Summary

The Asset’s mission of becoming Tony Stark’s person would be much easier to complete if Steve Rogers would stop trying to sabotage it

or

the asset tries to practice communicating with the local perceived expert

Notes

Please enjoy and let me know what you think! Sorry it’s a day late! Not beta-read so any mistakes are my own.

The Asset decided to be Tony Stark’s person because he repaired it.

That was important. Whenever it had a malfunction, Steve Rogers brought it to the technician — to Tony Stark — just like all the Handlers from Hydra, though he wasn’t because if he was, he would understand proper care protocols for the Asset. Steve Rogers would put a hand on it’s shoulder to guide it from wherever they were when the malfunction report was given.
The Asset did not need to be touched by Steve Rogers, it did not need to be led. It would not run away; there was no escape from Steve Rogers and it knew better than to try. Steve Rogers was significantly stronger than all it’s past handlers and it frightened the Asset. It laid awake listening to Steve Rogers breathing through the walls, mulling over the the prying tones he used to try and gain the Asset's trust.

Steve Rogers was the worst kind of Handler for doing that. He knew he had full control of the Soldier but wanted to manipulate it further because he was cruel. He said things that made no sense, to confuse it and deceive it. The Asset was used to it and knew eventually it would fall for one of the tricks and then be paraded around as stupid to the others in the Tower. To Tony Stark.

Steve stayed while the technician worked on it’s arm because like Hydra, it seemed to be protocol. The first few times it was at the Soldier's side, touching it even though it made the Soldier want to rake the flesh and skin from it’s body wherever Steve touched it. The Asset didn't because whenever it injured itself Steve Rogers would get angry. It made sense — Weapons were not meant to hurt themselves, only to hurt others. The Soldier did not want to hurt others but eventually Steve Rogers would order it to. The Asset knew it would because Steve Rogers said it wouldn’t and Steve Rogers was a liar.

Even during the Asset’s maintenance Steve Rogers kept up his cruel games, letting fluid leak from his eyes as if Steve was hurt and not the Asset.

Once Steve Rogers seemed to notice the confusion on the Soldier’s face which was all wrong because it was not supposed to feel. But, since Steve Rogers gave it permission to be a person, it seemed to be allowed.

"I don't like seeing you in pain, Bucky." Steve Rogers croaked and that name made the Soldier head throb terribly. A trigger word meant to incapacitate the Soldier, it gathered.

When it was a person, it would not answer. It would not acknowledge Steve Rogers at all. It would not acknowledge the name Bucky.

It would be Tony Stark’s person.

Tony Stark, owned the Tower they were housed in. He was a strikingly small man with a relatively slim build but an ego that belonged in a man twice his size. It made the Asset think of flying cars and he didn't know why. Tony Stark did not strap him down. He did not operate and tell the Soldier to keep still and shut the fuck up.

He hummed and he talked to the-man-in-the-wall voice called Jarvis. Tony Stark was assisted by curious little machines, machines that the Asset would one day replace. Tony Stark rolled his eyes and told him how stupid they were. "Where did they come from?" Tony was repairing a plate that kept catching. He had estimated it would take a few hours top and assured Steve Rogers they had it. Steve Rogers had patted the Soldier's flesh arm and said he was just a shout away if they needed anything (read: if you misbehave I will deliver correction). The Asset wanted to grovel in thanks to Tony Stark but did not interrupt his work. The question just rolled off it’s tongue when one of the robots brought him a tool. They were clever enough to know what Tony Stark needed without asking questions. It was daunting for the Asset but would learn. It always learned. "Hmm?" Tony looked at him with knitted brows behind his protective goggles. "I didn't catch that."

He paused his work and the Soldier looked stressfully toward the door. It didn't want Steve Rogers to think Tony Stark was finished and take it away. The tool had ceased burning and sparking and Steve Rogers was never far away. He would hear. The Asset wasn’t certain if it was allowed to ask
questions unrelated it’s direct care. It was potentially negligent to even speak in the first place, ruining its chances of becoming Tony Stark’s person because the robots did not speak. Perhaps it shouldn’t speak either?

"Sargent Barnes was inquiring on the origins of Dum-E and U," the-man-in-the-walls offered and Tony Stark’s look of surprise did not lessen.

"I made them," Tony Stark said with a small shrug. "That's kinda what I do."

"You're a technician." The Soldier was confused. The technicians maintained. Did they also create? That was foolish — Tony Stark was a genius, he could do anything.

Tony Stark smiled a bit. "I'm a lot of things," he replied in a good natured tone. "I think this the most you've said to me since you've been here."

The Soldier glanced toward the door again. It did not want Steve Rogers to come back now. "Is that allowed?" it asked hesitantly.

