Call It What You Want To

by Kangofu_CB

Summary

The guy was all bedroom eyes and artfully-mussed hair, and his expression was caught somewhere between hopeful nerves and annoyance, only one of which Clint was used to having directed at him. He’d come dressed to impress in chinos and a navy cowl-neck cardigan, whereas Clint very definitely had not.

More importantly, Clint had no idea who the guy was.

“Yeah?” he croaked, intelligently.

The other man blinked.

“I’m here about the apartment?” Bedroom Eyes was all confused hesitation.
“Camille said she talked to you,” Bedroom Eyes continued, “and told me to stop by today. You are Clint, right?”


The sincere but inept accidental sugar daddy Clint AU that one person actually did ask for.

Notes

HAPPIEST OF ALL BIRTHDAYS TO CLARAXBARTON

This fic was specifically requested by and written for her, and I have done my best to deliver on all fronts.

**Specific and important information:** This is a "sugar daddy" story - which inherently means there's an age difference and power dynamic at play here. I know those sometimes make people uncomfortable. In this universe, Bucky is 27 to Clint's 41. So it's a fairly significant difference. If that's not for you, proceed at your own risk. It doesn't come up much, tbh, but it exists. There is also a power dynamic that, again, isn't super prevalent, but does exist. Clint is older, has money, buys things, owns the building Bucky lives in, and is an Avenger to Bucky's millennial, broke grad student, hates the Avengers with a burning passion self. Everything here is consensual, and I reiterate that the dynamics are understated, but please don't blast my inbox about it if you don't like it - just hit the little X in the corner, thanks.

See the end of the work for more notes.
Chapter 1

Clint woke up to a pounding that he thought was only in his head, until it resolved into pounding that was muffled but clearly audible, even to his damaged ears. After a few moments of lying, defeated, in his bed and wishing for the pounding to go away, he reluctantly reached for his hearing aids and the closest pair of bedraggled sweatpants he could reach. He rolled to his feet with a groan, pulled the pants up, and shuffled to the door.

The door which was still banging with a less-muffled and more reverberating thump with every step closer.

“I’m comin’,” he yelled from the top of the stairs and, mercifully, the banging stopped. “Jesus Christ,” he muttered.

Clint had no idea who was at his door.

Actually, he had no idea who could be at his door, or why, but it was almost guaranteed to be bad news.

Probably it was one of his tenants. Possibly it was a Russian enforcer, back to hassle him. Though that hadn’t happened in some time now, ever since Natasha had dropped in on one of his ongoing skirmishes with the local Bratva and said a few things that Clint’s miserable Russian didn’t quite catch, and they hadn’t been back since.

Clint hadn’t meant to acquire an entire apartment building. Clint had meant to convince the local mobsters that the building shouldn’t be sold, and its inhabitants left alone and unmolested. Instead, Clint had crashed a high-stakes poker game, bought a building, stolen a dog, and gotten yet another concussion.

So. Clint Barton, Hawkeye, ex-con, ex-carnie, former S.H.I.E.L.D agent, current Avenger, and, now, landlord.

Irony. Karma. Whatever it was, Clint was its victim, and Natasha had never and would never stop laughing about it.

Hopefully, whoever was at the door didn’t need anything important.
He flung the door open, rubbing sleep out of his eyes and yawning hugely, to who was, possibly, the world’s most beautiful man.

The guy was all bedroom eyes and artfully-mussed hair, and his expression was caught somewhere between hopeful nerves and annoyance, only one of which Clint was used to having directed at him. He’d come dressed to impress in chinos and a navy cowl-neck cardigan, whereas Clint very definitely had not.

More importantly, Clint had no idea who the guy was.

“Yeah?” he croaked, intelligently.

The other man blinked.

“I’m here about the apartment?” Bedroom Eyes was all confused hesitation.

Clint was also confused.

He did have an empty apartment in the building - Cindy had gotten married and moved out, and the unit had been empty for about three months - but Clint hadn’t listed it or even really told anyone it was available. He’d barely had it cleaned before he’d gone on a mission and immediately forgotten all about it.

“Camille said she talked to you,” Bedroom Eyes continued, “and told me to stop by today. You are Clint, right?”


Clint stepped back from the door and turned to go into the kitchen where his phone was lying conveniently next to his coffee pot. He flicked the machine on and picked up the device, peering at the cracked screen. He didn’t know anyone named Camille, but he did know a certain redhead who was fond of secret identities, and sure enough, there was a message from Natasha.
I'm sending you a new tenant. His name is James Barnes. He'll be there at 11. Try not to be a disaster.

Well that was too little, too late. Clint glanced down at his bandaged-wrapped torso and bruised knuckles, the bleach-stained purple sweats, and his bare feet. He couldn’t see his face, but he knew with utter certainty that he looked every one of his forty-one years, and that his hair probably resembled a bird’s nest.

It was much, much too late to make a good impression.

The coffee pot gurgled.

“So,” Clint said, putting an officially-licensed Hawkeye mug under the dribbling stream as he poured whatever coffee had managed to make its way into the pot while he deciphered Natasha’s text into the mug. When the cup was full, he swapped the pot for the mug. “You’re James? I, um, forgot you were coming.” Clint winced at the bad lie. He was not awake enough and not caffeinated enough to be conversing with anyone, much less someone who would have made him tongue-tied at the best of times. “You want coffee?” he added.

James looked- well, Clint wasn’t great with people, but he was good with body language, and he could tell that James was looking around his battered, cluttered apartment and judging the shit out of him. Not that Clint could blame him, the place was a disaster at the best of times - much like Clint himself - and he’d only just gotten back from Caracas in the early morning hours. His gear and clothing were scattered everywhere, and it was painfully obviously that Clint was only barely functioning as human.

“No thanks,” James said, his eyes now travelling over Clint and probably finding him just as lacking. “I stopped at Daily Press on my way.”

“Oh man, I love that place,” Clint lamented, before burning his mouth on the too-hot coffee in his hand. Oh well, wasn’t the first time and it wouldn’t be the last, and he desperately needed the jumpstart of caffeine.

“So,” James said, still watching him, “about the apartment?”

“Oh! Oh, yeah, yeah, ok. Uh, you wanna see it?” Clint had never actually rented out an apartment to anyone before. He’d always been the renter, never the owner, and all the current tenants had
come with the building. There was probably some kind of process to the whole thing, but Natasha had sent James, so as far as Clint was concerned, that was all the reference he needed.

“Sure?” James said slowly, looking at him like he was an escaped mental institution patient.

“Oh, let me just—” Clint motioned first at himself and then vaguely at the stairs. “I’ll be right back.”

Clint took the coffee and the cellphone with him upstairs, where he swapped the sweats for a pair of jeans he was relatively certain were clean, and an Iron Fist t-shirt he found in the clean laundry pile. A gift from Kate, after the time he’d been arrested and tried to pull the ‘I’m an Avenger’ card. He also ducked into the bathroom and, yep, his hair and general face-like-thing were exactly as bad as he’d thought. He took ten seconds to try and tame his hair into something more reasonable before giving up and going back downstairs to find James glaring balefully at a framed Black Widow art print Clint had gotten at a publicity event.

Apparently the guy wasn’t a fan.

Which was kind of funny, all things considered.

Clint snorted a little and then went digging through the kitchen junk drawer for the keys to the empty apartment.

“Got ‘em!” he called, cheerful now that he’d managed to guzzle down his first of many cups of coffee. He refilled his mug and slipped his feet into worn out tennis shoes - the laces of the left one held together with at least three knots, and a hole forming in the top of the right where his big toe pressed against the material. “C’mon I’ll show you the place.”

James took one last, lingering glance at the art print, before turning to follow Clint out of the front door.

The empty apartment was directly across the hall from Clint’s, and the lock took a bit of jiggling before the key would turn smoothly. “I’ll fix that,” Clint reassured James as he opened the door wide to let him go first. “The tumblers are sticky, but that’s easy.” Locks were one of the few things about being a landlord that came easily to Clint, given his previous life of unsavory activities. Everyone’s locks were in perfect working order, and the outer locks were brand-new deadbolts. Natasha had even convinced Tony to install a new, better buzzer system with digital codes for buzzing tenants and guests in and out.
Which begged the question of how James had gotten in, but the answer was probably still Natasha.

The apartment was a mirror-image of Clint’s, up to and including the loft, but missing the clutter. There was a narrow galley kitchen, a small living room and bathroom, and the same metal staircase, all in reverse. It was still clean, courtesy of a cleaning team that Kate had told him about, though it smelled a bit stale from disuse.

“Feel free to poke around,” Clint offered, leaning against the wall by the door.

James gave him another dubious look, but dutifully stuck his head in the cupboards and bathroom before heading upstairs to look at the loft. Meanwhile, Clint frantically texted Nat.

_He’s here and I am a total disaster and how do you rent apartments SND HLP_

His phone pinged with an incoming email, and when Clint opened it there was a lease application and rental agreement.

_THX_ Clint texted, glancing over the documents. They looked very similar to what he vaguely remembered signing when he’d first moved into the building, years ago, with all the appropriate blanks for rent and security deposit and pets.

Fuck.

What was the going rate for apartments these days? Clint had no idea - he hadn’t moved in years. Clint was frantically trying to Google _that_ when James trundled back down the stairs, looking more relaxed than he had so far.

Ok, what had _Cindy_ been paying him in rent. Clint scoured his brain, trying to remember, and then wondered if it even mattered, maybe the guy didn’t even want-

“Is it available immediately?” James asked, now looking determined.
“Yeah, I mean-” Clint gestured at the empty room. “Sure.”

James’ shoulders slumped in what was definitely relief, and Clint figured that meant he really needed a place.

“You in a bind?” Clint asked. “You could move in tomorrow, if you wanted. I should probably have the cleaning crew come back through first, it’s been a while, but uh, if you haven’t got a place, this is definitely available.”

Suspicion immediately replaced the relief, James’ eyes narrowing as he watched Clint. “You don’t want references, maybe?”

Clint shrugged. “Camille is a close, personal friend of mine. I’ll take her word for it that you’re on the up and up.”

James continued to look at him with barely-concealed distrust before heaving a sigh. “I probably can’t afford it, anyway, but yeah, I’m in a hurry to move. My roommate,” he spat the word, “is moving for work and decided to sublet our place, only he didn’t mention it to me until a few days ago. Let’s just say his choice of subletters is less-than-ideal. I don’t need the place tomorrow, but I do need it soon.”

“Mmm,” Clint hummed. “I can email you the paperwork? And you can let me know a move in date?”

“You still haven’t told me the rent,” James reminded him, and yeah, that was a point. “Or asked for references or anything people normally do.” James’ tone was flat.

Clint rubbed awkwardly at the back of his neck. “Yeah, I’m pretty new to this whole ‘landlord’ thing. I sort-of inherited the building.” Well, that was one way of putting it, anyway. “To be honest, I’ll have to get back to you about the rent, once I look to see what Cindy was paying for the place. I can send it with the paperwork and hey, if it’s too much, we can negotiate ok?”

It wasn’t like Clint was in it for the money. Clint had plenty of money, garnered through both legal and more illicit means, more money than he knew what to do with really. He’d bought the building to help people, not to turn a profit. And Natasha had sent James here, knowing James had a need that Clint could fill. If nothing else, he’d do anything she asked of him.
They’d work it out.

This Barton guy was out of his mind, Bucky decided. Completely off his rocker. The rental and lease applications he’d emailed were generic, run-of-the-mill agreements, with no hidden riders or objectionable clauses, but the rental rate he was asking was ridiculous.

Ridiculously low, that is.

Granted, it was more than he was paying now for the shithole he shared with Dan fucking Moore, but he also wouldn’t be sharing the new space with anyone, and it was - just barely - within his budget. Bucky couldn’t help but look for the catch. He’d been screwed over enough times in his life to not be wary.

Still, one didn’t look a gift horse in the mouth, especially when one needed to be out of their current arrangement yesterday, in an apartment with far too many frat-bros and not enough bathrooms, now filled to the brim with no-homo testosterone and more homophobic slurs than Bucky had heard since he was in junior high and had first come out as gay.

Dan, Bucky knew, had been well aware of Bucky’s preferences, because it wasn’t like he hadn’t brought home a date or two in the last year they’d shared a residence, and Bucky couldn’t help but feel resentful and sure of the fact that Dan had done it on purpose, subletting his half of the apartment to two of the most obnoxious, shitty human beings Bucky had ever had the misfortune to meet. Nathan and Ian were also fucking awful roommates, uncaringly loud at the most obscene hours, trailing filth wherever they went, and eating Bucky’s food.

So even if Clint’s building was full of pests, or run by the mafia, or terribly mismanaged (which seemed likely, given Bucky’s meeting with the man), it had seemed quiet and friendly, filled mostly with families and the door buzzing system and locks had given Bucky a sense of security. Plus, it was his own space, and he knew how to deal with New York’s finest cockroaches.

Bucky carefully filled in all the blanks of the application and lease agreement and sent them off, along with rental references from his last two apartments.

That done, he texted Camille.
Is your friend fucking serious with this rent?

She sent back a shrug emoji and a couple of winky faces.

Camille’s texts were all like that. They rarely included words, and the two of them seldom had any conversations outside their shared class. So when Bucky had casually mentioned his roommate situation, Camille’s response that she ‘knew a guy’ went largely unheeded by Bucky, until she’d informed him that he had an appointment with said guy today, in what was actually his only free day this week.

Bucky’s schedule, as Camille often reminded him, was utterly insane. In addition to his Studio 20 grad program at NYU, he did freelance photography and videography with his mostly-useless undergrad photojournalism degree, ran a borderline-political ‘Inside New York’ podcast that generated a little extra cash, and was the go-to web design, IT person, jack-of-all trades for his friend Sam’s VA groups.

In short, Bucky did not have enough hours in his life, and his roomates made that worse by simply existing.

This apartment would be a godsend, if it was really everything it appeared to be.

Camille had done him a solid. And her friend, too, if it all worked out.

He hot tho ;) Bucky texted, just to be an ass.

The guy was hot, despite the fact that he looked like he’d recently hosted, and possibly lost, Fight Club. Still, bandaged and bruised, he’d had a six pack you could grate cheese on and biceps for days. Even if he was a shitty landlord, at least he’d make good eye candy.

For an old guy she texted back, followed by several peach-butt, eggplant emojis.

Bucky snorted.

The guy wasn’t that old. Like, yeah, ok, maybe late thirties or early forties, but Bucky was twenty-
seven. It wasn’t like ten or fifteen years was that big of a deal, and anyway he wasn’t planning to marry the guy. Maybe just, like, ride him off into the sunset once or twice.

There wasn’t a thirsty emoji, so Bucky sent back the drooling face and drink. Camille would get it.

It was just a fantasy anyway.
James moved in on a Wednesday.

Specifically, he moved in on the Wednesday after the Tuesday wherein Clint spent the entirety of the afternoon and most of the night shooting Doom bots and, once he was out of arrows, punching them. Or being punched by them.

So of course that meant James had a plumbing problem almost as soon as he got into the building.

Which meant that Clint had to drag his bruised, bloodied self out of bed and into the apartment across the hall, where the kitchen plumbing was doing its damndest to flood the apartment. Clint could see water tumbling from the u-joint of the pipes where, thankfully, James had left the cabinet doors open and was trying to soak the water up with a towel.

