am too,” Brock mumbled, face pressed in between her shoulder blades. Darcy let out a silly laugh at the feel of his scruff against her skin. The nonstop need to fuck had lessened after about 4 hours of them going at it without much reprieve. Understandably, they’d both been exhausted and fell asleep for a long while. After that, she needed Brock about once every few hours. Since Brock absorbed more of the contaminate on him, he needed a few rounds every 2 hours. Honestly, she wasn’t complaining and they’d figured out a rhythm that allowed the team to go in every so often to continue to draw tiny samples of blood to measure any changes of toxin levels.

Unfortunately, it hadn’t been flushed from their systems. Fortunately, after 3 days of testing, the team decided that Darcy and Brock were not going to contaminate anyone else. The toxins weren’t being released through their sweat or other fluids- which meant they could be moved to one of the nice apartments in the tower that Stark kept open for visiting researchers. Complete with full video streaming services, any take-out they wanted, a giant tub with all the Lush bath bombs and multiple surfaces for them to get experimental on. They even switched out the chest pads for watches that read their basic vitals. Non-lab visitors weren’t allowed but they’d been able to make calls. It was like Netflix and Chill under a very nicely decorated bell jar. Though according to FRIDAY, Tony was going to burn all furniture once they were cured and have a crime scene cleaning team go in. Given that both their come was probably everywhere, she told FRIDAY to relay the message that he’d made the right call.

“You wanna take another bath and watch more Brooklyn 99?” Darcy asked and she felt Brock nod his head, face still smooshed against her back. There was a TV in the bathroom, the living room and the bedroom. Although she wanted to foster independence by having her own apartment away from work, she wondered if she could convince Tony to let her have this one. Since Jane brought a
lot stuff from her apartment in Brooklyn, it kind of felt like home to Darcy.

“Yeah, did I tell you that Gina reminds me of my youngest sister?” Brock asked and Darcy smiled. He’d told her that multiple times. At 22, Stefani was the youngest of the Rumlow kids and the surprise baby of the family. She’d heard them bickering on the phone. Brock insisted that Darcy meet Stefani after they got the sex pollen out of their systems.

“I think you may have mentioned it. How is it that all your sisters got super Italian names and you didn’t?” she asked, sitting up despite his protests. She leaned back down to kiss his cheek, which pacified him somewhat.

One thing that had been clear without any science knowledge was that the contaminate made them extra clingy. They did not do well with being separated for more than half an hour at a time, even now. They both went through intense anxiety and their heart rates skyrocketed. So, all her baths had been with him, even if he preferred showers. Something about feeling like he was sitting in a wet, Petri dish of filth. He’d been a good sport about it but her being naked and wet had really softened the blow. But definitely not other things…

“My dad suggested the name and my ma liked it. Thought it was different. Little did she know, my dad got the idea because there was a boxer he liked- Brock Cross. He put down some money on him and ended up winning back a decent amount, so he thought the name was lucky. Ma only found out after the birth certificate had been made up. Both their parents gave ‘em grief and they stuck to more traditional family names after that but ma would occasionally throw in a book character as a middle name,” Brock chuckled. “Also, ma kept a closer eye on my dad to make sure the old man wasn’t visitin’ a bookie.”

“That’s fair about the bookie,” Darcy laughed, using the towel to clean up any residue between her thighs. Brock rubbed a soothing hand on her hip.

“My ma would like your name. I think she regretted not just doing what she wanted. She calls most my sisters by their middle names, anyway. Maria’s is Imogen and Stefani’s is Deirdre. Ma tended to do a lot of reading towards the end of her pregnancies,” Brock said.

“I think your mom would get along with mine. Obviously, I was named after Mr. Darcy from Pride and Prejudice,” Darcy said, recalling fond memories of her mother reading a lot of classic literature at bedtime. Her mother was an English professor and loved literature from around the world. It was a big part of her wanting to study Political Science. She still enjoyed the smell of the pages of a well-read book. “Do you think your mom would like me?”

“Hell yeah, she’s always on about me settling down. Pretty sure she’s lost hope by now. She’ll be over the moon about you,” Brock said with genuine enthusiasm and Darcy’s heart leapt at how excited he sounded at the thought of settling down with her. They’d not really discussed concrete plans of what they would do once the antidote was made but a week in and Darcy couldn’t imagine not being with him. She knew that a week with someone, even constant, 24-7 contact wasn’t enough to build a relationship on but her heart told her otherwise.

Or maybe it was the alien compound in her blood that was telling her that. Every so often, something in the back of her head told her that this might not last. That when they were cured, they’d just go on their separate ways. That thought tore her heart into a thousand pieces but then she wondered if it were true. Would everything they were feeling now be a memory in a few weeks? Studying the fibers of the towel, she stayed silent and bit her bottom lip. Brock ran a hand down her back.

“Hey, now I think something’s wrong with you,” he said gently and Darcy let out a sigh, leaning in
to his touch.

“I just was thinking,” Darcy began tentatively. “We’re talking about meeting each other’s family but we don’t even know what’s gonna happen.”

“They’re going to find an antidote, even if it takes a bit of time. Jack told us they recovered some of the research,” Brock assured her, sitting up and pulling her into his arms.

“No, I don’t mean that. I mean, we’re talking like we’re gonna keep doing…this, whatever it is,” Darcy sighed into his bicep, enjoying his presence and wallowing in the comfort he offered by an innocent skin on skin touch. “I meant that we don’t know how we’re going to feel at the end of it. For all we know, there’s a reverse effect and we end up hating each other. Or, all the emotions we’re feeling just dry up and we’re indifferent or something.”

“Remember how I told you I wanted to ask you out before all of this but was too much of a coward?” Brock asked and Darcy nodded her head. “Well, I’ve been crazy about you for a while. Honestly, I’m more worried about you waking up one of these days and hating my guts for taking advantage of you.”

“Oh my god, you are so not taking advantage of me,” Darcy swore, sitting back on her heels and taking his face in her hands. “And I totally thought you were hot when we first met and have had multiple sex dreams about you since. I think I told myself I didn’t have any feelings and hated you because I couldn’t have you. Which is so immature-”

“It’s not, baby. Look, whatever happens, I’m not going anywhere unless you want me to. If you don’t feel anything after this is over, I’ll let you walk away. I’ll…I’ll get a job somewhere else so you don’t have to see my face ever again,” Brock promised and Darcy’s throat tightened. Tears welled in the corners of her eyes and a bought of nausea washed over her. Even if logically, she appreciated his promise to give her space after all was said and done, she knew that right now, in this moment, she did not want to be separated. Whether she felt all these emotions due to the contaminate or due to legitimate emotions that may have been underneath the surface this whole time, she didn’t care. She just knew that she felt something for Brock- maybe even the beginnings of love.