"Of course it's allowed." Tony Stark restarted his work and the pain buzzed throughout his arm. Good, it gave the Soldier something to focus on. "If you ever want to chat with me just ask Jarvis. He'll hear you. Or Steve if you'd rather. If I’m around, you’re always welcome."

"Jarvis," the Soldier said even though he really shouldn't have preference.

Tony Stark made a strange face. "Trouble in paradise?" He asked. The Soldier cocked it’s head — it did not understand the question. "Never mind. Yeah, just ask Jarvis and I'll be there."

I'll be there. Tony Stark would care for the Soldier and assure it remained in good working order. Tony Stark was good at his job even though he did a lot of a things.

The Soldier felt safe in his lab. He wished Steve Rogers wouldn't return for it but once Tony Stark was finished, he did. He put that hand on it’s shoulder and called it Bucky and took it away from Tony.

It wasn’t Bucky. It was Winter.

Winter looked over it’s shoulder in Tony Stark’s direction and caught his warm brown eyes. Tony Stark was watching it leave and one day, perhaps it would stay. He held up the tool in a wave and a gave a stern sort of smile.

The Soldier felt it’s mouth twitch, it wanted to smile like a person, but Steve Rogers’ hand tightened as they got closer to the door. The Soldier looked away. Good things did not happen to Weapons but Tony Stark was good and hopefully he would remain in charge of his care.

If the mission was successful, the Soldier wouldn’t have to answer to Steve Rogers. It wouldn’t have to leave Tony Stark. It would become his person, it would become a person.

The next portion of the mission required significant in-field observation and testing.

Observing was difficult with the man-in-the-walls who alerted those of it’s presence. To be a person was to understand socializing and to be Tony Stark’s person, to be Winter, the Asset would need to learn. The first task was finding a vantage point and targets. That part should not have been so difficult, an entire team lived within the Tower and engaged in the intricate act of communication constantly.
The Asset would follow the sound of voices it once shied from. Codename: Hawkeye was the best at this but the Asset suspected this was partially to do with the dog he had. The elevator alerted his presence on Hawkeye's floor and it could not be a part of the observation. It had to find another way to see without being seen.

It attempted to obscure itself from sight but the man-in-the-walls saw and Steve Rogers opened the cupboard door with a strange smile and watery eyes. "What are you hiding from Buck?" Steve Rogers' skin and hair was still wet from the shower having not dried properly. It's old Commander was never in disarray.

"Classified." It was frustrated. That emotion was learned from Tony Stark for when his inventions did not work; the Asset thought it applied to observation failures as well.

"Oh." Steve Rogers looked like Lucky did when Hawkeye denied it a treat. Steve Rogers was frustrating. "C'mon out and I'll get your shake."

The Asset wanted to refuse — it had a whole new plan to construct. Tony Stark was away for another twelve hours and seventeen out of the original twenty hours and twenty four minutes of his departure. Each second lost weighted on it's broken mind — mending, Sam Wilson says. It could not refuse because it was not a question but one of those kindly worded orders only Steve Rogers gave. The Asset stood and waited to be told where to wait for his morning meal.

"Clint will be down soon, do you want to eat with him?"

Steve Rogers ate before he left the Tower five mornings a week to run with Sam Wilson. Then he gave the Asset it's shake and a glass of water and ate toast while speaking to it in a soft voice. It was all useless information, nothing mission related. The Asset wished it didn't have to listen. Steve Rogers voice was...familiar it's broken brain wanted to say but that was wrong. Nothing was familiar about this place, about this Handler.

Tony Stark's absence made it difficult to resist the temptation of its own goddamn malfunctions.

It was frustrating because Steve Rogers plan was working while the Asset delayed becoming a person. It wasn't safe from Captain America anywhere. Not even in its quarters, gifted by Tony Stark. The Asset's feeble mind was tainted with thoughts about the real blue eyed man, who was small and weak and gentle and Handler Steve Rogers, who was large and strong and pretending to be gentle.

Sometimes it's dreams were pleasant, like they were when it was in cryo. Loops of memories that the Chair wiped away during normal functioning. A boney body crushed against his chest, wispy blonde hair that smelled so good and like nothing the Asset could place. "Bucky," he'd always say in a voice that was thick with emotion — human emotion, like the Asset was a person, but maybe back then it had been — and something unusually husky with an accent that hurt to think about. "I love ya Bucky."

"You're my best fella," not-the-Asset would always say. It, Bucky in the dreams, knew how to hold the small man, caged in two flesh arms. The Asset knew how to press its mouth against the soft skin of the man's throat. No teeth, no vicious tearing of flesh. "I love you more than you'll ever know, punk."