“I don’t know what happened,” he said, sounding more frantic than Clint thought the situation warranted. “I just turned the water on and-” he gestured futilely.

“Yeah, it’s old plumbing. I can fix it, it’s fine,” Clint said, exhausted.

James was soaked and Clint was soon to be. He’d at least been dressed when James came pounding on his door. Granted, he was wearing old sweats again, but he had on a shirt this time, and that was an improvement as far as he was concerned. James had never and probably would never see Clint as anything but a glorified human disaster, but at least he was wearing clothes.
Clint squatted down in front of the sink and reached through the pipes and the spray of water to wrench the control knob to off.

The water stopped immediately, and Clint lifted his arm to wipe his face off on his sleeve.

“I… probably should have thought of that,” James said, abashed.

Clint snorted. The first time he’d had to fix a sink he hadn’t known there was a shut-off valve, and only a YouTube video had saved him. “It’s fine,” he said, instead. “That’s what I’m here for. At least you came and got me fast, otherwise I’d be worried about water damage. Shouldn’t take too long to fix.” Clint yawned and stretched out to drag his haphazard collection of tools closer. He kept them in a battered metal toolbox, one that had been blue at some point but might be more rust than paint by now, and the tools themselves were not at all well-stored or organized. He had everything from a fletching jig to about twelve types of wrenches inside. Clint pulled out all the things he thought he’d need, digging a bit to get to the bottom, then settled himself on the floor on his back where he could reach the leaking pipe, ignoring the puddle of freezing water under his shoulders with the ease of long practice. Clint could ignore anything if he needed to focus, perks of being a sniper.

The cold tile and water felt almost good against his sore muscles anyway.

“Coffee?” James said, after a minute of standing awkwardly as he watched Clint work.

“God, yes.” Coffee sounded amazing. Actually, going back to bed sounded amazing, but coffee was a close second.

James rummaged around in one of the boxes he’d stacked on a rickety-looking kitchen table until he managed to locate and plug in a coffee pot - far away from the slowly-spreading pool of water on the floor - and then he took the pot to the bathroom to fill it with water for the machine.

“No plumbing disasters in the bathroom,” he informed Clint, making Clint snicker, and after a few more moments the sound of a gurgling and the smell of coffee permeated the room.

“So are you in some kind of boxing club or MMA or something?” James asked, out of the blue.

“What?” Clint said, distracted as he tried to twist the wrench with enough force to get into the pipe.
“You just…” James trailed off and Clint lifted his head up to look at the other man, who was gesturing vaguely at Clint. He suddenly remembered his bloody knuckles and bruised jaw, the litany of other bruises and scrapes along his torso. He probably did look like he’d gone a few rounds.

“Something like that,” Clint agreed, smirking, and went back to the pipe.

He was using plumbers putty to coat the threading of the pipe and the replacement o-ring when he heard a strange chirping sound and felt something brush up against his outstretched leg. Clint looked up to find not only James but also a small, furry cat watching him with curious eyes.

“You have a cat?” Clint blurted, surprised.

James handed him a cup of black coffee with a funny little smirk. “It was on my rental application,” he reminded Clint. “His name is Alpine. Did you forget already? Do you not like cats?”

Truthfully, Clint had barely bothered to look at James’ paperwork, he’d mostly glanced it over to make sure he had a job and shoved it in his haphazardly organized filing cabinet before emailing back to say James could move in anytime he was ready. Clint had called the cleaning company the same day James had toured the place and had them come back and give it another once-over, and then promptly dismissed the issue from his mind.

He hadn’t, however, dismissed thoughts of James by a long shot - he was, in fact, unable to get the man off his mind - and he’d had more than one embarrassing enough that he’d never admit to it daydream about the man. The kid was, at minimum, ten years younger than him and clearly going places in life. He wore chinos, for god’s sake. Clint didn’t even own a pair of chinos. James’d listed about half a dozen jobs and a graduate program on his rental application. Clint had barely gotten his GED. He needed to stop thinking about James, beyond being his tenant, and move on, and he knew it.

“I like cats fine,” Clint rushed to reassure him. “I just- ok honestly, I didn’t really pay that much attention. I told you, Camille vouched for you and that was good enough for me.” He shrugged. “I’ve got a part-time dog, but cats are nice. Independent.” Natasha had a cat, a black she-devil named Liho who hated Clint with the passion of a jilted lover, but in general he liked animals.

James was staring at him kind of strangely, so Clint just shrugged and sat the coffee to the side where he, hopefully, wouldn’t knock it over, and went back to the pipe.
“How do you have a ‘part-time’ dog?” James said, after a minute, and Clint laughed.

“How’s Lucky, and I share him with Kate.” Clint applied judicious force to the socket wrench he was using. “She’s my…” Hmm. How to explain Kate?

“Ex?” James asked, into the pause, and Clint laughed again.

“No, god no. Gross. She’s like twelve. Not really. I’m pretty sure she’s at least twenty. Maybe twenty-one. No she’s my… apprentice?” She was the best goddamn archer he’d ever seen, is what she was, and well on her way to being a better superhero than Clint had ever been.

“Your landlord apprentice?” James sounded like he was caught somewhere between amusement and horror, and Clint really couldn’t blame him. He wasn’t exactly going for gold in the landlord department.

Clint grinned as he sat up. “You sayin’ I’m a shitty landlord, James?” Clint picked up the cup of coffee on the floor next to him and took a long, deep swallow. “Cause I just fixed your kitchen sink.” To demonstrate, Clint stood up and turned the faucet on, watching as it produced a smooth, steady stream of water, and no more leaks under the cabinetry. Clint put his cup down on the counter next to the sink and washed the putty off his fingers.

James cleared his throat, and when Clint turned around he was flushed across the bridge of his nose. “It’s Bucky,” he said.

“What?”

“My friends call me Bucky. Let me just- I’ll get you a towel.” James- Bucky- fled the room, leaving Clint blinking at the space he’d previously occupied.

Another soft mew drew his attention down to his feet, where Alpine was watching him with a twitching tail. Looking down forced Clint to notice he was thoroughly soaked, between the spray of water and lying in the puddle, and his plain white t-shirt was now see-through and his sweatpants were sticking to him like a second skin.
Which was about the time Clint realized he hadn’t bothered to put on any underwear.

Largely because he was out of clean ones.

Clint groaned at his own ineptitude.

Bucky was furiously texting Camille at the same time that he was rummaging through several boxes haphazardly labeled “bathroom” in search of a towel. The one that was languishing on the soaked kitchen floor had actually come out of the kitchen box, where it had been wrapped around his toaster, and he wasn’t entirely sure where any of his other towels were at the moment.

Now that he thought of it, they might be in with his laundry.

*I’m starting to think I’m on some kind of fucked-up camera show.*

Ten seconds later his phone was ringing in his hand, the contact photo of Camille - her blonde hair tumbling across her face as she glared at him over the rim of her sunglasses - coming up on the screen. What the fuck, Camille never *called* him. No one called him, he was a millennial. He didn’t believe in phone calls.

“Hello?” he said, uncertainly.

“Explain,” she responded in her short, clipped way. Bucky wasn’t certain, but he thought English was actually her second, or possibly third, language. She carried just the hint of an accent, something guttural in her vowels.

“Uh,” he began, still digging through the shit piled in his bedroom, and trying to talk quietly because god knew the loft wasn’t exactly *private*. “My landlord is in my kitchen, soaking wet and clearly not wearing underwear, and it’s all starting to feel like a badly-written porn set up?”

There was a second of perfect silence before Camille started laughing, bright and explosive, and then she hung up on him.
Bucky stared at the phone in disbelief.

This day was surreal.

*Make him an offer*, Camille texted him, moments later, along with a winky face, an eggplant, and the okay hand.

Bucky shoved the phone in his pocket without replying, and finally extricated a towel from the hamper he’d used to bring the last of his clean laundry over in, not bothering to fold or pack it, just in a hurry to get the hell out of the bro-infested apartment he no longer shared. He hurried back down the loft stairs, the blue towel clenched in his fist, and into the kitchen.

“Hey, sorry it took so long, I haven’t unpacked… anything…”

His landlord was standing at the kitchen sink, *wringing his shirt out like a dishrag*.

Bucky couldn’t help the small noise that escaped his throat.

It was just. The guy was just standing there all… wet and half naked and *flexing*, it wasn’t fucking *fair*. His shoulders and back were rippling with the effort of squeezing the water out of the abused cotton t-shirt, which Bucky was fairly certain might actually shred under the strain and *Jesus fucking Christ*. The livid bruising across his ribs and shoulders did absolutely nothing to detract from his attractiveness, and even the scrapes along his arms and flank seemed sexy.

Bucky wasn’t sure if he was trapped in a nightmare or a daydream.

Then Clint turned around, and Bucky decided *fuck it*. Camille was right. She knew the guy, she wouldn’t have told Bucky to go for it if she thought he was gonna get punched. And anyway he’d already signed the lease, so worst case scenario was he avoided Clint for the next year until he had to move again.

Well, actually, there were probably worse worst case scenarios but Bucky couldn’t engage his brain enough to think of them.
Clint was literally dripping water, it was running in rivulets from his damp hair down the chest that looked just as ripped as Bucky remembered, abs that meant Clint either spent some serious time at the gym or did something that required an eight pack for a living, and disappearing into the waistband of sweatpants that were riding low enough that Bucky could tell the guy was a natural blond. He held the towel out and took a deep breath, waiting until Clint was done toweling his hair dry and scrubbing at his chest before he spoke.

“How weird would it make things if I offered to blow you right now?”

The look he got was startled, deer-in-headlights, instead of anger or disgust, which, as far as Bucky was concerned, was a good start. Clint froze, the towel dangling from his fingertips as he gave Bucky a once-over with his eyes, though Bucky couldn’t tell if he was being checked out or checked to see if he was serious.

Bucky shifted, stood a little straighter, let his hip jut out, and bit his lower lip. Saw Clint’s eyes focus on that detail and yeah-

He was being checked out.

That he could definitely work with.

Bucky took a couple of steps closer, tugged the towel out of Clint’s grip and folded it into a thick square and dropped it on the floor at his feet.

“It’s just, you know, with the abs and the-” Bucky gestured at Clint’s body in an all-encompassing sort of way. “Plus the porno handyman schtick. Seems like a golden opportunity I shouldn’t pass up. If it’s not too weird.”

“Not- no, uh,” Clint cleared his throat as his chest and neck started to flush. “Not too weird. That’s-um, that’s fine.”

Bucky snorted and stepped into Clint’s personal space, close enough that he could see the ring of green in his eyes, close enough to feel the body heat emanating off his skin. Clint was taller than him, tall enough that Bucky had to look up to meet his gaze. He reached out, put his hands on those goddamn shoulders, let himself drag his fingertips down Clint’s chest and abs, stopping at the elastic of the pants. “If you’re sure,” he said, glancing up from under his lashes, felt Clint’s breath hitch
Clint gave a strangled laugh. “Yeah, I’m sure. If you- if you want.” He sounded utterly bewildered by this turn of events, and if Bucky gave himself any time at all to think about it, he’d talk himself right out of the entire idea. So he didn’t.

Bucky dropped to his knees on the towel, aiming for smooth and graceful, but satisfied with not bruising his kneecaps or falling on his face. He ran his lips along the edge of the sweatpants, licked a stray drop of water off the sharp edge of Clint’s hipbone, grinned at the stuttering inhalation he got in response. When he looked up, Clint was grabbing the edge of the countertop in a white-knuckled grip, making the scrapes and bruises on his hands stand out even more, and glaring at the ceiling.

“All right,” Clint muttered in disbelief, and Bucky barked out a laugh.

“Handyman porno schtick,” Clint said, and Bucky nodded, tugging Clint’s sweatpants down and was not at all disappointed by what he found there. He’d had a pretty good idea, what with the way the sweatpants had clung to Clint’s body, but seeing was believing, and even half-hard his cock was impressive.

Clint opened his mouth to respond - something snarky, probably, Bucky somehow got the impression that when he wasn’t caught off-guard, Clint was mouthy - but was immediately distracted by Bucky wrapping a fist around his cock and sliding it firmly along his length. It only took a couple of quick strokes to bring Clint to full hardness, and Bucky hummed in pleasure as he ripped the condom open with his teeth.

The taste of latex was terrible, but herpes was forever, so latex would have to do.

Bucky thought, briefly, of what it’d be like to taste Clint’s skin, hot and musky over the length of his dick, of what his come would taste like, and then dismissed the thought.

This was a one-time deal. Maybe two, if Bucky were exceptionally lucky, and that wasn’t nearly enough times to broach the subjects of monogamy and testing. He rolled the condom on and followed it with his mouth, down, down as far as he could without choking and still had to wrap his hand around the base.
“Christ,” Clint gasped, and when Bucky looked up at him he was panting, all his muscles standing out in harsh relief and staring at Bucky like he was some kind of miracle.

Bucky swallowed, got just that bit more in his throat as his eyes fluttered closed.

“Jesus,” Clint groaned, and tentatively thread his fingers through Bucky’s hair. Not pulling, just resting against his scalp.

Slurping his way off Clint’s cock - which caused another round of interesting noises - Bucky leaned back and followed his mouth with his hand, gave Clint a several long, teasing strokes.

“Bucky,” he reminded Clint.

“What?” Clint looked wrecked already, his mouth soft and his eyes hazy.

“It’s Bucky,” Bucky said, smirking, “not Jesus. Also, I’m Jewish.”

Clint let out a choked laugh, gave Bucky’s hair a gentle tug that made Bucky moan.

He drifted back in, mouthing over Clint’s hips and thighs, applying his teeth and tongue anywhere he got a shiver of reaction, until Clint’s hips were twitching towards him. Bucky swallowed him back down, let himself get lost in the action, the repetitive nature of it, the slide of Clint’s dick over his tongue and into his throat. Listened to the litany of swears interspersed with Bucky’s name that fell from Clint’s mouth like a prayer as Bucky sucked harder, bobbed faster.

Bucky reached down with his free hand and squeezed himself through his jeans, moaned at the sharp spike of pleasure that wasn’t enough, but was something, and Clint moaned in return.

“Fuck,” Clint said. “Fuck, Bucky, fuck, stop, get up here.” He tugged insistently at Bucky’s hair, until Bucky released him and stumbled to his feet, his toes tingling from the lack of proper circulation, or arousal, or both.

Clint pulled him directly into a hot, open-mouthed kiss, spun them both around until Bucky was the one pressed up against the counter.
For someone who always seemed to be treading the fine line of ineptitude, he had no trouble at all deftly unsnapping Bucky’s jeans with his left hand and sliding his calloused palm around Bucky’s achingly hard dick. Clint still had his hand tangled in Bucky’s hair and he used it to tilt Bucky’s head back, to hold him in place while he ravaged Bucky’s mouth. Bucky moaned again, felt himself go limp and pliant, felt Clint grin against his lips.

Sharp teeth bit into his bottom lip, hard enough to make Bucky hiss and then groan, as Clint let go of his cock long enough to shove his jeans down a little lower and fumble his condom off, and then he was jerking both of them off like he’d been doing it for years. He jerked them off like he’d been a paid observer of Bucky’s personal pleasure sessions, squeezing just this side of too tight, moving his hand slow and steady.