“I don’t want to think about that,” Darcy said, lip wobbling and the tears now trailing down her cheeks.

“You have me now, so let’s just think about that,” Brock suggested, kissing the pulse on Darcy’s wrist.

“Okay, bath later. I need you, again. Right now,” said Darcy, wrapping her arms around Brock’s neck and latching her lips onto his for a hard kiss. He didn’t miss a beat, pressing her back against the mattress and making frantic, quick love to her until her tears dried.

Chapter End Notes

Gingerbread man scenario taken from a post on tumblr… I swear the link name is dirtier than the post actually is. Totally SFW.

http://artificialink.tumblr.com/post/182846432056/gay-jesus-probably-bustnuttington-
Also, sneak peak for the next chapter. We may be meeting Stefani…and she may be wearing this:
Determined to finish this fic...eventually 😊 I’ve also been taking a needed break from the fandom and have left tumblr completely. I’ve considered leaving the Darcy fandom forever but I want to try and finish most of my ongoing stories if I do end up doing that.

As always, thanks for any comments and kudos ❤️

By the start of week 2 of what Jane had begun calling ‘Darcy’s Love Marathon’, a better understanding of the alien bio-toxin was developing. Several researchers were moved onto the project because of the time sensitivity. That meant that Dr. Patel had been joined by the best botanist, biochemist and neurobiologist that Tony Stark could find, amongst others. Of course, many of the researchers at Stark Tower also offered their time and assistance. Dr. Maria Lopez, the original recipient of the offending flowers, was devastated over the turn of events. She had been a great asset though, since she had been able to help decode the research notes of her ex. At least, what little had been recovered.

Unfortunately, the culprit of this entire situation was still at large. Dr. Karl Norav had fled the country and burned his research. They’d been able to recover some notes from the fire. Original Hydra notes from the first trials also were helpful but Norav had used that as a jumping point for his much more complex strain. At the end of the day, he was the best in the field and he really was the only one that might be able to make this antidote process faster. Thor was on a quest to find the original alien plants and the planet that might have an antidote but he’d not had any luck yet.

Fortunately, Darcy and Brock seemed to be working off the bio-toxin on their own. The new strain Norav created did get worked out of the system if the infected…didn’t fight their urges. From what the research team projected, they would be back to normal in a few months even if no antidote had been synthesized. Obviously, that was the last resort plan and had a few unexpected side effects which was the reason for the meeting that Tony now held. Jane and Maria were representing the research team in addition to Jane being Darcy’s health care proxy.

“I for one would like to see these papers my brother signed. This hot shot over here said I can’t sue because Brock signed some liability agreement? I don’t buy it. I’ll find a loophole,” Stefani Rumlow insisted with confidence, pointing a pointy, manicured nail in Tony’s direction. She sat the conference table, heeled tennis shoes on the expensive teak wood. Even though the tiny woman walked into the room wearing an oversized, grey, faux fur hooded coat with wolf ears, she somehow still commanded the room. Jane had met her a few times throughout the week and had taken a liking to her.

“Now you’ve told me what you plan on doing. I have lawyers who can counter you,” Tony said, head quirking in intrigue as Stefani rolled her eyes. He’d been watching her for the last half hour like she was a mystical unicorn. Still, Tony nodded his head at his lawyer, who slid a document over to her with a sigh. The sigh seemed to be directed more at Tony, Jane decided. It was a sigh she’d often let out when she was with Tony for long periods of time.
“Is she always like this?” Jane asked Jack, under her breath. He seemed more familiar with Stefani.

“Yeah, constantly.” Jack whispered back. “She’s like if Brock were a Gen Z kid, had significantly less trauma and never left the Bronx.”

“I can hear you talking about me, ya drongo,” Stefani shot at Jack, adopting a horrible Australian accent at the end of her accusation. Jack just chuckled.

“I’ve already checked, couldn’t find any grounds to sue him,” Jane offered, because she did check. Unfortunately, chemical attacks were listed as an event all Stark Lab employees were supposed to assume was a normal liability upon employment.

“Well, I’ve watched so many episodes of Judge Judy, The People’s Court and Judge Mathis that I am practically a lawyer,” Stefani said haughtily. “Also, as my brother’s health care proxy, I am currently allowed to make all legal decisions for him.”

“Uh, for the record, I would like to point out that watching TV does not entitle you to practice law in America and you need to pass a bar exam to become an attorney. Also, health care proxy offers a limited power and only regards medical decisions,” attorney Edward Tull said, after clearing this throat. Their entire conversation was being recorded. At his attempt to bring everyone back to reality, Stefani rolled her eyes and scoffed.

“First, you don’t cater this meeting and now my legal authority is being challenged?”

“I know we’re all frustrated but the only person to blame is Dr. Karl Norav,” Sharon Carter said, taking charge like the CIA agent and niece of Peggy Carter she was. When she’d been contacted about Brock’s chemical attack, she’d rushed up from DC. Unfortunately, no one had contacted her with an update that she wasn’t needed as a sex partner. So, she’d insisted on talking to Brock even though they stated it was under control. Darcy had started sobbing and Brock had been testy at Sharon for inadvertently making Darcy cry. Still, she’d stayed and had been able to get her supervisors to put her on the case since Dr. Karl Norav was someone the CIA had been after. Being involved with some bioweapons sales after the fall of Hydra made you a high priority for all ABC agencies. High enough that the CIA conceded to work with the newer Avengers task forces on the case.

“I don’t see why you’re here,” Stefani said with derision. “You broke my brother’s heart when he needed you most. Why were you even called? Hoping to get back on Brock’s good side now you’re single again? Not on my watch.”

“She was listed as his sex buddy in case of a sex-mergency, such as now,” Tony provided with a smirk. Even though Tony disliked Stefani challenging his authority, he seemed to enjoy her chaotic energy and was occasionally feeding it. Jane assumed it was because he liked having a snark buddy in what was already a somewhat tense meeting.