The Asset always opened it eyes, malfunctioning with fluid running from its eyes and a voice in its head saying 'Steve, Steve, Steve' over and over again. It would lay there, listen to Handler Steve Rogers thrash through the walls in his own dreams. It would understand its imperfection, it's weakness and know it needed a wipe. It always told itself it would ask for one in the morning — if it
woke it's Handler who knows what thoughts may come to mind. It had been many years, the Asset thought but could not trust its mind enough to be certain, since hands roamed its body, touched it in clinical areas that were always dealt with in not-exactly-clinical ways. If Steve Rogers willed it, and he would eventually because he knew about small Steve and that meant he knew about all things he and not-the-Asset-Bucky used to do.

Other times it's dreams were unpleasant. It thought about the Weapon, about the flesh arm that was once there, about pain and about the Handlers who had —

"Bucky," Steve Rogers was looking at it, looking through it because he already knew what in the Asset's head. "You okay?"

Steve Rogers asked because he knew it wasn't and he wanted to break down the Asset. Because then he could say that it wasn't person and that he'd given it a chance but the Asset had failed.

'Another failure', he could hear Steve Rogers saying in a voice that was probably accurate without all the strange sweetness copied from small Steve, 'you failed your mission'.

It had never failed any missions before Steve Rogers.

It could not harm a handler but once Tony Stark claimed it as his own, it wouldn't see Steve Rogers anymore. That would be it's own reward. Then it felt cold because Steve Rogers surely knew now what it intended to do and would punish it. "Fully functional." What else could the Asset say?

"Okay. Go sit down. I'll be out in a second."

Steve Rogers twisted his lips once more, a parody of a smile: mocking the idea of wellbeing. Fake, fake, fake. Tony Stark did not shy from unpleasant things. He did not smile when he did not want to which made the smiles he gave the Asset all the more precious. It thought of Tony Stark's smile and let it melt the ice building up in it's chest cavity.

It went because Steve Rogers ordered it to. Maybe he knew how to be Handler and saw that Asset was achieving the impossible goal and had to stop it.

It never failed. Not until Steve Rogers.

It sat in a chair because Steve Rogers got upset when it sat on the floor. It's hand tightened over the arm rests, waiting for the wipe to begin as it's broken mind buzzed with white noise.

It was a malfunction, a mistake — Steve Rogers wouldn't allow any wipes.

"Good morning!"

The Asset inclined it's head in recognition of codename: Hawkeye. It had seen Tony Stark do it before and the other person had returned the gesture. Hawkeye was the codename but his comrades called him 'Clint'...including Steve Rogers.

Tony Stark called him 'Barton' and it was to become Tony Stark's person so learning proper vocabulary and names were important. "Barton."

Hawkeye — no, Barton — looked a bit startled and it wondered if it had been permitted to speak to Barton after all. Steve Rogers had said you can make your own choices, Bucky but that did not come with a clear rule set. A wet nose pressed against it's metal hand and the Asset tensed before recalling this dog was useless, not like dogs Hydra kept that stripped flesh away with sharp teeth. The lab had one eye that was warm, not as warm as Tony Stark's, and did not seem particularly starving.
It had seen Barton touch the dog's fur on many occasions and it made the dog's tail move rapidly. It would have to research more about canines before it attempted such things. It had killed many dogs during missions but it had not reason, no want to kill this one.

Barton sat down across from it, quiver and bow not equipped. Did he not have a mission? "So how have you been, man?"

The Asset was not a man, not yet. Barton is either mocking him or not very intelligent. Or perhaps not speaking to it. The Asset didn’t believe anyone else to be in the room, Steve Rogers was running a blender and would appear soon. "Fully functional."

It's not a reply that Barton was looking for, head cocking. It tries again, trying to imitate Tony Stark. "Oh just fantastic Barton."

It sounded exasperated and annoyed which was exactly how Tony Stark sounded whenever someone asked him how he was when their face was floating in a blue hologram. Usually it was a woman and usually she used a tone similar. Sometimes however she seemed wounded and would apologize for asking. Which, to the Asset's alarm, so did Barton.

"Sorry, I didn't mean to... Obviously you're probably not doing too great right now." Barton rubbed the back of his neck.

"No I'm sorry," it said because that's what Tony Stark said once. "I love you and you know that. Just stressed Miss Potts."

Miss Potts it realizes belatedly is not a term at all related to Barton and it cannot love anything because it is not yet a person. It had a made a mistake, a miscalculation. It needed to abort, to crawl to Steve Rogers on it's hands and knees and recognize it is not a person and does have the capacity to learn.

Barton just stared at it.

Mission status: unknown.

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