“Holy hell,” Bucky gasped, rising up on his toes to thrust into Clint’s grip, felt himself slide against Clint’s dick, cupped in his rough palm, as fireworks went off behind his eyelids.

“Good?” Clint asked, nibbling along his jaw and scraping his teeth against the soft, sensitive skin behind Bucky’s ear.

“Yeah, god, yes,” Bucky panted, letting his head droop against Clint’s shoulder. “Faster,” he added.

He felt the rumble of laughter in Clint’s chest, pressed up against his own, but the other man obligingly adjusted his speed, just enough that Bucky could feel his orgasm approaching at the speed of light, knew it was going to hit him like a freight train.

It’d been him and his left hand for far, far too long, and now he was getting handled by a goddamn professional wet dream, and it was going to be over embarrassingly quickly.

Clint’s hand unclenched itself from his hair and slid down, across Bucky’s shoulders and past his lower back, until he cupped Bucky’s ass and pulled him in, hard, jerking Bucky impossibly tighter to his body and squeezing their dicks together and Bucky-

Bucky went off like the fucking fourth of July, a shaking, stuttering mess with his arms wrapped around Clint’s neck and his come all over both of them. “Oh fuck,” he managed, rocking up as much as he was able into Clint’s grip, until it was too much and the shuddering became twitching and Clint let go. He moved - to step back maybe, or maybe just to readjust - but Bucky slid his hand off of Clint’s shoulder and down, to tangle with Clint’s hand, still wrapped around his own dick and wet with Bucky’s release.
“Can I give you a hand with this?” Bucky asked, and was proud of the way his words mostly didn’t slur, though he sounded completely fucked out and hoarse. He didn’t wait for an answer, just followed Clint’s lead, both their hands wrapped around his dick, let Clint show him what he liked, which wasn’t much different from what Bucky liked, except for a little twist at the end that Bucky filed away for later experimentation, until Clint was gasping and coming all over both of their hands.

“Damn,” was all Bucky could think of to say, since the only thing keeping him upright was the fact that he was wedged between the countertop and Clint’s body.

“Yeah,” Clint agreed, his breath hot and fast against Bucky’s neck. “Good thing you brought a towel.”

Chapter End Notes

I don’t know dippity do dah about plumbing, in case that's not obvious. Pretend all of that made sense.
Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

How does one embark upon the role of "accidental" sugar daddy? Well, it starts like this...

Chapter Notes

This chapter features so-done-with-stupid-boys Natasha, and appearances by Scott Lang.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Have you seen Clint?

Bucky squinted at the phone. He had only seen his landlord in passing a handful of times in the three weeks since what he’d fatefully termed The Kitchen Sink Incident, and each time Clint had been personable and friendly and had managed to keep an exactly professional distance between the two of them.

He hadn’t seen Clint at all in nearly a week.

And that, Bucky had figured, was that.

It wasn’t like he’d expected more or anything, but Bucky couldn’t keep the twinge of disappointment from rising when he thought about it.

No. Been a few days, but my schedule’s crazy.

Which Camille knew, because she ragged on him about it constantly.

I’m coming over.
Twenty minutes later, Camille was standing impatiently outside his door, tapping her foot and huffing as she waited for him to put shoes on.

“We are only going across the hall,” she admonished him.

“I don’t know why we are going at all,” Bucky snarked. “He’s your friend.”

Ok maybe Bucky was a little bit bitter. But it had been the best handjob of his life and Barton didn’t even want a follow-up? What the hell?

Camille pursed her lips at him in disappointment. “He was away for work for a few days, but he’s been back at least twenty-four hours and I haven’t heard from him. I’m concerned for his welfare. I might need help manhandling him to my car.”

Bucky stared at her. “For what?”

She rolled her eyes. “The hospital, probably.” She turned on her heel and strode out of Bucky’s apartment, leaving him to follow. The hall was only a few feet wide, so she was already pounding on the door by the time Bucky caught up to her.

“Open up, pridurok,” she called. They waited a beat, and when no one answered and the door didn’t open, she sighed as though totally inconvenienced, and muttered to herself in whatever language she’d shouted at Barton in. She reached for the knob, jiggled it and then gave it a sharp twist, pushing the door open.

They paused in the entry as though waiting for something, but there was no sound from inside the apartment.

Bucky followed her in, where it was just as much of a cluttered wreck as it had been the day he first came by to ask about the apartment he was now renting, but dark and silent as a tomb. There was a lump on the couch that Bucky initially took for a pile of laundry, until Camille strode over to it and nudged it harshly.

“Wake up,” she hissed, and deftly caught the fist that flung itself out of the pile of blankets.
The pile of blankets groaned.

Bucky snickered.

“What the hell?” Clint sat up, sending the sheets and blankets he’d been burritoed in tumbling to the ground. He scrubbed at his eyes and shook his head as though he were dazed. Clint blinked up at Camille. “What in the fuck have you done to your hair?”

It was Bucky’s turn to blink. Camille’s hair was the same straight platinum blonde it had always been, cut on a sharp angle at her jawline.

Camille reached out and flicked the lamp by the couch on, and Bucky sucked in a sympathetic breath.

Clint always looked vaguely like he’d gone a few rounds in the boxing ring, new bruises cropping up before the old ones had fully healed, but this was a whole new level. His chest was wrapped in ace bandages - crookedly like he’d done it himself - along with his wrist, and he had a line of butterfly bandages on his face next to his eye and across his jaw. He was bruised from neck to hips, in a dizzying array of purple and green marks, some of which had faded to a sickly yellow along the edges.

He looked like someone had used him as a punching bag.

Camille gripped his jaw, turning his head from side to side.

“Concussed,” she announced, and let him go.

“No shit, Sherlock,” Clint responded, shrugging a blanket up over his shoulders. “Why are you here?”

“You never call, you never write,” she said, breezily, turning to the kitchen.

“You know I can’t fucking hear you,” Clint grumbled, pulling the blanket up over his head like a hood and settling back onto the couch with his eyes closed. It became obvious to Bucky that Clint
hadn’t noticed his presence, and he began edging towards the door. Clint was here, he was mobile if not okay, and if Camille needed to take him to the hospital Bucky was pretty sure he could make it to the car under his own power.

Camille cut off his escape route as she came back from the kitchen with a bag of ice and a glass of water, nudging him further into the room. Bucky capitulated with a sigh, taking enough steps forward that he’d be in Clint’s line of sight if he opened his eyes.

When she got closer, Camille kicked at Clint with the pointed toe of her boot, and he lifted his head to glare at her. Which was when he caught sight of Bucky - his eyes widened and he had the grace to look at least a little bit sheepish.

“You could have told me I had company,” Clint snarked to Camille, even as he accepted the ice pack and water. He settled the ice against his left side, just under his arms, and Bucky wondered if he had broken ribs. Camille dug into her purse and shook tablets out of a bottle into his hand, which he swallowed along with half the water. “Hi Bucky,” Clint greeted him, giving a feeble wave.

“Hi,” Bucky said. “You look like shit.”

Clint barked a laugh. “I must look better than I feel then.”

Camille rolled her eyes. “You didn’t answer any of my calls or texts, what did you expect?”

“I took my aids out when I got home, myshka .”

She dug in her purse again, handing Clint a little plastic case that he took with a sigh. He opened it and pulled out a pair of tiny devices that almost looked like they had fishing line and-

Oh.

Bucky watched as Clint fitted hearing aids into his ears, and a lot of things suddenly made a lot more sense. Like the way he’d watched Camille’s face so carefully when she was talking to him, and the way he hadn’t noticed Bucky was in the room. How long it had taken him to come to the door that first time.
“I didn’t know you were deaf,” Bucky blurted, and then immediately flushed with embarrassment.

Clint shrugged. “I don’t advertise it. It’s fine, don’t worry about it.” He turned his attention back to Camille. “Now that you’ve ascertained my not-dead status, harassed me about my concussion, and forced me to interact with humanity, are you going to let me die in peace?”

“The only person allowed to kill you is me,” she said succinctly. “Someone needs to keep an eye on you for the next twenty-four hours, and if you won’t come back and let-”

“No,” Clint bit out. “I’m fine. I don’t need medical and I definitely don’t need St-” he cut himself off abruptly. “I don’t need anyone mooning over me while I lay quietly praying for the sweet release of death, and try not to vomit.”

She smiled sweetly in a way that instantly made Bucky’s hackles rise. “Well in that case, I guess I’ll just have to pack a bag and come stay here,” she glanced around judgmentally. “I’ll have to go get Liho, of course, but I’m sure Kate could be persuaded to come by until I get back, or maybe Bobbi-”

“Jesus fuck,” Clint groaned, leaning his head in his hands. “Can you not? Can you, for once in my godforsaken life, just-”

Camille hissed something in a language Bucky didn’t recognize - score one for his detective skills! - and Clint responded in kind, looking both furious and exhausted. They raged at each other for another few minutes in quiet, biting barbs that, while Bucky couldn’t suss out the meaning, he could definitely pick up on the tone.

“I can stay,” Bucky blurted, and then wondered what the hell was wrong with him. “Or you can come over,” he offered. “My couch is comfortable and I’m just working on that damn project for Professor Malloy’s class. I can make sure you’re still breathing, at least.”

Clint sighed, succumbing to the inevitable.

Camille smirked, sharp and triumphant, and Bucky wondered, briefly, what the fuck he’d gotten himself in to.

*
Natasha insisted on re-wrapping Clint’s ribs, which was exactly as painful as he’d expected it to be, especially because she was pissed at him. She also, however, packed him a bag of worn, soft clothing, a bottle of Stark’s specialized painkillers, and the knitted blanket that she’d gotten him at an open air market in Muenster. She even walked him to Bucky’s door, depositing him just outside of it with a soft hand on his cheek and a steely glare.

“Stop being stupid,” she ordered, in Russian.

“I didn’t get hurt on purpose,” Clint whined, in the same.

“I wasn’t referring to your injuries,” she retorted, as though that explained anything, and then rapped sharply on Bucky’s door before walking away.

Bucky had gone back to his apartment with a shell-shocked look on his face, leaving Natasha behind to help Clint get changed and re-wrapped and decontaminated while Bucky - presumably - went to prepare for the arrival of his guest.

The guest that Natasha had manipulated him into accepting, which grated on Clint in exactly the wrong way.

He’d been - not exactly avoiding Bucky since their little encounter, but trying to give the man space, trying not to make it seem like he had expectations, and then he’d been called away on Avengers business for the last 96 hours, and somehow the whole thing had gone to shit right in front of him. Exactly like every other aspect of Clint’s life, actually. Bucky would barely meet his eyes, and he was certain Natasha had dragged him over this morning on the pretense of worry for Clint, as though she couldn’t have broken into his apartment without Bucky’s help to check on him.

The apartment door opened to Bucky’s flushed and flustered face, interrupting Clint’s thoughts.

“Hey,” Bucky said, opening the door wider. “Sorry, come in.”

“You don’t have to do this,” Clint said, standing just outside the door. “She’s gone, I can go back to my place and you can pretend you never agreed to this. It’s not too late.” Stark’s drugs were already kicking in, and Clint was feeling at least fifty percent better than he had an hour ago.
Bucky’s face hardened, and he reached out and took Clint’s bag from where Natasha had left it on the floor and Clint hadn’t bothered to pick it up. “Shut up and come inside, for fuck’s sake. You look like you got hit by a truck, you’re not gonna bother me sleepin’ on my couch.”

Clint followed him in meekly, too tired and too injured to argue, and, frankly, too lonely.

He didn’t really want to go back to his empty apartment by himself, to wallow in his own pain and misery alone. And fuck Natasha for noticing anyway. He sighed.

Bucky had made up the couch like a bed, with a sheet tucked around the cushions, a pillow on one end and a blanket neatly folded at the other. He dropped Clint’s duffle on the floor at the end of the couch and nudged it with his toe until it wasn’t a trip hazard, wedged against the edge of the couch below the armrest. He gestured redundantly.

“Make yourself comfortable,” Bucky said, and Clint lowered himself gingerly onto the cushions, instead of the boneless sprawl he would normally have affected. “I’ve got a bunch of stuff to do but I’ll wake you up - that’s what you’re supposed to do, right? Wake someone up every hour?”

Clint snorted. “I’ve already slept off the first twenty-four hours, and anyway, they don’t really do that anymore. I’m fine, just need to rest.” He leaned over to grab the duffle, and Bucky scrambled to get it for him.

“Let me- for fuck’s sake, I’m supposed to be helping.”

The resulting huff of laughter made Clint want to reach for his ribs. “I just want the blanket that’s in there.” He wasn’t usually sentimental, but he was also usually in his own damn apartment, surrounded by his own damn things. He wanted something familiar.

“This is nice,” Bucky offered, passing the blanket to him and watching as Clint wrapped himself in it like a burrito and tucked himself up onto the couch.

“Mmm. N- Camille gave it to me.” Clint could feel his eyes drifting shut, the pain medication and exertion already working to coax him into sleep. Bucky threw the blanket he’d left on the couch over his feet and knees, where the knitted blanket didn’t cover, and Clint blinked slowly, once, twice, and then succumbed to a sleep so deep it felt like unconsciousness.
He woke up some indeterminable amount of time later, his ears gummed up from sleeping in his aids, to the sound of Bucky quietly swearing.

“Whassa matter?” Clint blearily asked, levering himself into a sitting position with a wince.

“This fucking-shit, shit I’m sorry,” Bucky said, looking at him wide-eyed and apologetic. “I didn’t mean to wake you up.”

“’S fine,” Clint yawned. “What’s the problem?”

“This piece of shit is the problem. I’m almost fucking done with this fucking presentation and it just-crapped out?! The screen went black like the battery ran out but it’s plugged in and it won’t turn back on and I don’t even- Fuck! I have to turn this in tomorrow!” Bucky ran his fingers through his hair, frustration and panic evident on his face. The laptop he was referring to had clearly seen better days, battered and chunky and, if Clint wasn’t mistaken, actually duct-taped together in places. He made a gimme gesture at the computer, and Bucky immediately looked sceptical.

Not that Clint could blame him, he didn’t exactly look like a computer savant.

And granted, Clint wasn’t Tony - hell, he wasn’t even Natasha - but Coulson and S.H.I.E.L.D. had ensured he knew how to retrieve data and hack a decently-encrypted database, even if that database was seemingly destroyed. He couldn’t get into the Pentagon mainframe, but he could definitely retrieve whatever was on Bucky’s ancient laptop.

“C’mon Buck, hand it over. I swear I won’t fuck it up.”

Reluctantly, Bucky passed him the laptop, which made a discouraging clicking noise when Clint tried to turn it on. He leaned over, which hurt so he stopped, and instead hooked his toe in the strap of the duffle bag and dragged it closer so that he could rummage in it more easily. It was the same duffle he typically took on short missions so he was hopeful - yep, inside one of the pockets on the end was a small zippered case that Clint typically tucked into a tactical pocket in case the need arose. He unzipped it and spread it out on the couch cushion next to him. Closing the laptop, Clint flipped it over and opened the backing, exposing the components. After that it was simple enough to plug the little USB-like device that Tony had given him - the one with enough storage to probably save all of the Pentagon’s secrets, if Clint were smart enough to hack them - into the hard drive and transfer all the data from it to the storage device.
“Here,” he said, passing the drive and the laptop back to Bucky. “All your hard drive data is on that, so you just gotta open it on another computer.”