“And yet, here you are, in this room with us, not gettin’ any,” said Stefani, gesturing grandly around the room, not feeling any pity at how flustered Sharon was becoming. While Jane liked Stefani, she did feel a little bad for Sharon, who she also liked. From what Jane could tell (despite Darcy insisting Jane never truly paid attention to human behavior) was that Sharon still had feelings for Brock. She wasn’t sure yet if it was general, ex-boyfriend residual love but not ‘in love’ kind of feelings or complete regret that it all ended and wishing for more. Also, she’d heard the gossip from Thor about Sharon and Steve. It was mostly awkward and he apparently dumped her for Bucky, which Jane didn’t entirely fault Steve for. Hell, she dropped the English guy like a hot potato when Thor came back.
“I’m here because I care about Brock. Despite and in some ways, because of my shared history with him. Our relationship, however, will not get in the way of me making the right decisions for Brock or the CIA. Besides, you’re the health care proxy, not me and you will continue to make the final medical decisions for him,” Sharon said, voice tight but steady and hands clasped on the table. From all of Jane’s interactions with Sharon, the woman always seemed to be a paragon of stoic beauty but Jane thought there was a tiny crack in a façade that was waiting to splinter. As if she were holding herself together rather precariously. Sharon had once mentioned to Jane that she felt she had too much to live up to because of her family legacy. It stopped her from being herself at times. With both parents being award winning researchers and Jane being known as a whack job for a good portion of her career, she understood that sentiment.

“If you cared about Brock, you wouldn’t have ghosted him and hopped on Captain America’s dick the first chance you got,” Stefani sneered, setting her feet on the floor when Sharon flinched.

“You don’t know anything about that so don’t act like you do,” said Sharon, voice wavering slightly but she kept her shoulders straight and head high.

“Uh, I think I know a lot more than you realize. Like the fact it was all a little Woody Allen. Since he’s your aunt’s sloppy seconds. Did auntie give you a blessing or did you even bother mentioning it to her with her dementia? Was it all worth it?” Stefani said, tone calm but out for blood as she leaned forward on her elbows. The only indication that she’d hit a nerve with Sharon was the slight widening of her eyes and the blush coloring her cheeks.

“Hey, 2 people who are very important to us all have been infected by an alien substance and we don’t know how they’re going to recover. But we can at least create a united front to help them through it,” Jack spoke up, causing Stefani to fall back into her chair with a huff. Sharon let out a small sight of relief.

“For the record, Brock did wish for me to be here for situations like this. Jack can vouch for me on that. So, Jack, has your task force been able to recover anything new?” Sharon asked, poised despite her blush and quickly finding her footing once more.

“Norav is a hard man to find. We think he’s hiding out with some underground Hydra factions in Romania. As you know, we recovered some of his notes but anything that could have been used to help synthesize an antidote was torched by him,” Jack said. Even though he hadn’t been cleared for field work, he still insisted on leading the task force for some of the on the ground search. Given his knowledge of Hydra, everyone felt he was the best choice. “I’ve talked to some informants of mine and they still have their feelers out. Either way, I’m thinking if we find Norav, we’ll find a lot of other Hydra followers.”

“The CIA has found similar information,” Sharon confirmed. “Dr. Lopez, anything helpful in the research you were able to decode?”

“A lot of what we could salvage was only observational and most of it probably is theoretical or done with animal trials. I doubt Karl ever did human trials outside of his initial research before Hydra’s fall. But, a lot of what I’ve decoded pertained to what happens as the chemicals stays in the system and the after affects, even if an antidote is given,” Maria said, grimacing slightly and looking at her lap. It was still hard for her to fully grasp what her ex had planned for her.

“The hormones their bodies are releasing mimic when someone falls in love,” Jane provided. “We’ve all seen the anxiety and stress they undergo when they’re separated and believe that will continue. Norav’s goal had been to make Maria fall back in love with him. It’s not just a ‘sex pollen’ as we initially assumed, it was created to be more of a ‘love pollen’. Though, there’s not a clear indication on if the ‘love’ that develops is only with the person closest to you or if there needs
to be an initial attraction. The urge for sex will continue to diminish and then they essentially go into an emotional ‘honeymoon’ phase.”

“And we really don’t think there’s antidote for the emotional components of the side effects,” Maria said softly. Opening a file, she laid out some brain scans of Brock and Darcy. One of the researchers at Stark Towers was developing new technology for a cheaper and more portable MRI scans. “Dr. Minhaj has been doing research of his own on how certain emotions affect the brain over long periods. These scans were taken earlier last week and then yesterday. He said that there’s been a significant increase in activity between the scans in certain regions of the brain. They’re identical to couples who claim to be ‘crazy in love’, particularly early in the relationship. While the concept of falling in love can be subjective, Dr. Minhaj does believe the alien substance is contributing to both change in brain activity and the hormone increases Jane mentioned.”

“So, it’s like, a Love Poison number 9?” Stefani offered. “I know some real douchebags down on the Shore who’d pay a lot for that.”

“Exactly why it’s considered a dangerous and illegal biohazard,” Sharon abruptly insisted. Stefani narrowed her eyes. “Was anything else salvaged from the fire?”

“No, just the notes written in a half-burnt journal,” Jack grimaced. “All the plants he used to synthesize it were torched. Our next hope to speed it up would be to bring in Dr. Norav and hope he talks.”

“You won’t bring Karl into custody easily. In fact, I think he probably has his own version of a cyanide pill,” Maria said with a frown and Jack nodded solemnly. “It’s clear Karl didn’t focus on creating an antidote as he perfected the chemical, so whatever Thor finds will be helpful. But, even if we were unable to successfully synthesize an antidote of our own, from our readings it seems that Darcy and Brock would be able to work it out of her system naturally in another 2 months. About 3 to 4 for Brock, since he absorbed more.”

“My brother gets a sex-cation for 3 months? I guess he kind of deserves it,” Stefani said somewhat distastefully, clearly not enjoying thinking about her brother in a constant sex cycle.

“I’m gonna have to burn that room,” Tony muttered.

“But you’re certain that you can create an antidote in another 2 weeks?” Sharon asked, steering the conversation back to the matter at hand.

“Sooner if Thor gets back with an original antidote of the alien plant,” added Jane. “He’s been updating me on his search and thinks there’s a civilization that’s used the original plant as some kind of aphrodisiac in rituals. He’s pretty certain they would have information to help us or even a plant used to reverse the effects.”

“Great. That brings us to the problem of the long term psychological damage,” Sharon said, turning back to Maria but Stefani spoke up.