Bucky took the items and looked from them to Clint and back again in confused disbelief. “Seriously?” he said, finally.

Clint nodded, leaning back into the corner of the couch, trying to get comfortable. He must have been asleep for a while, because the pain was making an insistent reappearance, which meant the drugs Nat had given him were starting to wear off.

“That’s- fuck, that’s awesome.” Bucky said. “I mean, I don’t have another computer, but- this is great, thank you.”

And that- that was something else Clint could fix. He felt bad- Clint knew he’d handled the situation after their last encounter terribly. Clint wasn’t exactly known for his amazing people skills. But, he’d treated Bucky, if not badly, then at least not well, and despite that the younger man had come with Nat to check on him, had let him crash on his couch out of a sense of obligation or concern, and Clint-

Well, Clint could fix this problem. This was easy.

“Where’s my phone?” Clint glanced around, trying to spot the now even more battered device. He should really let Tony replace it as he kept threatening to do. It was just that Clint knew his phone, it was easy and familiar. Unfortunately, it had gotten even more crushed during his recent encounter with A.I.M, when he had kind of accidentally fallen through not one but two collapsing ceilings inside the building they were attacking.

Clint wasn’t sure which had come out of the encounter worse - his ribs, or his phone.

“No idea,” Bucky shrugged. “I haven’t seen it. It’s not in your bag?”

He dug in the duffle some more but unfortunately the phone was nowhere in sight. Clint sighed.

“Here.” Bucky held his own phone out. “You can use mine if you need to.”
Clint untangled his arm from where he’d wrapped himself back in his burrito blanket and reached for the device. Bucky typed his passcode and handed it over. Clint had to think for a moment to recall the number he wanted, but eventually his brain managed to dust it off.

It rang exactly twice before a familiar, vaguely British voice answered in clipped tones.

“Hey J,” Clint said. “It’s Clint. Can you put me through to-”

“Certainly, sir,” JARVIS answered. “I simply needed voice recognition, given that you used an unknown number. One moment.”

There was a short click before Tony’s voice came over the line, as loud and enthused as always, making Clint wince. “Legolas! You’re alive! We weren’t sure!”

Clint rolled his eyes. “Yeah, well, I’m good at not dying. Anyway. I need a favor.”

“You need a new phone? Because I can already tell you’re calling from a piece of crappy not-Stark tech, and I’ve got this new model that should be able to link up to your aids and-”

“Oh, maybe?” Clint interrupted. “I don’t actually- I can’t find mine. But that’s not why I’m calling. I need a laptop.”

Tony made a considering noise, the one where his brain was in super overdrive, running down possibilities. “Ok what kind of specs are we talkin’? Does it need to be able to hack your average run-of-the-mill government database, or do you want something with a little more oomph to it? I could probably write you a program that will destabilize a medium-sized theocracy in under ten minutes, but it’ll take a couple of days. You don’t have a mission do you, because honestly, as almost-team-leader, I’m going to have to veto any field trips for the foreseeable future. I know you’ve got a few broken ribs.”

“No. God. No. I just need a regular laptop for a regular person. No destabilization required. In fact, I’d prefer that not be a feature.”

“Bo-ring!” Tony sang, and Clint clearly already lost his attention, judging by the now-uninterested tone of his voice and the rattling of in the background. “I’ll send you whatever’s hot off the Stark tech presses. Happy can drop it off. Call me when you want something interesting. Or if
you die.” He hung up, leaving Clint blinking at the phone in a combination of drug and Tony-induced stupor.

Bucky was staring at him, but Clint was too tired to parse out what the look on his face meant. “Wake me up if you hear someone at my door,” Clint yawned, shifting into a more comfortable half-lying, half-propped position on the couch.

He woke up to Bucky gently shaking him awake, clearly trying not to jostle him too much or cause him pain but Clint still groaned.

“There’s someone yelling at your door. I assume your door, they’re actually yelling ‘Hey, birdbrain!’ and knocking really loudly.” Bucky was biting back a smile, and Clint rolled his eyes. He could hear the vague sounds of a familiar voice now that he was back in the land of consciousness.

“It’s me, Scott! From Germany, a couple of years ago!”

Clint heaved himself off of the couch with more groaning and shuffled to Bucky’s door, flinging it open to find Lang pounding on his door across the hall.

“Scott,” Clint said, distracting the other man. “What are you doing here?”

Scott whirled around, grinning like Christmas - which, Clint thought, was basically his default facial expression - with a bag in one hand and a stack of pizza boxes in the other.

“I come bearing gifts,” Scott said, crossing the hall to meet Clint in the doorway. “I thought you were at your place though. Tony said you were holed up in a love nest, but I thought he was joking.” He peered around Clint’s shoulder and caught sight of Bucky, sitting at his desk again, and both his eyebrows flew up to his hairline.

“Don’t.” Clint said, cutting him off before whatever obnoxious thing he was about to say came out of his mouth.

Scott laughed but passed over the pizzas and a nondescript reusable shopping bag that was heavier than it looked. Clint grunted as the weight tugged at his back and, therefore, his ribs, and Bucky appeared at his side to take it from him. Scott smirked, and then stuck his hand in his pocket.
“Oh! Before I forget. Tony sent this too.” He pulled a smartphone out of his pocket that had a crumpled sticky note attached.

_Hulk-proof_ was written in Tony’s sharp, nearly illegible writing. Clint rolled his eyes. He flicked the phone on and watched it boot up.

“It’s already got your old number on it,” Scott added. “I heard your last one didn’t survive your latest outing. What’d you do, fall off a building?”

“I fell down the stairs,” Clint deadpanned. As soon as the phone was done loading it immediately began pinging with messages and missed calls. Already he was ready for it to be lost again.

Scott snorted. “Yeah I kinda heard you fell down a couple, but ok man, whatever you say. Text Tony. He’s worried, you know how he gets.”

“He hung up on me earlier,” Clint said, scanning the texts, most of which were demands from Natasha that he check in, but a few were from the other members of the team, including a half dozen from Wanda. He texted her back that he was fine, just sore, and ignored the rest. Nat had already come by and bullied him, she knew he was alright.

“He sent pizza. He knows it’s the way to your heart.”

Clint couldn’t help but laugh at that, even though it was painful.

“Anyway, I’m getting out of here,” Scott finally said, still shooting Bucky the occasional glance, which the other man was skillfully ignoring, face buried in a textbook. “I have a call with Cassie tonight and I learned a new card trick to show her.” He turned to go, but then turned back after half a step. “By the way, there’s some shady ass tracksuit wearing thugs hanging around across the street.”

Because of fucking course there was. Clint was injured, so undoubtedly the resident Russians thought they had a prime opportunity at their fingertips.

“Anyway, you want me to scare ‘em off?” Scott asked, eyes sparkling. “I could walk out yelling
how neat it would be if the Black Widow dropped by to check things out, make sure everything was kosher in the neighborhood.”

This time it was Bucky who made a garbled noise, and both Clint and Scott turned to look at him.

“Don’t tell me the fucking Avengers have decided they need to add superhero neighborhood watch to their resumes, because we really do not need that. They’re attracting enough bullshit supervillains to New York as it is without running down every shitty neighborhood thug in some kinda misplaced vigilantism. We don’t need the fucking Black Widow patrolling the block.” Bucky looked every inch the indignant hipster, and Clint struggled to hold back the laughter that wanted to escape.

Scott turned wide eyes on Clint at Bucky’s diatribe, clearly barely containing his laughter. “Oh my god,” he said. “Oh my god, that’s priceless.” Clint opened his mouth but Scott held both hands up in the universal sign of surrender. “Nope, I’m out. Steve tore his rotator cuff, which’ll probably be healed up by the time I get back, and Tony can return to normal levels of over-protective control freak instead of his current mother-hen state. This is all you, pal.”

Clint shut the door on his retreating figure before heaving himself back over to the couch, where he collapsed painfully and gracelessly.

Bucky was eyeing him with mild suspicion. “What was all that about?”

“Oh!” Clint said, sitting forward and motioning for the shopping back. “It was this.” He reached into the bag and pulled out a new-in-box Stark Tech laptop, still wrapped in plastic.

Not reaching for the package, Bucky turned a narrow gaze on Clint for several long seconds.

“Okay, but seriously, are you in the mob?” he said, finally, and Clint couldn’t stop the hiccuping laughter that exploded out of him, dropping the laptop box on the table and clutching at his ribs to support them as best he could.

He wiped tears from his eyes as the mirth subsided to intermittent chuckling. “No,” he said, “God, no, I’m not in the mob. That’s the tracksuit mafia. I promise - nothing illegal. I just know a guy.”

“You just… know a guy,” Bucky said, skeptically. “Who happens to have the latest Stark laptop just lying around, waiting for me to need it.”
Well, when he put it that way, it definitely sounded shady. But-

“Yeah, pretty much,” Clint shrugged. He waggled his new phone. “I got a phone out of the deal too.”

“These cost like- like fucking two grand, dude, are you kidding me?”

“I just know a guy,” Clint said, sinking back into his seat and digging in his duffle bag for the bottle of pain pills Natasha had left him. “Don’t worry about it.”

Bucky was clearly debating the merits of taking the laptop. He obviously wanted it. And it was pretty clear he also needed it, if he really had an assignment to finish, but he just as obviously deciding whether or not he should take the computer at face value. Clint rolled his eyes.

“I swear no one was harmed in the acquisition of the computer.”

Finally, finally, Bucky gave in, pulling the box closer to himself and unwrapping the plastic with the kind of excitement Clint hadn’t seen since Scott had video called Cassie to watch her open birthday presents. Clint reached for the top box of pizza and pulled it into his lap, intent on eating as much of it by himself as was humanly possible.

He worked his way through nearly three quarters of the pizza as Bucky booted the laptop up and got it running with his preferences.

“Is it okay?” Clint asked, as he set the nearly empty pizza box aside and leaned back on the couch, pleasantly full and slightly buzzed from the drugs.

Bucky looked up, startled, when Clint spoke, dragging his attention away from the computer.

“Yeah,” he said, sounding surprised to find Clint speaking to him. “Yeah, it’s- it’s great.” There was a handful of heartbeats and then he said, very quietly, “Thank you.”
Clint waved him off. He’d have to pay Tony for the laptop eventually - he didn’t like to be in debt to anyone, and he’d probably have to hide the money in various places around the tower for Tony to find, but it was worth it to see the look on Bucky’s face, the relief and the soft gratitude around his eyes.

Clint drifted off to the soft sound of Bucky clacking on the computer keys, his feet propped on the coffee table and his head on the back of the sofa.

Chapter End Notes

pridurok - Russian for idiot
myshka - Russian for mouse

I don't know ANYTHING about computers, but I fried my hard drive last month and the computer people opened up the back, stuck a plug in the hard drive, and copied all my data over, so I figured this wasn't TOOOOOO outside the realm of possibility?
Bucky tried to wake Clint gently, prodding at his shoulder and calling his name, but it still took several seconds for the other man to open his eyes.

“C’mon,” Bucky said, “bed, let’s go.”

Clint blinked at him and Bucky wasn’t sure at first if he even knew where or who he was, but then he seemed to make the connection. He squinted at Bucky.

“I’m already on your couch, I’m not gonna take your bed.”

Bucky rolled his eyes. It was nearly two in the morning and he had class at ten. His project was - amazingly, thankfully - completed and he wanted sleep. Which he knew he wouldn’t get much of if he was worried about Clint down on the couch.

“I’ve had your dick in my mouth, I think we can share a mattress.” The words were out of his mouth before he had too much time to think about them, and he immediately regretted even saying anything.

Clint flushed red in the semi-darkness of the room, lit only by the light in the hallway. “Ah, about that-”
And that, that was exactly what Bucky didn’t want to hear. He didn’t want to be let down gently and he definitely didn’t want to hear what a mistake it had been.

“Can we just for-”

“I’m sorry,” Clint blurted, leaving Bucky off-balance.

“What? Why?” Bucky was beyond confused. “I’m the one who offered.” He threw caution to the wind. “Hell, I’d offer again if you weren’t avoiding me.”

“I’m not avoiding you. I was just… you know, trying to be not-creepy?” Clint cringed. “I didn’t want you to think, like, I expected anything or- I dunno. It was a hook-up, right? I was just trying to let it be a hook-up.”

“Oh my god,” Bucky said. “Oh my god, you are an idiot.”

“Yeah,” Clint agreed. “I’ve been told.”

“Bed,” Bucky demanded. “Let’s go, up and at ‘em. We can have this discussion or whatever I guess there or later or never, to be honest, but it’s late and I wanna sleep. C’mon.” He helped Clint leverage himself off of the couch and set him in motion towards the stairs before snagging his duffle bag and following him up.

Clint looked briefly confused when he reached the loft, as though he’d expected it to look different than it did, and maybe his layout was different than Bucky’s, but he got over it after a second and shambled towards the bed, coming to a halt at the foot. Alpine uncurled himself from the end of the bed and shot them both a disdainful look before leaping to the floor and sauntering away.

“Which side?” he asked, looking at Bucky.

The bedroom was still only partially unpacked, but the bed had two nightstands and it had to be pretty clear which one was in use, considering Bucky had two books, a pair of glasses, and an alarm clock on the side nearest the door. Bucky rolled his eyes. He was beginning to suspect Clint was not nearly as awake and coherent as Bucky had thought.
“Take the window side,” he said. “I’m gonna change and brush my teeth.”

Clint grunted an affirmative, and moved to throw himself onto the empty bed before seeming to think better of it. Instead, he dug around in his bag for a toothbrush and followed Bucky to the bathroom.

It was awkward, brushing their teeth at the same time over the one small sink, but they made it work with minimal jostling, especially as Clint was either left-handed or ambidextrous, brushing his teeth with his left hand as he stood on Bucky’s left and Bucky brushed with his right hand. Clint’s right wrist was still carefully wrapped as well, which could have contributed to his left handed handyness.

In the bedroom, Clint pulled the t-shirt he’d been wearing up and over his head and dropped it on the floor, before picking it up and looking sheepish. Bucky had seen enough of his apartment to know it was probably a habit, and he huffed a laugh.

“Mi casa su casa, you can drop your shirt on the floor, I don’t care.”

*You can drop all your clothes on the floor*, he didn’t say.

Clint reached for the waistband on his sweats and Bucky choked a little. He was _sure_ he hadn’t said that part out loud.

“Shit,” Clint let go of his pants at the sound and scrubbed a hand over his face. “Sorry. I just- I’m tired and I keep forgetting this isn’t my place and-”

It was physically painful for Bucky to watch Clint stammer awkwardly and shuffle his feet.

“Just take your fucking pants off and get into bed, Barton.”

Clint blinked, and a slow smirk spread across his face.

Bucky opened his mouth to apologize, and then closed it with a snap.
He wasn’t going to apologize because he’d meant what he said, dammit. No take-backs.

Clint dropped the sweats, revealing a pair of plain black cotton boxer briefs that nevertheless got Bucky’s engine rumbling, warmth coiling in his gut that he steadily ignored. The smirk never left Clint’s face and Bucky decided two could play at that game. He pulled his own shirt off and tossed it into the hamper near the closet, before stripping his jeans off and walking casually to the dresser, where he grabbed a pair of soft, red pajama pants that he knew molded themselves to his ass the minute he put them on.

There was a tiny choking sound from behind him and it was Bucky’s turn to smirk.

When he turned around, Clint was sitting on the edge of the bed, his ace wrap half unraveled and staring at Bucky.

“You want some help with that?” Bucky asked, making Clint jump a little. The other man seemed caught between a nod and shrug, so Bucky walked over to assist. “Are you trying to put it on or take it off?”

“Off,” Clint answered, his voice a little coarse. “I wanna let the pressure off of my chest for a few hours.”

“Mmm,” Bucky said, reaching for the bandage. “So you want me to unwrap you?”

Any arousal Bucky had been kindling was instantly extinguished as the stretchy bandage wrap fell away from Clint’s chest. Earlier, in Clint’s apartment, Bucky could see bruising, of course, along the exposed skin the wrap didn’t cover, but it was nothing compared to the deep purple, obviously painful bruises along his ribs and flank.

“Jesus,” Bucky muttered, reaching for Clint’s side and then holding himself still at the last second. “What the hell did you do?”

“I fell,” Clint quipped, giving Bucky a small grin. “Here,” he said, reaching for Bucky’s hand and pulling it to his side. “Just bruising, nothing broken. Well, just a little fractured. You can touch, just don’t, like, punch me or something.”

Underneath Bucky’s fingertips, Clint’s skin was warm and smooth, no alarming bumps or shifting
“Are you asking me to be gentle?” Bucky said, resting his hands on Clint’s sides.

Clint huffed a small laugh. “Just this once.”

Bucky tilted his head, regarding Clint for a long moment. He took a deep breath. “If you promise to be still and not hurt yourself,” he said, watching Clint’s face perk up with interest, “I promise to be very, very gentle.” He nudged Clint towards the head of the bed, and Clint went without complaint, his movements smooth but cautious. He propped himself up against the headboard with two of Bucky’s pillows and sat, relaxed and waiting, with his hands at his sides. Bucky climbed after him, until he was straddling Clint’s thighs but carefully not settling any weight on him.

“Where do you not hurt?” Bucky asked, after a minute of cataloguing injuries.

Lips twitching, Clint gave his own lap a pointed look. Bucky rolled his eyes.

“Other than your dick,” he amended.

Clint shrugged. “My legs feel pretty okay, except for my knees, and my arms aren’t too bad. I took a pain pill, it’s all pretty decently under control right now.” He gave Bucky a concerned look. “I’m fine,” he promised. “Be right as rain in a couple of weeks. I’ve had worse.”

Somehow, that didn’t make Bucky feel any better about it.

Not that it was his place to feel better about anything anyway.

He could, however, make Clint feel better.

Bucky didn’t answer, choosing instead to press his lips to Clint’s jaw, underneath the butterfly bandages and across the stubble that was slowly growing in, before trailing his mouth lightly across Clint’s face and beneath his ear.
The other man took a small, shuddery breath.

“Remember,” Bucky breathed, feeling Clint shiver, “you have to be still.”

Clint groaned. “This is payback, right? For ignoring you?”

“Maybe,” Bucky agreed, running his mouth across Clint’s shoulders, keeping his touch feathery and light across the worst of the bruising. He braced himself on the headboard and leaned in for a real kiss, minty fresh with his own toothpaste, but warm and hot and vivid. Different from their last kiss, which had been rushed and sloppy, this was purposeful and slow. Explorative. Bucky initiated the kiss, but Clint sank into it like it was his only purpose in life, stroking his tongue along Bucky’s and dragging gentle teeth along his lower lip.

He could probably spend hours just kissing Clint, and wasn’t that a dangerous thought.

Clint kissed with a kind of single-minded focus Bucky hadn’t often - or ever - been the subject of, and it was something he recognized he could easily come to crave. He definitely appreciated it. It took effort, actually, to drag his mouth away and move on, to slide down Clint’s thighs so that he could reach his bruised chest.

“Okay?” he asked, looking up, after he passed a few light, barely-there kisses across the worst of the bruising.

Clint looked caught somewhere between disbelief and bliss, and Bucky smirked up at him.

“Yeah,” Clint said, breathless in a way that didn’t sound like it had anything to do with his injuries.

Bucky leaned back down, pausing to scrape his teeth across a nipple, and Clint hissed but didn’t object, so Bucky did it again. Clint’s hand twitched like he was going to move it, and Bucky backed off.

“Ah, ah,” he said. “You’re supposed to be keeping still, remember?”

Clint let the hand flop back down to the bed with a roll of his eyes, but he didn’t object.
Bucky traced a meandering path down his torso, until he was kneeling between Clint’s spread legs and his mouth was pressed against Clint’s rapidly-hardening dick. He mouthed at it through the cotton of his underwear, felt the answering twitch, and smiled. He was, he decided, going to fully torture Clint, and made no move whatsoever to remove the restricting cotton. Instead, he scraped his teeth along the shaft and pressed wet, sucking kisses along Clint’s thighs and the juncture of his hip and groin.

When he sank his teeth into the flesh there, Clint let out a low groan.

“Too much?” Bucky asked, and did it again.

Clint’s spine arched into the touch, and Bucky pressed his hands against his hips, firm enough to hold him in place.

“No,” Clint argued. “Not too much. You could even take those off, you know. I’ll-”

“You’ll sit there and not move,” Bucky emphasized, before returning to his self-appointed task. Clint huffed an annoyed sound, and Bucky bit him again in retaliation.

“Fuck,” Clint panted, but he stayed still. “I’ve had torture that wasn’t as bad as this.”

Bucky snickered before pressing his mouth back to Clint’s dick, which was now rock hard and straining against the cotton of his boxer-briefs. Bucky sucked damp patches into the fabric. He still wasn’t comfortable not using condoms, but this way he could almost taste Clint, could smell the warm, musky scent of him. He wondered if he could make Clint come just from his mouth on the front of his shorts, and decided to find out.

His hands drifted from Clint’s hips to his thighs, and lower, until he was cupping Clint’s balls and rolling them in his fingers, and his other hand was gripping the base of his cock, squeezing rhythmically as he continued to mouth at the head.

“Christ,” Clint moaned, and Bucky heard the thump of his head flopping back against the headboard.
“Still not Jesus,” Bucky reminded him, not looking up.

Clint’s responding laugh was hitched with a shuddering intake of air as Bucky swirled his tongue around the head of his dick.

The damp patch on Clint’s underwear was now from more than just Bucky’s mouth, and Clint’s hips were making tiny little twitches that he was clearly trying to prevent, and just as clearly unable to help. Sliding his hand up and down Clint’s cock, Bucky diverted his oral attention back to Clint’s chest and stomach, avoiding the worst of the bruises as best he could, but paying special attention to his nipples and any unmarred skin he could see.

He sucked a love bite onto Clint’s pec, near his collarbone. If Clint could have bruises all over from whatever accident or fight he’d gotten into, Bucky felt pretty sure he could at least leave a mark from something better. At least it’d be a reminder of what they’d done - one that would hopefully lead to future encounters.

Clint’s hands moved again, reaching for Bucky, and Bucky batted them away. “Let me be nice to you,” Bucky said, leaning back out of reach and speeding up the motion of his hands a little. “You’re hurt. Let me make you feel better.”

“I feel great,” Clint slurred, barely opening his eyes. “Just wanna touch you a little bit.”

“Mmm,” Bucky neither agreed nor disagreed. “Next time,” he finally said, watching as a flush worked its way up Clint’s chest and throat. He twisted his wrist the way he remembered Clint liking from their one previous encounter, and Clint couldn’t seem to stop the way his body reacted, twitching up into the touch and making a punched-out, wrecked sound. Bucky did it again.

“Oh fuck,” Clint said, opening his eyes more, his gaze flicking between Bucky’s hands and face, like he wanted to watch Bucky make him come at the same time that he wanted to watch Bucky watching him.

“Maybe next time for that too,” Bucky agreed. Surely they had to get past hand jobs at some point, right?

Something about the idea set Clint off, because he let out a low, wounded sound and came all over himself, his hips jerking and twitching minutely and soaking his underwear and Bucky’s hand. Bucky eased him through it, slowing and gentling his touch until Clint flinched a little, prompting
him to let go.

Bucky waited until his breathing slowed down, until Clint opened his eyes in that syrupy, post-orgasmic lassitude, before smirking.

“You made a mess of these,” he said, snapping the band of the boxer briefs. “Guess I’ll just have to get rid of them.”

Clint let out a low, weak chuckle, but obligingly lifted his hips enough for Bucky to remove the ruined cloth, tossing it off the side of the bed to be dealt with later.

Bucky stared down at the other man, still covered in come and half-hard against his thigh, and his until-now neglected cock gave a twitch of interest. Clint raised an eyebrow.

“You want some help with that?”

“Well,” Bucky began, eyeing him. “I was hoping to jerk off on your abs, but the bruises are kinda putting me off.’

Clint laughed. “C’mere,” he said, motioning Bucky forward. “Turn around. You can lean on me.”

“Are you sure?” Bucky looked dubious, and Clint made an impatient motion.

“Yeah, it’s fine, I won’t let you hurt me, c’mon. Lose the pants first.”

Shucking his pants and tossing them to the end of the bed, Bucky complied, turning around and leaning gingerly against Clint’s thighs and stomach. He could feel the damp residual of Clint’s orgasm against his back and shuddered.

“Sorry,” Clint muttered, tugging at Bucky to arrange him in a better position. “I shoulda cleaned up first.”

“It’s- no, it’s fine,” Bucky said, strangled. It was hot, is what it was, and he wasn’t about to admit
that. He could shower later. This was fine.

Then Clint wrapped his arm around Bucky’s shoulder and leaned down to nip at his ear. “So,” he said, conversationally. “You wanted to jerk off on my abs, huh?” He trailed his hand down and tweaked Bucky’s nipple.

Bucky made an involuntary sound as his dick jerked against his thigh.

Clint made a little humming, considering noise. “Show me?” he asked, wrapping his arm more tightly around Bucky’s shoulder, and Bucky groaned as he let his head drop back against Clint’s shoulder.

He reached down to wrap a hand around his dick, jacking it slowly.

“You think about jerking off on my abs a lot?” Clint asked, his free hand roaming up and down Bucky’s side, ghosting over the nipple he’d already abused.

Bucky nodded, twisting his wrist at the same time.

“You think about anything else?”

Bucky groaned. Clint was going to kill him. He licked his lips, squeezing the base of his dick to slow down an orgasm that was already fast-approaching. “Yeah- yes,” he stuttered. He tried to shift, to move so that he could use both hands, and Clint’s arm tightened around him, holding him in place.

He couldn’t help the garbled, wrecked noise he made in response to that.

“Oh,” Clint said, and he sounded-

He sounded something Bucky didn’t get a chance to process, because the arm around him tightened again, and the hand that hand been stroking along his side reached up to tangle in his hair and tug.

“Oh fuck,” he breathed, sinking into the embrace and ceasing to think. He picked up the pace,
jerking himself harder and faster and-

“Slow down,” Clint said - commanded, really, and Bucky’s whole brain whited out. “Better,” he said after a second. “You like this?” he asked, squeezing Bucky’s shoulders again, and Bucky nodded, beyond words. “Would you like it if I held you down and fucked you? Pulled your hair a little?” He tugged at the strands of hair still gripped in his fist.

“Yes,” Bucky groaned.

Clint was quiet for a few seconds, watching as Bucky dragged his hand up and down his own cock at an agonizingly slow place.

“Next time,” he decided, shifting his arm to pluck Bucky’s nipple and hold him down at the same time.

Bucky moaned.

“Is this how you imagined it?” Clint asked, and Bucky shook his head.

Normally-

Bucky fantasized about Clint entirely too much, honestly, but normally he imagined something more like what Clint had described, with himself face down on the bed as Clint fucked into him from behind, a hand on his shoulders and one in his hair and that-

“More like this?” Clint asked, and then pulled Bucky’s hair hard enough to bring tears to his eyes and make his spine arch.

“Oh fuck,” Bucky gasped, and came, shockingly hard and unexpected, all over his chest and stomach and hand and Clint’s arm.

“Yeah,” Clint said, after Bucky slumped against him, breathing hard and totally spent. “Yeah, we’re definitely going to do that next time.”
Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

The one where they go on a date. Sort of. Maybe.

And then Clint says goodbye before a mission.

Chapter Notes

Featuring guest appearance by Aaron Judge.

Also, more filth ahoy!

Bucky was pretty sure he was on a date.

He wasn’t positive, because he and Clint weren’t really dating. Or he didn’t think they were dating? He honestly wasn’t sure they weren’t dating. He wasn’t convinced whether or not Clint knew if they were dating.

In the six weeks since Clint had managed to get himself grievously injured and now mostly-recovered, they’d seen each other most days, and texted on the ones they didn’t. Bucky woke up to late-night quips and off-center photos of Clint’s daily activities, and went to bed with stupid puns and heartfelt goodnights. Or handjobs. Or blowjobs. Sometimes they had dinner, sometimes they just hung out in Bucky’s apartment, and sometimes they just fucked. Clint absolutely took everything he’d learned about Bucky on that first night to heart, and expanded on it until Bucky was now having the best sex of his life on the regular.

But he didn’t think they were dating.

Tonight, though, they were at the Yankees game. And Bucky had no idea how Clint had managed to afford the tickets, much less get them on short notice. Plus, it was just the two of them, under no pretenses that Clint had just had an extra ticket, or someone couldn’t go, or anything. He’d just called Bucky up two days ago and asked him if he wanted to go to the game.

Of course Bucky had said yes.
Bucky had been expecting nosebleed seats and hot dogs and barely being able to see the team’s numbers on their jerseys.

What Bucky got, was third row, first base line, just behind the home dugout seating. What Bucky got was a view so close he could smell the fucking grass, and what even the fuck?

Clint was almost definitely in the mob, and Bucky, at this point, did not even care.

The game was a complete rush. He was so close to the field he could almost hear the players talking, he could see every play in real time, there were stadium hot dogs, which were the best kind in Bucky’s opinion, and Clint enjoyed his so thoroughly that Bucky felt no pressure whatsoever to behave in a date-like way and try to be neat or even presentable while shoving a loaded dog in his face, and overall it was amazing.

If it was a date, it was the best one Bucky had been on in probably ever. If it wasn’t a date, it was probably still the best date Bucky had been on, ever.

Then, during the seventh inning stretch, one of the typical sports-game ads came on the Jumbotron, and Bucky nearly ruined the whole thing.

Following behind a typical ‘Salute our Servicemembers’ blanket thank you to any vets in the stadium, was a new-to-Bucky ‘Applause for Avengers’ ad that immediately set him off on a rant.

“Are they- are they fucking serious?” Bucky said, aghast.

Clint looked at him with raised eyebrows over a mouthful of hotdog.

Bucky gestured wildly at the screen. “We’re- we’re thanking the Avengers now? We’re- what? We’re grateful that they attract aliens and superhumans and- and Thor, and they build crazy AI robots that want to take over the world and we’re- What? I mean, I can’t- I can not.” He reached up and yanked his hat off of his head and then resettled it and tried to find his calm center but you know what- fuck that. Bucky’s whole thesis was focused on the Avengers Initiative and how it had - and continued to - endanger average New Yorkers and this was his area of expertise and he couldn’t not.
Clint’s face was turning red around the food he was struggling to choke down and Bucky couldn’t stop the flow of words from pouring out of his dumb mouth.