“Uh, my brother falling in love with someone decent for once, isn’t psychological damage,” scoffed Stefani.

“That’s obviously not what I meant-”

“If it’s not what you meant then why did you say it like that?” Stefani asked with attitude.

“Brock and Darcy are under the influence of an alien bio-toxin,” said Sharon, challenging the question with attitude of her own though it came off a little condescending. “They’re going to need
initial psych checkups, which is just protocol. Also, this stuff isn’t some cute ‘love potion’, like you put it. The two of them are ‘falling in love’ against their consent.”

“Isn’t that usually how falling in love works?” Stefani challenged and Tony nodded with a thoughtful purse of his lips.

“I mean, from the check ins we’ve done, they seem happy. Honeymoon phase on steroids happy. Why ruin that?” Tony offered before his lawyer advised him to not add anything else.

“Are you suggesting we don’t tell them?” Jack asked. “It might cause some additional strain if we suggest what they’re feeling isn’t real. We’ve seen how the smallest thing upsets them right now. And I’d hate to agree with Stark but they really are loved up. Want to move in together, meet families-”

“Of course, we’re telling them,” Sharon said with a scoff. “This stuff effectively renders your consent null and void. It would be inappropriate otherwise and they need to make their own decisions with all the information.”

“He’s not picking you,” Stefani said in a faux-cough. When Jack glared at her to behave, she stuck her tongue out at him.

“I think I’m with Down Under on this. Ignorance is bliss and this also isn’t covered in the Stark Labs liability disclosures. For some reason, we never considered love being a side effect of a chemical attack,” Tony said wistfully though Ed quietly murmured that they were adding it.

“So, what you’re saying is, I can sue you over that?” asked Stefani, sitting up as Ed let out a strangled noise.

“Hey, I’m just saying, if they’re both happy when all is said and done, why should we ruin it?” Tony shrugged.

“Brock can be happy with a new girlfriend and your money,” said Stefani, looking at Tony as if he had multiple heads. “Ma will be off his back for like, 5 seconds and then we can drown our sorrows in the piles of cash.”

“I think we should tell them but only when they show signs that they can handle it. Maybe during their post psych eval?” Jane suggested. While she had been nodding along when Darcy spoke of all the ‘plans’ she and Brock had for post-alien cocaine life, Jane didn’t want Darcy to be stuck into a relationship she’d never wanted. Even if it all hinged on a chance encounter with an alien substance and she seemed happy at the moment, Darcy deserved to make a decision based on all the information.

“Besides, Brock’s had the hots for Darcy for ages now. He was just about getting the courage to ask her out before this stuff infected them. For all we know, they would have fallen in love without it in the end,” Jack offered.

“Darcy did have an unhealthy obsession with him and Thor always was suggesting we try and set them up together,” Jane had to admit even as she noticed Sharon’s lips thin and her skin pale slightly. It had always been on the back of her mind that Darcy’s insistence she hated Brock was rooted in another emotion. Besides, Thor was quite perceptive about affairs of the heart. “But it’s their right to know everything.”

“I agree with Jane,” Maria said with a nod. “I know I’m not here to make any decisions on their part but it should be up to them to decide if they want to accept the side effects or not. That’s just a
question of morals and it’s clear we expect them to make all other decisions for themselves once it out of their systems.”

Murmurs through the room indicated a general consensus on the matter. Withholding information on what the chemical was doing to the couple would be worse in the long run. Once they discussed different options for when they should actually tell Darcy and Brock, the meeting ended. Jane, Stefani and Jack were going to meet separately with HR to discuss a few other details. Maria and Ed were the first to leave the room but everyone else seemed to linger. Jane watched in interest as Sharon cleared her throat, plastered on a forced smile and walked over to Stefani, who was sitting cross legged in a chair.

“Hey Stefani. It really is nice to see you again,” Sharon said, almost shyly. Stefani frowned and looked Sharon up and down. “Even if you can’t say the same about me. But I really do care about Brock’s wellbeing. I want you to know that.”

“You know, you always rubbed me the wrong way,” Stefani said bluntly and Sharon let out a bitter chuckle, all attempt at pretense vanishing. Clearly, a gauntlet had been thrown down and Jack hurried over in case he needed to grab Stefani.

“I know,” Sharon said flatly but her lips were pursed and her shoulders tense. “You said it every time I came to Sunday dinner. Your mom loved me though, Deirdre.”

“Not anymore,” Stefani shot back, standing up from her chair. “Also, call me that again and I’ll rip your pretty hair out. Real Housewives style. My brother might hold a sad little flame for you but he’s got more self-respect than to run back to you because you snap your fingers.”

“Really? Is that what you think? Brock and I love each other and he told me he wants to move to DC and start over,” Sharon said, eyes widening and face turning bright red a few seconds after the words left her mouth. Clearly, she’d not meant to let all that information slip. Jane was also very intrigued because it didn’t entirely fit with what Jack said; that Brock had pined for Darcy and hadn’t found the courage to ask her out. Now, Jane wondered where Sharon really fell in all of this and how it might affect Darcy. Because at the end of the day, for Jane, Darcy’s well-being was her priority. If Brock had planned to play the two women, Jane wouldn’t let Darcy fall into his trap.

“Yet, you’re still in this room and Brock hasn’t looked for any DC jobs,” said Stefani, not showing indication that the information was shocking or new. In fact, she met Sharon’s gaze with a steely indifference. “You only got back with him after he fixed his face, right? You think he didn’t notice that? You never even visited him in the hospital. Don’t you think it’s weird he never told his family about getting back with you? Especially me. He tells me everything. You can hope he takes you back and forgives you for all the fair-weather shit you put him through but all you’ll ever be to him now is a sad rebound.”

“Alright ladies, you both obviously care about Brock but a cat fight isn’t gonna to help him,” Jack interjected, stepping between Sharon and Stefani. “In fact, I think Stark will be the only one enjoying it and I’m pretty sure we can all agree as a room, we’d like to avoid that as much as possible.”

“Hey!” Tony shouted but everyone ignored his indignation for the tension that was palpable between the two women. After a long, glare filled minute, they both backed down. Sharon left the room swiftly, head held high but Jane thought there may have been a sheen to her eyes. As Stefani moved to follow, Jack grabbed her elbow.

“Was that necessary?” Jack asked with a displeased furrowed brow.
“Yes,” said Stefani, not planning to elaborate until Jack cleared his throat expectantly. “She and Brock were crap together. You can’t tell me you disagree.”