“There have been eight - *eight* - life-threatening attacks by A.I.M. just in the last six months. There have been three alien invasions, assuming you don’t count Loki, which I do. There was a supervillain just last *week* who disabled the entire metro system for *six hours*. I was late to class because of that fucko! And we’re *thanking the Avengers*?” Bucky’s chest was heaving with the force of his frustration. “We should be throwing them out of the city!”

People were turning to stare at him, and Bucky finally, *finally* ran out of steam. Clint looked- he looked somewhere between amused and confused and -

Oh fuck.

Oh, fuck, Clint had invited him here to this game in this seat and *fucking Christ, Barnes* the guy had art of the Black fucking Widow on his wall and -

Clint started laughing.

He laughed so hard he had to put his hotdog down and wipe his eyes.

“Oh my god,” he said, finally. “Oh my god, you’re amazing.” And he looked so fond and *proud* and Bucky -

Bucky turned red to the tips of his ears and excused himself to go to the bathroom as the people around them rolled their eyes and turned back to the field, where the game was getting ready to start back up. Clint grabbed him by the wrist as he scooted by and Bucky turned back, flushed and embarrassed and a million feelings he couldn’t quite articulate.

“Better hurry,” Clint said, grinning, “or you’ll miss the Captain America impersonator throw the first pitch at the top of the ninth.” He pressed his lips to the inside of Bucky’s wrist.

“Oh, fuck you,” Bucky snarked, equilibrium regained.
Unfortunately, despite the insane line at the bathrooms, his own lollygagging, and a carefully thought out plan of getting in the longest line he could find to order two beers, Bucky didn’t manage to miss the first pitch of the ninth inning, and only succeeded in missing most of the eighth inning, which in retrospect, was a mistake. Because there really was a Cap impersonator to throw it.

“They could have at least gotten the real deal,” Bucky grumbled, his chin in his hands. “And maybe made him do it shirtless.”

Clint laughed again. “Nah, he wouldn’t do it. He’s a Dodgers fan. Hates the Yankees.”

Bucky turned to stare at him. “Why do you even know that?” he asked. “Are you an Avengers groupie? Am I sleeping with an Avengers groupie? Because that might be a deal-breaker, Barton.”

It was Clint’s turn to flush. “I’m definitely not a groupie,” he said, clearly embarrassed. “I just know some things.”

“Is this like how you ‘know a guy’?” Bucky asked, amused. “I’m just kidding, you can have a weird Avengers fetish, I’ll still fuck you.”

And Bucky would. He’d just tease Clint for it mercilessly.

Rolling his eyes, Clint turned back to the game, where the Yankees were so far ahead it was laughable, and the game was clearly pretty much over. Fans were filing out in groups at regular intervals, the stadium slowly emptying. Clint stayed just where he was, only moving to prop his feet on the seat in front of him when those fans got up and left. Bucky got it - getting out of the stadium and home on a game day was a nightmare, the public transit systems packed and the sidewalks equally full - so he leaned back and made himself comfortable, too.

He didn’t have anywhere to be, and he’d been hoping to finish the evening with Clint anyway. It’d be worth the wait.

The team was clearing the field and the stands were nearly empty before Clint moved, shifting to get his feet underneath him, and Bucky began gathering their trash and stuff in anticipation of leaving.
“Nah, leave that for a minute,” Clint said. “I’ve gotta- you know how I said I know a guy?”

Bucky didn’t get a chance to answer, because one of the Yankees players had made his way to the edge of the stands to scan the seats, obviously looking for someone and -

“Is that Aaron Judge?” Bucky said, wondering.

Clint sighed. “Yep. Yeah, it is.”

“What is he-”

“How the fuck do you know Aaron Judge?” Bucky hissed, even as Clint wrapped a hand around his wrist and began tugging him towards the bottom of the stands and the wall where the player was waiting.

Aaron Judge - rookie phenomenon who definitely didn’t get the respect he deserved and sure as fuck needed his contract reworked - was currently waving Bucky and Clint closer. This was the guy who had broken Joe goddamn DiMaggio’s homerun record. This day was absolutely surreal. Bucky would pinch himself if he had a hand free.

“Hey!” Judge said, leaning a hip on the low wall that separated the seating from the field. He was beaming up at Clint when they got closer. “Hey, you made it!

“Yeah,” Clint said, his smile a grimace that was just this side of painful. “Thanks for the tickets, man. You didn’t have to do that. But yeah, we had a great time. Awesome game!”

“No, no it was the least I could do,” Judge rushed to assure Clint. “Seriously, I owed you - I still owe you, like anytime you want a seat just-”

Clint waved him off. “No, no this was great! Really, it was great, but uh, you don’t - You don’t owe me anything, we’re good, seriously.”
Judge looked like he wanted protest further, but subsided. He caught sight of Bucky and Clint’s hands, where Bucky had managed to free his wrist only to find their fingers tangled together. Blinking between the two of them, he took in Bucky’s ten-year-old Jeter jersey and Yankees hat, their hands wrapped up together, and Clint’s casual t-shirt that was absolutely older than even Bucky’s jersey, and his eyes widened minutely.

Bucky braced himself for the reaction. He’d been gay and out for as long as he could remember, but he still got the occasional negative response.

Clint intervened before whatever was about to be said actually got said.

“Aaron, Bucky. Bucky, Aaron.” He didn’t let go of Bucky’s hand, and he didn’t explain anything about their relationship - or whatever it was.

Instead of a negative response, however, Aaron Judge held his hand out to Bucky, as though Bucky was the one who had anything to offer.

“Hey,” Judge (and Bucky couldn’t bring himself to think of the guy as Aaron, no matter what Clint implied) said, as Bucky accepted the handshake. He jerked his head up towards Bucky’s hat. “I’m not Jeter,” he laughed, “but I can sign your hat. If you want.”

Bucky yanked the hat off his head so fast he almost ripped his hair out with it.

Clint snorted.

Bucky stepped on his toes in retaliation while Aaron fucking Judge signed his hat.

Best. Date. Ever.

Even if it wasn’t a date. Didn’t matter. Number one date of all time.
Clint was out of his depth. Hell, he was out of his *league*.

He knew that. He’d known that going in. Bucky was young and gorgeous and fucking *brilliant*, and Clint was… well, Clint was none of those things.

Clint was an Avenger, which, in this case, wasn’t exactly a recommendation, considering how very vocal Bucky had been about his absolute hatred of the Avengers. And while Clint couldn’t fool himself into thinking his body didn’t look good, he’d barely gotten a GED, he definitely wasn’t a college grad, much less working on a Master’s degree.

He knew what he was good at. Things Clint was good at included: shooting things with arrows, shooting things with other projectile weapons, throwing knives, close quarters combat, violence in general, fucking, ordering pizza, and pissing off the Russian tracksuit thugs. Oh and, somehow, acquiring money and property.

Like his apartment building.

Of those things, Bucky could only be interested in, like, two.

Plus Clint’s abs. He’d expressed a clear interest in Clint’s abs.

So all of that meant that there was a definite expiration date on whatever it was they were doing.

And that date might be coming up sooner rather than later, because Clint had a mission. It was a pretty standard, run-of-the-mill infiltrate, abscond with the data, exfiltrate, and don’t die. It would probably only take a few days, but he had zero way of explaining any of that to Bucky. He also had zero desire to explain any of it, because that was definitely going to be a nail - maybe *the* nail - in his coffin.

Knocking on Bucky’s apartment door felt a little bit like knocking on the door to his own funeral.
Clint wasn’t sure, exactly, when or why he’d gotten so attached to the younger man, but there was absolutely no denying that he’d invested far more of himself than he’d ever intended. Natasha asked how things were going whenever he saw her. Tony shot him sly little smirks and made innuendo about his new, younger boyfriend because God knew Scott had never been able to keep his mouth shut and Clint -

Clint was standing in the hallway with a plain white cardboard box topped with a slightly-squashed Christmas bow and a whole lot of self-esteem issues.

When Bucky opened the door he smiled in welcome and surprise, and not a little bit of heat in his eyes as he took in what - for Clint - was standard pre-mission gear. Fitted black tac pants and a thin black t-shirt, all of which would slide effortlessly under his Hawkeye gear.

“Here,” Clint said, shoving the box towards Bucky awkwardly.

“What’s this?” Bucky said, opening the door further and stepping back so that Clint could make his way into the apartment. He picked at the forlorn purple bow with the hint of a smile.

“A present,” Clint said, unnecessarily. It was actually a telephoto lens to fit the camera that Bucky had oh-so-proudly shown Clint last week when he’d come over, something he could use for his photography business, new and shiny, and Bucky had been so excited that Clint couldn’t help but smile. Then he’d said something wistful about astronomy photos and that had been all the prompting Clint had needed.

“What’s the occasion?” Bucky asked, as he shut the door and flipped the bolt. “It’s not my birthday, it’s not Christmas. Do we have an anniversary I don’t know about?”

They didn’t, Clint thought, despairingly. They barely had a relationship.

“I, um. I have to go out of town for work,” Clint muttered, shuffling his feet. “I just-” He shrugged, helplessly.

Bucky sat the box aside on a small table by the door.

“A ‘just because’ present, hmm?” He asked, reaching out to pull Clint closer. “I like your style. When do you leave?” He pressed his mouth along Clint’s jaw.
“Couple hours,” Clint said, tilting his head so that Bucky could have better access and letting his hands settle along Bucky’s waist. “I wanted to say bye this time.”

Because last time he hadn’t said goodbye, and he’d damn near got himself killed, and something about that had left an impression upon both him and Bucky. He’d caught Bucky looking him over, more than once, in the weeks since he’d come back from the last ill-fated mission with fractured ribs and more bruising than even he cared to catalogue.

“I can think of better ways to say bye than presents,” Bucky murmured into his shoulder and yeah, yeah Clint could too.

“Yeah?” he asked, already breathless. “Got any special requests?”

“Mmmm,” Bucky said, sinking his teeth into Clint’s shoulder, “I can think of one or two.’

“Gonna share with the class?”

“Nope,” Bucky said, after a moment of mouthing along the exposed skin of Clint’s neck. “I’ll let you surprise me.”

And Clint- Clint wondered if this would be their last encounter. Actually, Clint wondered that every time, and he’d wondered it even more ever since their fateful sort-of date to the Yankees game, when it had become startlingly clear to him that Bucky had no idea he was Hawkeye, and probably wouldn’t be too impressed when he figured it out.

And, well, if it was going to be a finale, Clint wanted to go out with a bang.

Literally.

“Upstairs,” he growled, prying himself away from Bucky and giving him a small push towards the staircase.
Bucky grinned, bright and happy and, under that, flushed and aroused. He bit his lower lip, something he knew drove Clint insane, and then turned to climb the stairs, glancing over his shoulder to make sure Clint was following.

Clint was absolutely following.

He waited, long enough for Bucky to get a bit of a head start, then climbed up the stairs behind him, methodical and feigning patience he didn’t really possess.

In the loft, he yanked his own shirt off, quick and efficient. “Strip,” he told Bucky, even as he reached for the button on his own pants. He was on a time limit, here, and he intended to get every moment out of it that he could. If he showed up at the tower fucked-out and disheveled, he’d endure the teasing, because it would be worth it.

Bucky didn’t even waste time with smart-ass remarks, which was something of an unusual occurrence, just reached for the hem of his shirt and pulled it over his head, before kicking off the sweatpants he’d been wearing when Clint arrived.

He was naked far faster than Clint.

Clint stalked towards him, both of them undressed and half-hard already, and Clint shoved him onto the bed before crawling over him. He’d learned, in the last couple of months, that Bucky liked things a little bit rough, and he liked Clint to be unequivocally in charge, and Clint-

Clint liked those things too.

He kissed Bucky like he hadn’t seen him for weeks instead of days, like he might not ever see him again, and if the desperation bled through into the kiss, Bucky at least reciprocated, lifting his head off the bed to meet Clint’s mouth with his own and arching into the wandering hands trailing over his body. When they broke apart, both of them were breathing like they’d run a marathon and Bucky’s dick was pressed up against his own, rock-hard and already wet.

“Turn over,” Clint said, instead of the millions of other things he wanted to say.

Bucky scrambled up, flipping onto his hands and knees and his head dropping between his shoulders.
Clint pressed up against him, his erection hard against Bucky’s thigh, and pressed kisses and soft bites to his neck and shoulders. Goosebumps broke out across Bucky’s skin as Clint trailed his tongue along his spine. He wrapped his hands around Bucky’s hips, holding him in place as he drifted down, across the dimples in Bucky’s lower back, and stopping to nip sharply at the curve of his ass where it met his leg.

Bucky whimpered when Clint dipped his tongue into the divot at the base of his spine and that-

Clint sat up, shifting to rearrange Bucky, pressing his arms under his chest until he was leaning on them, his face pressed into the mattress and his ass in the air, and then he dragged his nails down Bucky’s spine, making him arch into the touch. He leaned forward to pick up where he left off, trailing his tongue from the base of Bucky’s spine, lower and lower, until he licked the furled muscle of his hole, and Bucky whined.

“Oh okay?” Clint asked, letting the question brush across Bucky’s skin even while he waited for an answer.

“Oh please,” Bucky said, low and breathless, and it was like a punch to Clint’s gut.

Clint was good at a few things - shooting arrows and punching people, mostly - but he was also great at sex. Sex was something Clint could do and do well, focusing on a partner and their pleasure and the hundreds of ways he could make someone forget about how awful he was in every other way and focus on how good he could make them feel. It was a skill he’d honed to near-perfection over the course of his life.

At least if Bucky was gonna tell him to fuck off, he’d have this to remember him by.

He dragged his mouth - stubble and wet lips and heavy breathing - across Bucky’s perineum, up the spread of his cheeks until he was nudging at that small, tight muscle with his lips, flicking his tongue over it as it twitched and Bucky squirmed.

Clint tightened his grip on Bucky’s hips, coaxing another low, wrecked sound from his chest.

“Relax,” Clint breathed. “I’m tryin’ to say goodbye here, remember?”
Bucky’s half-hearted laugh transformed into a moan as Clint licked into him, used his tongue and, eventually, his fingers to take him apart, spread him open and taste the tight, wet heat of him. Until he was sliding two fingers into him along with his tongue and massaging his prostate while Bucky, well, bucked underneath his ministrations, until he was pushing back against Clint as much as he could from his folded-up position, until he was begging with and without words to come.

“Please, please, please, please,” was all that Bucky could seem to manage, in between half-hitched breaths and sub-vocal moans.

“You wanna come, baby?” Clint asked, twisting his wrist, and Bucky sucked in a breath that sounded wheezy and so, so close.

“Yes,” the other man gasped, and Clint dived back in, flicking his tongue across the stretched rim and fucking Bucky with his fingers in short, sharp motions until Bucky’s entire body seized up, and he came with a wordless cry.

“Oh god,” Bucky said as he slumped forward, sliding down into the mattress, barely held up out of the wet spot by Clint. “Oh fuck.”

Clint hummed as he looked around for a towel or-

He picked up Bucky’s shirt off the floor and tucked it underneath the other man before letting him slide down, flat on his stomach, boneless and sated. He ran his hands up and down Bucky’s back, soothing and comforting, and ignoring the throbbing ache between his legs.

“You can fuck me,” Bucky slurred, his face now pressed into the cradle of his arms. “I like it.”

Clint grinned. “You like me fucking you?”

Bucky huffed a tired laugh. “Yeah. But, I like being fucked after I come, too. That’s what I meant. Like the feeling of it.”

All the pleasure receptors in Clint’s brain lit up like a carnival.
“You sure?” he checked, already reaching for the drawer in the nightstand where he knew Bucky kept condoms and lube.

“Mmm-hmm,” Bucky agreed, and pulled his right knee up on the bed, spreading himself out, and who would be able to resist an invitation like that?

God knew Clint had no self-control. It was a well-documented fact.

He slid into Bucky like he’d been born to fit there, felt Bucky arch back to take him deeper, and gasped at the sensation of the all-encompassing hot, tight feel of him. He rocked, slow and steady, trying to be considerate, and already so, so close.

“Harder,” Bucky groaned, lifting his hips, and Clint was helpless to do anything but comply.

He grunted as he picked up the pace, felt sweat gathering at his temples, and there was no way Natasha was going to be anything but insufferable for the entirety of the upcoming mission brief but Clint just did. not. care.

Bucky gasped underneath him, reaching back to grasp at Clint’s neck as Clint fucked into him, and then shuddered hard, his body clamping down as he came again and Clint-

Clint couldn’t breathe he came so hard, holding himself up on shaking arms with his forehead pressed against Bucky’s neck and Bucky’s fingers tangled in his hair and he wondered, distantly, if he was ever going to recover.
Chapter 6

Chapter Summary

Secret identity? What secret identity??

The mission should have gone off without a hitch.

The mission unequivocally did not go off without a hitch.

Such was Clint’s life.

All of that might have been fine, if he hadn’t got back to his safehouse in Padua only to find it overrun with former-HYDRA flunkies.

“Fuck, fuck, fuck,” he muttered as he skirted rooftops and cut through back alley shortcuts to get away from what used to be a perfectly serviceable safehouse and was now a pile of smouldering rubble. He had, at least, managed to keep all his weapons on his person, not get seriously injured, and he still had his burner phone.

Of course, that meant he needed to contact Nat from memory which… wasn’t his best skill.

Taking enough twists and turns that he was very nearly lost himself, Clint rocked to a halt under the shadow of one of the city’s many churches and pulled out the unfamiliar device.

He didn’t even know his own number on it.

Clint groaned, waiting for his racing heart to slow so that the adrenaline rush would free up enough brain power to remember the number he needed.

After a few minutes it finally, finally came to him, and he tapped out a rushed message.
Hey you still have a place in Venice right? Cause my Padua spot just went up in smoke. Literally.

There was a few seconds of no response and Clint tried desperately to do the time conversion in his head but could only come up with was ‘sometime after dinner’. It was nearly three a.m. his time, but the time in New York was back several hours so Nat should be awake-

Three little dots appeared on the screen and Clint sighed in relief.

Until the response appeared.

What the fuck is your life?

Clint snorted.

How is this a surprise? THIS is my life. I show up to my SAFE house and there’s like a dozen HYDRA guys in it so I kinda sorta burned it down. With them in it. Seriously, Venice y/n?

C’mon, Nat, I just finished that job in Munich I wanna sleeeppppppppppp

Another lack of response, then more dots.

You definitely have the wrong number, but you have got to get your shit together.

Clint blinked at the phone. Natasha didn’t usually play horrible pranks on him, but then, she’d given him no quarter when he’d turned up for the mission briefing still reeking of sex, with rumpled hair and clothes and scratch marks on the back of his neck, so it wasn’t outside the realm of possibility that she was giving him more shit. He thought about texting her back, but he was tired, and sore, and smelled vaguely of smoke and cordite and, frankly, this wasn’t funny.

So he called instead.

The line was barely connected before Clint was speaking.
“Nat, c’mon it’s not funny, I’m tired and I nearly got shot, and I’m pretty sure my leg needs stitches so do you have a place nearby or what? I’ll grovel when I get back, I’m sorry I showed up to the briefing all-”

“Clint?!?” Bucky’s voice cut him off.

Clint pulled the phone away from his ear to look at it, as though that would give him any other clues. “Bucky?” he said, as he put it back to his ear.

Aw, fuck.

“What the fuck?” Bucky said, his voice flat and blank. “What the fuck, Clint?”

Clint sighed. “Okay- I can explain.”

“That’s what they always say,” Bucky said, and now he sounded sarcastic and vaguely… hurt?

“I really- I can explain,” Clint said again. “But can you do me a favor first? Can you just- can you text Camille and tell her I need to get into her place in Venice. She’ll know what you mean.” He paused. “Please?”

“I- fuck, fine, okay. Can I- do you want me to call you back on this number or...?”

“Yeah, you can call me back on this number Buck,” Clint said, trying for soothing.

Bucky snorted and hung up the phone.

Apparently soothing didn’t work.

A few minutes later an address came through on the phone from a different number, along with a key code for the alarm system.
Thanks, Clint sent back.

New phone, who dis? Natasha replied.

Clint banged his head on the stone wall behind him.

The phone vibrated in his hand as Bucky called him back.

“Hey, Bucky,” Clint said, as he picked up and began trudging towards the train station.

“Don’t you ‘Hey, Bucky’ me, you asshole. What the fuck? You said you were going out of town for work.”

“I am out of town for work,” Clint said, jogging across an empty street.

“What kind of work involves getting shot?” Bucky sounded near-hysterical.

“I got shot at, I didn’t get shot. I only got a little bit stabbed.”

“That. Is. Not. Helping.” Now he sounded like he was speaking through gritted teeth and Clint should really, probably be trying harder to make this better but he also knew there was nothing he could say that was going to make this okay. Clint sighed.

“You’re right, I’m sorry. I’ve got like—” he glanced at his watch, “two hours until the first train to Venice, and as far as I can tell no one is following me, so, y’know, I’ve got time to talk.”

“You’ve got—” Clint could hear Bucky take a deep breath on the other end of the line. “Okay. So—let’s start with the basics. You’re in…. Italy?”

“Yep,” Clint said, settling himself on a bench outside the train station.
“And you got shot at?”

“Not… in Italy?” Clint cringed. “I got sorta-shot at in Germany. But I’m fine, really. Totally fine.”

“You said you needed stitches,” Bucky reminded him.

Clint fingered the rip in his pants, stiff with dried blood. “Well, maybe not. Bleeding’s stopped.”

“Clint,” Bucky began, exasperated. Then he stopped and sighed. “Look. You don’t owe me anything, okay, we didn’t- it’s not like we’re- whatever, okay, it’s. Fine. It’s fine, you don’t have to explain yourself to me I’m not-”

“I’m an Avenger,” Clint blurted, desperate to stop the flow of words coming out of Bucky’s mouth before he reminded both of them exactly what they weren’t to each other.

“You’re- I’m sorry, what? What?” Clint could hear Bucky’s rapid breathing. “You’re- wait, I’m- my thesis is on the Avengers, you asshole!”

“Um, yes?” Clint knew that. Bucky had talked about it, in detail, mostly in ranting, angry detail, to Clint’s eternal bemusement.

“You’ve been an Avenger the whole time and that’s my thesis project and you didn’t think to mention that you-” he made an inarticulate sound of rage. “Which one? Are you Iron Fist?”

“No!” Clint said, offended. “Why does everyone always think that?”

“No, that doesn’t even-”

“I’m Hawkeye,” Clint interrupted, exasperated.

There was dead silence on the other end of the line.
“Oh my god,” Bucky said. “Oh my god, Aaron Judge called you Hawkeye, not Hot Guy.”

Clint scrubbed a hand across his face. “He called me Hawkguy, actually, which is worse.”

“How did I not know this?” Bucky said, almost to himself.

“To be honest,” Clint said slowly, “I’m not sure. Everything I own is purple. There are arrows in my apartment walls.”

“Your PR page sucks,” Bucky muttered, and Clint could hear the distant clicking of computer keys.

“Are you googling me?” Clint asked, aghast. “I am on the phone with you. You can ask me anything you want!”

“You’re way hotter in person. You should hire a new photographer.”

Clint blinked in bewilderment. This was not going at all like he had expected. “I- There are photos?”

“Bad ones,” Bucky said grimly. “Awful, really. Seriously, you are a thousand times hotter in person. I’m gonna redo your page,” he said, decisively. “You deserve better than this. Oh!”

Clint flinched. Here was the moment he’d been dreading.

“Thank you for the stupidly expensive and entirely unnecessary camera lens, by the way.”

“I- you’re welcome?” Clint hesitantly answered. “I, uh, I got you something in Munich, too.”

“Oooh, can I eat it?”
Clint thought about the expensive wool scarf, carefully boxed and hopefully undamaged in his pack. “Um, no.”

Bucky huffed. “Holy shit!” he said, suddenly. “Wait! You were texting- you thought you were texting Camille, is she- holy shit, is she Mockingbird?”

Clint dropped his head in his hands. “No,” he said, muffled through his fingers. “No, she is not Mockingbird. Jesus.”

“So she’s not an Avenger?” Bucky asked, and he sounded almost disappointed. Which was weird, because he’d been livid earlier.

“Oh, no. She’s definitely an Avenger,” Clint answered, because by God, if he was going down, he was taking Natasha with him. “She’s Black Widow.”

“What the fuck,” Bucky said, and there was the outrage Clint had been hoping for. “She’s in my class, Clint!”

“Yeah,” Clint answered, extremely satisfied with himself. “Yes, she sure is.”

“Isn’t she usually a redhead?”

“Yeah, Camille is one of her favorite covers. Blonde, French, usually does a lot of Yoga. It’s a thing.”

There was a few moments of silence interspersed with key-clacking. “Her PR page sucks too. Who the fuck is in charge of these photos?”

“I-” Clint honestly had no idea. He hadn’t known he had a PR page. He hoped his damn face wasn’t on it. “Listen, I’m sorry I-” he blew out a breath.

“Clint,” Bucky interrupted, and now he sounded almost gentle. “It’s- I get it, okay? Secret identities and shit, I guess. And you weren’t- I mean if you were trying to hide it you were doing a piss-poor job. I’m just an idiot.” He started laughing. “I thought you were in the mob.”
“I told you I wasn’t,” Clint pointed out. “I was very clear that I was in no way affiliated with the mob.”

“That’s just what someone in the mob would say,” Bucky said. “When are you coming back?”

“Tomorrow night. I’m gonna catch a few hours’ sleep at Nat’s place, and then I’m flying back. Commercial,” he groaned. “I land at LaGuardia at eight.”

“Okay,” Bucky said. “Okay. You wanna- you wanna maybe come over, after? We can talk? You can bring my gift.”

Clint laughed. “It’ll be late,” he warned. “I have to debrief first. I dunno how long it’ll take, the whole thing was a clusterfuck.”

“That’s fine. I’ll be here.”

And that was- that was something.

Bucky was nervous.

Which was stupid.

He’d been fucking Clint for - God, for weeks, for like almost three months? - and Natasha had been in one class or another of his for over a year, so it wasn’t like he didn’t know them.

Or, well, it was exactly like he didn’t know them because they were both Avengers, they were both heroes, they-
Bucky was *fucking a superhero*.

Why was this just now an epiphany he was having?

A knock at his door drew him out of the spiral of *what the fuckery* he was currently enjoying, and Bucky ran his fingers through his hair as he went to answer it. He wiped his palms off on his jeans, and straightened his shirt, and wondered what the fuck he was *doing* before finally wrenching the door open.

Clint and Cam- Natasha, she was Natasha, and wow her hair was really, really red - were standing on the other side, Clint looking sheepish and uncomfortable, and Natasha looking bored.

“Hi,” he said, stupidly.

Natasha rolled her eyes.

“Hey,” Clint said, and his voice was the same low, scratchy tone that it always was and he looked, for the most part, unhurt, which was actually new. He was wearing a S.H.I.E.L.D t-shirt that looked like it had been through about a thousand washes and a pair of sweatpants that had definitely seen better days.

He looked totally, completely normal.

Natasha, on the other hand, actually looked like a secret agent was supposed to look, to Bucky’s media-infested mind. She had on slim black jeans, black boots, a leather jacket, and he could just about see the collar of a grey t-shirt underneath.

Clint thrust a stack of boxes at him, which Bucky took automatically, and Natasha, clearly one thousand percent done with the both of them, shouldered her way inside and made herself at home on his couch. She raised an eyebrow at the two of them as if to say ’well?’, and Bucky and Clint followed her inside. Clint took the other end of the sofa while Bucky wedged himself into the uncomfortable black armchair that had looked cool in the catalogue, but sat for shit in reality. He held the boxes in his lap uncertainly.

“So,” he said. “Now what?”
Natasha muttered something to herself in another language that made Clint kick at her ankle, to which she viciously retaliated by punching him in the thigh, making him wince and groan.

“Fuck you,” Clint told her, edging closer to the arm. “I’m injured.”

“You’re always injured.” She gestured sharply at Bucky and said something else in the first language that made Clint go red in the face and shut his mouth. She stared him down for a few more seconds before turning to look at Bucky.

He edged further into his chair, clutching the packages protectively.

“You’re both hopeless,” she announced. “We’re Avengers,” she said to Bucky. “Don’t tell anyone, our identities are secret. Or my identity is secret, and Clint’s identity is known by everyone in a half block radius, but it’s not public knowledge so don’t fuck it up. He likes you, be nice.”

She pointed at Clint, said something else in whatever godawful fucking language they spoke to one another, something that made Clint clench his fists and glance sideways and pointedly not look at Bucky. Natasha whacked him in the arm. “Don’t be stupid,” she said, firmly.

She stood up to leave, but turned back at the door. “I looked up my public information page,” she informed Bucky. “The pictures are horrendous. If you can promise to keep my face out of them, I’ll allow you to redo them. You can even put it on your resume.”

Bucky perked up. Adding photographer to the Avengers to his resume would do a lot to help his career, probably.

Assuming no one kidnapped him for information.

Natasha breezed out of the door on that happy thought, shutting it firmly behind her.

Bucky moved to the end of the couch she’d previously occupied, anxious to be out of the world’s most uncomfortable chair, and he sat facing Clint with his back to the arm, one knee bent on the cushions to cradle the packages, and his other foot on the floor.
“Seriously,” Bucky said. “Now what?”

Clint shrugged. “Up to you, I guess. Nothin’s really changed for me.” He gestured at the boxes. “You can open those, if you want. I’m not gonna take ‘em back.”

The packages were, or had been, meticulously wrapped in a wide variety of paper and ribbons, but were now slightly mangled, which meant Clint hadn’t done the wrapping but he’d definitely done the packing. Every gift he’d gotten from Clint up to this point - and there had been plenty, everything from ‘extra’ metro cards, to MOMA memberships, to the best coffee table book Bucky had ever seen - they’d all been wrapped haphazardly if at all, and usually with either butcher paper or leftover Christmas paper, or sometimes just a battered bow. These were completely different. There was a small white, lightweight square paper box with a blue ribbon bow, a grey, slightly larger, flat hinged box, tied with a black ribbon, and a heavy, rectangular package that was actually wrapped in paper that had a slight metallic shimmer.

“Did you have these professionally wrapped?” Bucky asked, suspiciously.