“But it’s not your decision,” Jack said with a sigh, expression softening somewhat. “If Brock wanted to move to DC and start things up with Sharon, then he has every right to do so.”

“Did Brock tell you he wanted to move to DC?” asked Stefani, pulling her arm out of Jack’s grasp with a jerk.

“He mentioned it,” Jack admitted, running a hand through his hair, the stress of the past week suddenly weighing him down. His eyes strayed to Jane, who had been listening intently.

“Hey, if this involves Darcy future, then I’m eavesdropping,” Jane said.

“They’re both employees of Stark Industries. I’m entitled to the conversation,” Tony added.

“Before everyone gets their knickers in a twist, Brock did tell me that he was considering starting things up again with Sharon but she told him last month she wanted more time to think about it,” said Jack, holding up his hands in surrender. “But he also really likes Darcy and was scared to try start something with her. If you want my opinion, he and Sharon are just comfortable with each other. When they don’t think they have anyone else, they want to get back together even if it never works out at the end.”

“My brother is such an idiot,” Stefani muttered, shaking her head and crossing her arms.

“Well, it seems that Sharon is pretty certain Brock was going to pick her in the end. Now that she wants to be with him again,” Tony mentioned, causing Jane to pout.

“I’m not letting Darcy be the default choice for him. She deserves someone who wants her because she’s the first and only choice,” Jane said, crossing her arms and standing up taller.

“Everyone seems to be forgetting that at the end of the day, the decision is Darcy’s and Brock’s,” Jack said, leaning back on his heels.

“Then we should probably stop them from putting a down payment on a house. Brock was asking me to go to his safety deposit box to get grandma’s jewelry for a cleaning,” Stefani said with a coy smile, lifting her left hand and wiggling her fingers with an emphasis on the ring finger.

“You don’t want Brock to get back with Sharon but you’re okay with him getting engaged to someone you haven’t even met?” Jack pointed out with a wry chuckle.

“I’ve stalked her socials and she’s besties with Raul. If Raul can vouch for her, I know she’s cool and probably a great balance to Brock,” Stefani said with a shrug. “Besides, Brock’s been complaining to me about how he hadn’t asked her out and I can totally tell with the way he talked about her that she’s better for him anyway. Completely smitten without the alien crap.”

“While I can confirm that Darcy’s amazing, I’m not letting her get engaged until she has the whole story.” Jane said. “And Brock explains what the hell his plans are with Sharon. Darcy’s wellbeing is my priority.”

At that, Stefani picked up 2 canvas bags she’d originally brought into the meeting. When she’d been asked about them, she simply said they were care packages for Brock and Darcy but now Jane thought there might an engagement ring in one of them. Tony attempted to take a peek in the bags but Stefani held them closer to her body.
While Jane thought that Brock and Darcy were genuinely sickly sweet with each other now that the worst of the sex haze was beginning to lift, Sharon’s involvement now appeared to be a cause for concern. Sharon would get the job done when it came to taking down Norav but what would Brock decide at the end of the day? Would he want to stay with Darcy or would he break her heart if he knew Sharon wanted him back? It wasn’t Jane’s business if Sharon and Brock were good or bad for each other. But it was her business if Brock was good for Darcy. No matter what happened, Jane would be there for Darcy- as a maid of honor or a shoulder to cry on.

Chapter End Notes

I tried to make a balance between Stefani's POV/opinion and Sharon's. I don't mean it to come off as bashing Sharon because I really do like her as a character. I just think her character wasn't written well in the movies and they were so desperate to add a love character for Steve that they didn't respect either Peggy or Sharon.
“Don’t get me wrong, I really did enjoy our sex-a-thon but I’m also relieved we don’t have an all-encompassing need to bone ‘til we’re dead,” Darcy said, turning away from the tomato she was trying to slice with a wooden knife. Looking away from the sizzling skillet to meet her eye, Brock smiled. Darcy returned his gesture, trying not to bounce in place as her chest warmed. He looked real cute with a pink apron on. Probably even cuter if he ditched his shirt and sweatpants. Focusing back at her task at hand, Darcy continued to slice the tomato but frowned when all the seeds and pulp just squelched out.

Once it was clear their sex drives were decreasing but not yet safe to let them back out into society, the Stark antidote team had tried giving them more things to do to help while away time. One could only watch TV so much ‘til it got boring. Even for Darcy. Brock hated standing still for too long, so he would exercise with some of the smaller gym equipment they let him have. Sometimes it backfired and got Darcy in the mood. The man got super glisten-y when he jumped rope. Apparently, she was real into that.

So, the antidote team and outsiders in the know decided to find things they could do that hopefully wouldn’t get them hornier. Stefani had won so far, by getting them silly card and board games. Brock was maddeningly good at Operation but Darcy was a Fluxx master. They both hated Monopoly. The distractions from the antidote team were a lot more boring but admittedly, not worse than a round of Monopoly. It included rather mundane things like making them do their own laundry and providing groceries instead of take-out. Except, the team didn’t trust the two of them with sharp, pointy objects since they still got agitated when a research member of the opposite sex got to close to the other. For Darcy, it wasn’t too bad. She didn’t cry anymore but there was a lot of sniffling amongst her attempts at a stiff upper lip. Brock continued to show some minor aggression, which kind of made sense since he absorbed more alien goo to begin with. First, they’d been given blunt ceramic knives but Brock made a joke about how he could easily murder someone with it. Now they had to use these crappy, serrated wooden knives that were only good at cutting lettuce heads or already cooked meats. It massacred tomatoes into a pulp. And Darcy was pretty sure Brock could still do damage with it but at least he kept his mouth shut so they weren’t reduced to a spork.

“This will probably make me look super inexperienced but I’ve not had this much sex ever,” Darcy said as she decided to try and dice the tomatoes. They’d just have to put tomato goop on their burgers. That’s pretty much was ketchup was, anyway. She looked over her shoulder when Brock didn’t reply and found him frowning. “Like, the amount of sex we’ve had in the first two weeks were more than the total combined in my life. I think you should take that as a compliment. Or maybe with a grain of salt because of this alien sex pollen stuff. Whatever you want.”

“I was starting to worry I was making you sore,” Brock said, a tiny little furrow between his eyebrows showing his legitimate concern despite her playful tone.
“Oh, I was,” Darcy admitted, gut twisting painfully when Brock’s frown deepened. He looked like a kicked puppy. “But I enjoyed it. And that lube Stefani sent us, really helped. I’m just saying, it’s nice to have a break and do regular people stuff. I never knew I’d miss doing things like chatting in the kitchen and making dinner.”

“You like being all domestic with me, huh?” Brock smirked, taking two large steps away from their bison meat burger patties so he could pull Darcy into a tight hug. She made sure to drop the knife onto the cutting board as he engulfed her. Laying her face against his chest, she let out a content sigh. There was nothing better than being in Brock’s arms. It wasn’t even sexual anymore. Just being held by him was perfect. It was officially week 4 of sex-mania but there was a significant decline on sex. Sometimes, they would just cuddle, talk and giggle for hours. Darcy even made a plush pillow and blanket fort on the bed they could snuggle in.

“You’re a good cuddler. I would never have guessed it with all your muscles,” Darcy said, letting out a delighted scream when he lifted her off her feet and spun her around a couple of times.

“I love you,” Brock swore into her hair as he set her back down. At his words, Darcy’s eyes widened and she pulled away so she could search his face. They said that loaded sentence quite a few times to each other but only…in the heat of the moment. Sex ‘I love you’ didn’t always count. Neither one had ever mentioned it again, whether it be to discuss what they meant or reinforce it during down time. For a moment, she thought Brock would take back the words or blunder out a weak excuse but he looked down on her with such sincerity that it took her breath away. Instead, he continued gruffly. “Look, I know we’ve been sayin’ it when we’re, y’know, but I fuckin’ mean it. I love you. I really do. Shit, I love you more than I’ve loved anyone. Ever. That’s a God damned fact.”

“I love you too,” Darcy blurted, interrupting what she knew was going to turn into a curse-fest. Cursing and acting super Bronx was one way Brock emoted. When she replied, both she and Brock shared large, relieved sighs. For a moment, she felt lightheaded. Then, she let out an airy giggle. A sound she’d never made before. It was a love giggle if there ever was one.

“Fuck, I love you,” Brock said again, tugging Darcy into a tighter hug. As he began to rock her back and forth, she could feel a familiar, hard bulge forming in his sweatpants. While Darcy had no need to initiate sex, Brock still did. Again, they didn’t have to fuck themselves into constant oblivion but she sometimes worried about Brock. At this point, he insisted he was at his normal sex drive when in a relationship with the most beautiful woman in the world. He was more affected by the pollen though, even if he tried to act like he wasn’t. Said he didn’t want Darcy to fret over him but she couldn’t help it. Truth be told, she didn’t mind all the sex. She really enjoyed it. The sex was now less ‘distressed carnal’ and more ‘lazy casual’. Totally Darcy’s speed. Also, she found that out of the two of them, she was regulating their boundaries more. The scientists said that was likely because the pollen was leaving her system at a faster rate than Brock’s, so she regained the ability to think more rationally.

“So, totally down for sex but let’s not let dinner burn. I know you were super excited about me trying your bison burger recipe,” Darcy said. Brock’s arms squeezed her for a moment longer before slowly letting go.

“It’s great. Lower fat than regular beef but it still tastes good. Some people think it’s tough but they’re just not cooking it right,” Brock said, as he turned back to the stove and flipped their burgers over. “Trust me. You’ll like it. You liked that steak I made and you said you didn’t trust anything not well done.”

“I hate to admit it but you were right about me not getting a tummy ache. And it did taste good.
You’ve even got me into salads. You’re a wizard. A dick and cuisine wizard,” Darcy said, earning a cheeky wink from Brock. He certainly had opinions on food, even with a restricted diet. But damn could the man cook within those restrictions. He’d perfected a delicious vinaigrette recipe which was perfect on mixed greens. Made air popped popcorn with just a hint of coconut oil and salt that was almost better than butter theatre popcorn. Almost. Either way, her stomach wanted to marry him.

“Hey, that’s all a woman wants, right? A man who can cook and make her come,” Brock teased. Darcy let out a snorty laugh. Definitely not what her parents told her to look out for when dating men.

“Well, you’ve definitely checked off those boxes the past few weeks,” Darcy said, earning a proud smile from Brock. He even stood a little taller with a smug expression. She used the dull knife to gesture towards his lower regions and bit her lip in eagerness. “You want me to help you out there as an appetizer or dessert?”

“You can have me any way you like, baby,” Brock grinned like Zeus eyeing a nymph. While she didn’t have the need burning inside her quite like he currently did, she was still more than willing to oblige him. It was kind of like they were echo chambers for each other. If she knew he was in the mood, she got a little turned on and vice versa.

“Finish the burgers, then pull down your pants and sit down,” Darcy commanded. A tiny shiver ran down Brock’s spine and she could feel a mirroring one rush down her back. She’d never been demanding in bed before this month. Things had always been unfortunately quick with her past boyfriends and overall, disappointing for her. She’d certainly learned to take care of herself because she’d not been able to trust the man to do it. Possibly, the pollen made her more aggressive when it came to sex and getting off. Maybe she just felt more at ease with telling Brock what she wanted or if it wasn’t enough. They were forced to get comfortable with each other real fast and Brock was refreshingly blunt. Even in the haze of it all, Brock listened and wanted to make her feel good. He took it as a legitimate priority. In turn, it made her want to make him feel good too.

As Brock turned back to the burgers, Darcy made their salads and pulled out all the condiments. While she was eating her bison on a bun, he was just going for veggies and meat. Once he plated the burgers and turned off the stove top, he tugged one of the kitchen table chairs away from the tiled floors. To her warm delight, he placed the chair onto a shag run in the living room in an attempt to save her knees. Even when he was horny, he worried about her comfort. As Darcy smiled, he dutifully pulled down his pants and sat down, tossing the pink apron behind him. His knees splayed slightly, giving her a better view of the large, swollen cock sticking up between his legs. She took the time to wash her hands (because it was rude to get tomato seeds on another person’s privates) before trailing after Brock. His throat bobbed as she approached. Dark eyes eagerly followed her as she made herself comfortable between his legs, and rubbed the top of his thighs with her palms. A pained hiss left him when she ran a light touch down his length. She reversed direction, swirled her thumb over the tip a few times, spreading his pre-come. Then, she leaned down and licked from the base to the top.

“Fuck,” Brock whispered, closing his eyes and leaning his head back. He did his best to stay still, even when she slipped his tip into her mouth and sucked hard. A loud, pleading moan erupted from him. Darcy focused on licking and taking what she could of his cock in her mouth. She enjoyed the salty taste on her tongue and his musky scent as she inhaled through her nose. Brock did his best to only thrust in shallow, unhurried movements. One white knuckled hand gripped the edge of the chair and the other played with the hair on the back of her neck. By listening to his breath and the number of curses he let out, Darcy had learned to gauge how close to the edge he teetered. She used a hand to grip the rest of his length, alternating between slow and fast. When his breath
hitched in a telltale sign, she eased back and licked him languidly. Then sped up until he cursed. She did this artful sequence a few times, pulling him towards the edge before making him step back. Until she’d had enough and could feel herself pooling between her legs.

When she let go of him, he let out a feeble protest, then a whine at the cool air. Darcy stood up with a wink. She leaned forward to kiss him on the mouth, pulling back when it grew hungry. His eyes were almost entirely black as he watched her slip off her underwear. During the first week once they’d been unable to put on clothes without tearing it off, she’d requested stretchy skirts and dresses. Normally, she was a leggings girl but it was just easier to take off her underwear and lift a skirt hem. Kicking away her undies, she settled onto Brock’s lap with his help. His hands gripped her hips as she tried to find purchase on the chair. Since it was made for only one regular sized person, it didn’t work. The balls of her feet touched the rug but she still had difficulty getting leverage. Noting her trouble, Brock’s fingers dug into her skin as he lifted her up and down his length without resistance. Darcy let out a happy moan through her frustration. She rocked in his lap and her hands sliding under his shirt to feel his abs and pecks. They continued for about a half a minute until Brock also gave up. He tapped her thigh twice, indicating she should get up.

“These chairs suck,” Brock mumbled.

“Not as much as I do,” Darcy countered playfully, laughing when he gave her ass a swat. She led him over to the sofa chair, where he took off his shirt before sitting down. Following his cue, she wiggled out of her dress and took off her bra. Gripping his shoulders, she balanced her knees on either side of his thighs. His hair was already disheveled. Large, calloused hands ran up and down her hips and waist. She slid her opening along his tip. A warm tongue engulfed one of her nipples as his hand palmed the other. Arching her back, Darcy let him know just how much she enjoyed his attention with a series of loud moans. Brock spent his sweet time lavishing her breasts with nips and licks. Eventually, he worked his way up her neck and to her lips. As they shared a wet kiss, she finally slid down his length. He grunted against her mouth and grabbed her ass, ensuring each thrust was rough and deep. They kept a steady pace, Brock coming suddenly, burying his face in her chest. She kept pumping through it, finding her own pleasure when he started to play with her clit.

Once they were both spent, Darcy kissed his cheek and slid off him. He watched her with a pleased look on his face as she walked into the bedroom to clean up. When she walked back out to find her discarded clothes, she found Brock only bothered to put on his sweatpants. Sometimes she wondered if there was any point in keeping clothes on in general but she liked having some sort of structure. To Brock’s vocal dismay, she decided to wear all her clothes.

When they settled down to eat dinner, Darcy was slathering ketchup and mustard on her fancy brioche buns. She’d told Brock she would be happy with the cheap kind but he’d insisted. Since Stark was footing the bill, he’d taken full advantage of grocery deliveries and buying the most expensive items. One time, he even ordered caviar. She didn’t hate it but also didn’t see what the fuss was all about. Their exploration of the world’s best chocolate though…that had been a fun night.

“What do you think about the antidote they’re gonna have for us this week?” Brock asked when they were about halfway through dinner. Most of it had been in comfortable silence.

“I mean, it’s good, right? If it works?” Darcy poked at a piece of lettuce and shrugged.

There had been a few unplanned setbacks with the antidote, in that it killed some lab mice. But a week ago, Thor had finally returned from his space mission, proudly toting a neon blue aloe vera plant. Jane had texted pictures of him looking quite proud with the potted plant in his arms. She
told them it was the original alien plant, straight from its home planet.

Guaranteeing the planet inhabitants that it was safe with Thor, had taken longer than he’d liked, hence his late arrival. He also had to promise that he’d return the plant after an antidote had been made. But the aliens were right about being wary over the plant’s whereabouts, especially after they heard it had been weaponized. The innocent looking thing was used by the peace-loving society as something to help strengthen bonds and help young lovers find their life long mates. It supposedly had calming effects in its original state. Jane didn’t get into all the details but it wasn’t used primarily as an aphrodisiac. That just so happened to be a major side effect on humans. Still, with the original plant, the science crew had reworked their antidote and had some promising results. No dead lab mice so far.

“Did you still want to move in together, after this is all done?” Brock asked, lips pursed as he pushed what little was left of his dinner around his plate. His voice was tentative. Then he frowned, as if he wanted to take the question back as soon as he’d said it.

“Yeah,” Darcy said quickly. Brock’s shoulders eased. They’d been talking about it, on and off. Their life after quarantine. At first, Darcy was completely gung-ho about moving in with him. Now that the pollen had begun to wane in her, real life issues started to seep into her brain and cause doubt. Like the fact she was only on month 6 of a 12 month lease. Legit, she loved the idea of living with Brock but she wondered if they were moving too fast. The idea of having to find a sublet or potentially paying 2 different rents was not fun. The thought that she would be out a home if things didn’t work out between them post-pollen life, much less fun. Then again, she could be completely wrong and they’d live happily ever after.

“I told you, if we can’t find a sublet at first, I’ll pay for the apartment,” Brock assured her, already knowing the stupid day-to-day concerns running through her brain. It earned him a tiny smile.

“I don’t want you to, though. It’s not fair to you,” Darcy said weakly. “Besides, we haven’t even agreed where we want to move into. You said your place is too small for the both of us and you’d rather die than live in Bushwick at my apartment. Which is also probably too small for the both of us.”

“Maybe we can convince Stark to let us move in here. He’s gonna burn all the furniture, might as well sell it to us instead. I bet he’d do it at a discount, too. C’mon, I know you like this place,” Brock said, making it all seem so easy.

“Well…the bathroom is nice,” Darcy admitted. There was a huge tub, large shower stall and even a vanity. “And it has such a nice view. But it’s supposed to be saved for important guests. You really think he’d let us have it?”

“I think at this point, he’d do most anything to not have us sue him,” Brock said.

Darcy chewed on her lip. She did want to do it. Say hell to it all and move in with him. She didn’t care if it was in this huge, luxury condo or in his too tiny apartment in the Bronx. All she wanted was to be with him. “Is it crazy I’m really considering it?”

“If that makes you crazy, I’m insane for suggesting it.”

“What about SHIELD? Or the CIA or whatever agency wants you?” Darcy asked. She knew prior to the pollen, he’d been very much putting all his eggs in the ABC organization basket. “I thought you were waiting for the clear all so you could join again? SHIELD doesn’t have a base in New York City, you’d have to move somewhere else.”
“I don’t care about SHIELD, anymore. I was focused on it because I didn’t have anything else in my life. Nothing else to look forward to than shooting some assholes on government dime. But all that’s changed now. I have you. Look, all I know is that I don’t want to live without you. I wanna wake up next to you in the morning and kiss you every night when I get back from work. I thought I’d hate a job like the one I got now but it’s actually not that bad. I’d rather work a relatively safe job if it means I know I’m coming back to you. And I actually like being close to my mom and sisters. They drive me crazy sometimes but I’d rather they drive me crazy than me regret not spending more time with them. Besides, I’m getting real old. I doubt I’d pass my base level testing. They’d want to keep me at a desk, if they even let me join.”

“You’re more fit than most people half your age. But…,” Darcy trailed off, taken back by the earnest look on Brock’s face. She shook her head, wondering if she’d regret saying yes. She’d been so happy the past few weeks, outside of her stress about the pollen. And she couldn’t imagine having to sleep without him. “I don’t want you to give up your dream because of me. You’ve been obsessed with working in the field again.”

“You’re my dream now. Officially starting our life together is my dream. I don’t want anything else but you,” Brock swore and Darcy felt herself melt into the chair a little. It was such a Harlequin Hero thing to declare and she’d read many a book to fill up her romance cup. Her past boyfriends certainly hadn’t. She’d long accepted men who had pretty muscles and nice jaw lines did not sincerely declare their undying devotion to girls like her. That was a fantasy she could read at night before bed. Yet, here it was, happening. She didn’t want to believe it would last but she so desperately wanted to hold on for as long as she could.

“Okay, let’s do it,” Darcy said, the words coming out in a jumbled rush. She covered her mouth for a second when she realized the weight of what she was agreeing to but the sheer happiness on Brocks’ face made her feel like she was flying. “But the moment you want to join SHIELD or whatever, you have to tell me so we can work something out.”

“I love you,” Brock said and Darcy felt herself tear up. It was silly, she tried to tell herself. Yet, hearing those words and just feeling the sincerity behind it made her realize she’d never been with anyone who meant it. Not like he did. Not by a long shot.

“If you keep saying that, I’m gonna cry,” Darcy said with a sniffle, placing her face in her hands. “Hey, none of that,” Brock said gently. She heard his chair scrape on the floor and a few seconds later, he was engulfing her in a hug.

“Gosh, I’m such a mess,” Darcy moaned pitifully. “But I love you, too. And I promise these are tears of joy. I don’t know if that makes it more embarrassing?”

“There’s nothing to be embarrassed about,” Brock said with a chuckle, rocking Darcy in his arms and kissing the top of her head. “Fuck, you make me so happy. I’ve never been this happy before.”

“I just hope we don’t change our minds or you realize this was all a huge mistake and regret it,” mumbled Darcy, heart sinking at the thought he’d wake up one morning and take back everything. Her grip dug into his skin, as if she could keep this feeling going forever by not letting it slip through her fingers.

“Never,” Brock said with fervor, pulling back so he could look Darcy in the eyes, show his sincerity. “The only thing I regret is not asking you out before this mess. Not that I don’t mind the paid time off and making a love nest with you.”

“We’ve had enough sex so far, to last 5 years,” Darcy said with a pained laugh. Brock placed a
chaste kiss on her pout.

“I want to say the boys you dated before, obviously don’t know shit about sex but I also hate them and I’m glad they didn’t touch you as much as they should. I want to beat the crap outta them when I think about them touching you. You deserve better.”

“You’re the only one allowed to touch me, now,” Darcy said, then bit her bottom lip and looked up at Brock coyly. She could feel a second wind blowing and wanted to take his pants off. It was best that they finished dinner first. Try and be normal with a legit schedule. The scientists said it might help regulate their bodies if they could bear to wait a little between sex sessions.

“Let’s finish dinner, then I’ll fuck you into the mattress while a political documentary plays in the background,” Brock suggested, taking a step back but keeping his hands on her shoulders.

“You’re literally my dream man. I mean, maybe add a cowboy hat or knight’s armor and pose like you’re Fabio,” Darcy teased but a wicked gleam shone in his eyes as the suggestion.

“Hey, Tony said we can charge him for things we need,” Brock leaned in to whisper in her ear. “I’ll wear the chain mail, if you’re the sexy bar maid.”

“Oh, you’re serious,” Darcy realized, her entire face heating up at the possibilities running through her head. The wicked smirk Brock gave her showed he thought the sky was the limit. Why had she not considered role play? “Well, you could be the farmhand and I could be the innocent maid who needs some help bringing things to market. Or you could be the agent and I’m the hostage you’re saving?”

“Fuck,” Brock grunted, clearly open to both ideas, though she wasn’t sure exactly which one was making him tent up the most. Then again, he’d been passionate about how he firmly believed Die Hard should count as a Christmas movie, so she leaned towards the latter fantasy being his preference. Maybe she should curl her hair all 80s style, pretend Stark Tower was Nakatomi Plaza and see how much that tempts him.

“Let’s finish dinner later,” Darcy tempted, running her hands over Brock’s chest. His eyes glazed at the touch and she continued in a dramatic, breathy voice. “Oh, Commander Rumlow, thank you for saving me from Hans Gruber…however will I repay you?”

“Let me take you to the limo and we can figure it out,” Brock rumbled in a thick voice that made her entire body tingle. She let out a delighted scream when he lifted her over his shoulder and ran towards the bedroom. They weren’t able to finish dinner for a couple more hours. So much for trying to contain themselves.

The next day, all the mice injected with the promising antidote, fell into comas. The antidote had to be examined once more by all the frustrated scientists. Darcy knew she should be disappointed and concerned. Instead, she was excited at the costumes they ordered with expedited shipping. And that she didn’t have to find out if it was entirely the alien substance that was making Brock say the sweet things he did. It was with minor guilt that she put on a cheap princess dress and let an enthusiastic, dark-caped knight tear it off her.

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