Clint scratched at the back of his neck, a nervous habit Bucky had picked up on weeks ago. “It was, ah, part of the deal. Like, the service.”

Bucky’s eyebrows rose. He’d never bought anyone a gift that came wrapped as a standard service, and he doubted he’d ever received one either. He started with the smallest, lightest box. Inside was a deep blueish-gray scarf, thick and warm and which probably cost more than Bucky’s winter coat.

When he looked up, Clint was, if possible, even redder than he had been when Natasha was scolding him.

“It’s from Munich,” Clint said, without prompting. “One of those stores you’re supposed to visit when you’re there, I dunno. The saleslady helped me pick it out. I, ah, I showed her a picture.”

“Of the scarf?” Bucky asked, pulling it out of the box to wrap it around his neck. Hell, it would probably keep him warmer than his coat.

“No, of you.” Clint looked like he was going to spontaneously combust.
“Oh.” Bucky tugged the scarf a little tighter around his neck. “Thank you.”

Clint made a go-ahead gesture that Bucky took to mean he should open the other gifts and stop embarrassing the shit out of Clint, which he fully intended to continue doing. Just as soon as he had his other presents in hand.

He debated the other two boxes. The lightweight one was bigger, but the other one was heavier. Decisions, decisions.

He opened the bigger package first.

Inside the hinged box, nestled in tissue paper, was a gold filigree mask with attached black ribbons and a card that said *Ca’ Macana*. He lifted it out to look at it, turning it over in his hands. It was beautifully crafted and reminded Bucky, vaguely, of a cat, with the suggestion of ears at the edges and the shape of the nose.

“So- am I supposed to wear it?” Bucky asked.

“Yeah, of course! I mean, you can if you want? I just- it’s traditional, Venetian masks, and I thought of you when I saw it and- you can do whatever with it it’s not-” Clint floundered. “It’s not like a sex thing!”

Bucky burst out laughing. “Okay,” he said, smiling. He lifted it up to his face, but didn’t tie it behind his head. “What do you think?”

Clint swallowed hard. “It’s- you look fantastic.”

Smirking, Bucky gently placed the mask back in the box and set it aside on the coffee table. He picked the paper on the last package open carefully, just because it was pretty and he liked it. He didn’t usually save wrapping paper, but something about this felt special. Plus, it was heavy-duty and Bucky was sure his sister would enjoy receiving her birthday present wrapped in something so nice.

Inside the box, snug in molded foam, was a milky, blown glass cat statuette, maybe 8 inches tall.
Bucky stared at it for a long, drawn-out moment.

“Made me think of Al,” Clint said, into the silence, and something about that made hot tears prickle in the back of Bucky’s eyes. He blinked them away.

“You don’t even like Alpine,” Bucky rasped.

“Aw, babe, sure I do,” Clint said, and he reached out to tug Bucky closer with his still-knotted scarf. “I just don’t like it when he attacks my feet when we’re busy.”

Bucky snorted a laugh and let Clint pull him into his side, warm and comfortable. He let Clint take the box out of his hand and place it on the coffee table next to the other box; let Clint unwrap the scarf from around his neck and toss it aside.

“Hey,” Clint said, tilting his face up until he could look at Bucky. “I’m sorry. I shoulda told you sooner. I didn’t realize you didn’t know until the baseball game, and then it was- I dunno, I couldn’t figure out what to say and anyway it was dumb. ‘M sorry.”

“Mmmm.” Bucky hummed. “I’ll let you make it up to me,” he decided.

“Yeah?” Clint said, and his voice took on that bedroom tone that sent shivers down Bucky’s spine.

“Yep,” Bucky agreed, turning a little so that he could kiss Clint. “You can let me re-do your social media shit.”

Clint groaned theatrically, letting his head droop against the back of the couch. “Fine, fine,” he grumbled. “No face shots though.”

“That’s what she said.”

“I’m a spy!” Clint argued, before he caught the joke. “Smartass.”

“I’m your smartass,” Bucky said, climbing into Clint’s lap. “Hey, asshole. I missed you. I’m glad
“You didn’t get shot.”

“You didn’t get shot.”

“Me too. I got stabbed a little, though, so watch the leg. If you tear the stitches, Nat’ll put ‘em back without anesthetic.” He pulled Bucky’s face down for a much more thorough kiss than the one Bucky had given him moments before. “I missed you too,” he added.

They were in Bucky’s bed, half dressed and kissing lazily, when Bucky’s epiphany revisited him.

“Holy shit,” he said, breaking away from the kisses. “I’m fucking a superhero.”

Clint rolled his eyes. “You want a t-shirt?”

“Hell yes, I want a t-shirt,” Bucky said, grinning. “I deserve a t-shirt. I want it to say I’m fucking The Amazing Hawkeye - that’s your whole title right? That’s a thing?”

“Stop googling me,” Clint grumbled. “It’s just Hawkeye.”

“No,” Bucky disagreed, shifting up so that he was straddling Clint’s lap. “You’re definitely the amazing Hawkeye. Are all superheros fantastic in bed, is that a requirement?” He poked at Clint’s abs.

“Fuck you,” Clint responded, flipping them over in a move too fast for Bucky to follow. “I was amazing in bed way before I was a superhero.”
Chapter 7

Chapter Summary

Ugh, spies.

Also featuring a kitten.

Chapter Notes

Clint gets stitches. If that sort of thing skeeves you out, skip the first couple of paragraphs.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Clint made a face as the needle tugged at the skin over his ribs. It didn’t hurt, exactly, because Natasha had forced him into medical and he hadn’t tried to run away for once, so the doctor had very generously used lidocaine to numb the area before he started stitching. Clint still didn’t like the sensation, though, and he knew his face was doing awful things, because Natasha kept snapping photos of him with her cellphone from where she’d perched on the edge of a chair to keep him company. Or prevent his escape. Or for entertainment value.

One of those things.

“You should bring James to the tower,” Natasha said, conversationally, not looking up from her cellphone.

Oh. It was an interrogation.

“I should what?” Clint asked. “Why? He hates the Avengers. I’m pretty sure he’s going to wake up any moment and realize he hates me.”

She gave him a look that let him know how not-funny she found that, and how stupid he sounded. “He needs perspective,” she said, instead of voicing her opinion. “Something other than jaded, post-graduate millennial. He’ll like Steve.” She tapped something else out on the screen. “And we’re going to fail our graduate thesis if we don’t finish our assignment soon, and while I could hack the system and give us passing grades, that seems dishonest.”
“I- what?” Clint felt like a parrot. “You want me to introduce Bucky to the Avengers - who he hates - so that you can pass a class you don’t even care about?”

“That’s hurtful, Clint. Of course I care about it.” She tossed her hair, and pointedly didn’t look up. Clint wasn’t fooled - she absolutely didn’t care about the class. She cared about harassing Clint, which was completely unrelated.

“Agent Romanov,” JARVIS interrupted. “You have a guest-”

“Send them up,” Natasha said, finally tucking her phone away.

Clint glared at her suspiciously, but Natasha had been taught the finer points of resisting interrogation by the Red Room, and Clint’s look bounced harmlessly off of her unconcern.

“I’m just pointing out that James might have a change of heart if he were to get to know the team. It would be good for him.”

Clint heard the unvoiced it would be good for you. He rolled his eyes.

“Fine, fine.” He said, shrugging, and then wincing when it pulled at the wound the doctor was still stitching. “I’ll ask Bucky if he wants to meet the Avengers.” He was fairly certain Bucky’s answer would be a resounding no. But he’d ask, because Nat could smell a lie from a mile away. She narrowed her eyes at him.

“Good, I’m glad we agree.”

Before Clint could even formulate a response to that ominous as hell statement, the door to medical slid open - something that still, nearly six years into this Avengers gig, reminded him of something from Star Trek - with a quiet whoosh, making both Clint and Natasha look up.

Clint was expecting Steve, or possibly Sam and Steve, because he was expecting to suffer egregiously for the stunt he’d pulled today, and Sam loved nothing better than to harass him.
Instead, Bucky tumbled through the door looking disheveled and confused, and Clint shot Nat a venomous glare.

“Mudak,” he hissed, through clenched teeth.

She smiled beatifically at him.

“What the hell happened?” Bucky asked, looking between Natasha, Clint, and the doctor. Clint was stripped to the waist, his suit unzipped and pooled at his hips, leaving his entire upper torso bare. Other than the nasty cut along his side, he was relatively unscathed for a change, just dirty and only a little bruised.

Of course, the nasty cut was bleeding fairly profusely, and the saline the doctor had irrigated the wound with had only made it look worse, soaking with the blood into the disposable drape along his side.

“I’m fine,” Clint answered, just as Natasha snorted.

“You’re obviously not,” Bucky argued, taking a few tentative steps closer. He was clenching and unclenching his hands and rocking from foot to foot, obviously anxious and unsure.

“You can help him hold his arm up,” Natasha offered, as she settled deeper into the uncomfortable plastic chair.

“Is- is that- do you want-”

“Just stay on that side,” the doctor said, jerking his head towards Clint’s right, where he was uninjured. “I’ve got Barton on a table for proper stitches for once, I’d like to get them done sometime this evening.”

Clint rolled his eyes.

And while it was true he preferred to perform most of his own first aid, he never avoided necessary stitches. He just sometimes disagreed on when they were necessary, and he often enlisted Natasha’s
truly underrated assistance.

She’d refused this time, and the cut hadn’t stopped bleeding by the time they’d gotten back to the tower, so he’d dutifully trudged to medical for things like antiseptic and sterility.

Bucky edged further into the space, giving the doctor and the nurse assisting him a wide berth, before coming up close on Clint’s right, reaching out to grip his wrist and letting Clint relax his shoulders. Clint sighed in relief. It really was much easier to let someone else hold his arm up. Why hadn’t Natasha been doing this already?

“What the fuck,” Bucky said, to no one in particular. “I saw- I watched the news, everyone looked fine when the Doombots collapsed.”

“Get used to it,” Nat responded, pulling her phone out again. “Clint’s never left a fight uninjured in the entire time I’ve known him.”

“That’s not fair,” Clint argued, “I didn’t get hurt in the fight.” Because he hadn’t.

Tony was away on business in Venezuela and Doom had seen an opening and taken it, descending en masse on the city with a literal army of his distinct robots. It had taken considerably longer to hack and disable the signal he used to control them without Tony working on it in real-time, relying instead on JARVIS and Bruce in the Tower, with Steve calling shots in the field. But Clint had stayed relatively unscathed on a rooftop, knocking doombots out with EMP arrows until he’d run out, and then exploding arrows until he’d run out of those, and then regular old arrows to strategic joints and he’d been down to his last half-dozen of those when the bots has all shut down like marionettes with their strings cut, thanks to Bruce and JARVIS’ combined efforts.

Clint’s shoulders ached from the draw of the bow, but he hadn’t gotten hurt in the fight.

No, he’d-

The medical suite’s doors swooshed open again, and this time Sam and Steve filed in, both still dusty and in uniform, Sam grinning wide enough to split his face.

“It’s the man of the hour!” he said, all false enthusiasm. “I thought we were working with Hawkeye, but no, man, it’s the White Panther. I can’t wait to tell T’Challa all about it!”
“FUCK YOU,” Clint grumbled, just as Bucky said “SAM?” all confused and hesitant and a half-step away from righteously pissed off.

Sam blinked between Clint and Bucky and Natasha.

“Oh hell no,” he said, glaring at Nat, who looked unperturbed. “Tell me you did not.”

“I did not,” she intoned, totally flat.

“Sam, what the fuck?” Bucky said again, and he was clearly gearing up for an emotional diatribe. Clint knew all the signs. “You’re the goddamned Falcon? What the fuck, are all my friends secretly Avengers?”

“Ow,” Clint said, sharp and unconvincingly, but it distracted Bucky long enough for Sam to take a half-step behind Steve.

Natasha rolled her eyes.

“So, Bruce is checking over the kitten,” Steve announced, and Bucky’s head whipped around so fast his hair nearly caught Clint in the eyes.

“Kitten?” he said, and that was a better distraction than even Clint’s feigned pain.

“OH!” Sam chortled, and Clint sighed in defeat.

Because he hadn’t gotten hurt fighting Doombots.

He’d gotten hurt rescuing a fucking kitten. He’d sliced his ribs open on the twisted steel of a ruined dumpster one of the Doombots had fallen into, when he heard a tiny and pathetic little *mew* that had garnered his instant attention. Between climbing over the fallen robot and digging for the cat, Clint had somehow managed to tear open both his suit and his side, and hadn’t even noticed until Natasha had remarked on the estimated blood loss.
“You must be James,” Steve said, holding out one meatshovel hand. “I’m Steve. We’ve heard a lot about you.”

Bucky turned wide eyes on Clint, who shook his head wildly. They had not heard anything about Bucky from Clint, nosiree, which meant-

Both of them swivelled to look at Natasha, who blinked innocently.

Too innocently.

Bucky reluctantly accepted Steve’s handshake, and Clint choked down a laugh because it had to have been the most reluctant handshake Steve had gotten since the time George W had had to shake his hand at a political rally calling for the Freedom of Information Act to be signed.

“Bruce isn’t that kind of doctor,” Natasha reminded them all.

“What’s wrong with Trashcat?” Clint said, unable to help himself.

“First of all, you are absolutely not calling the cat Trashcat,” Sam said. “You named a one-eyed dog Lucky, you are banned from naming things, we’ve discussed this.”

“I found it in a dumpster, what am I supposed to call it?” Clint complained, wincing as the doctor tied off a particularly sharp stitch. The lidocaine was starting to wear off.

“Oscar?” Steve suggested, and Bucky turned wide eyes on him.

“As in the Grouch?” he asked, and Steve grinned at him.

“I got that reference,” Sam mocked, under his breath.

“Oh my god,” Bucky said, and took a deep breath.
They were all saved from whatever it was he was about to say when Bruce walked in. The medical suite was getting rather crowded at this point. In Bruce’s hands was the tiniest ball of multi-colored fluff Clint had ever seen.

Sure, the cat had been small when he’d dug it out of the trash heap and tucked it into the crook of his unbloodied arm, but now small and clean and wrapped in a bright, white towel, it looked so tiny as to be unreal.

Bucky made a noise that defied human explanation.

“What about PJ?” Sam suggested, as Bruce passed the kitten off to Steve, since Clint’s hands were clearly still occupied staying the fuck out of the doctor’s way.

“As in Parajumper?” Clint snorted. “That’s not better than Trashcat.”

“It’s way better than Trashcat,” Bucky disagreed, as he leaned away from Clint and swayed towards Steve and the kitten. “But it’s still objectively awful.”

“I found it in the trash,” Clint reminded everyone and no one at once, with a sigh.

“We found you in the trash,” Sam snarked.

“Be nice,” Steve ordered, in his good, old-fashioned Cap voice. “Clint didn’t miss a single shot - not that he ever does -” he added, magnanimously, because damn right Clint never missed, “and took out more Doombots than anyone else on the team today. He covered all our asses, and then he rescued a kitten. It was very… noble.”

Steve, Clint realized, had barely stopped himself from saying sweet.

Sam’s grin turned shark-like.

The doctor slapped a bandage on to Clint’s newly-sewn-together side and rolled back on his stool -
and coincidentally over Sam’s toes, when he didn’t leap away fast enough - and stripped off his
gloves. “Keep it clean and dry, the stitches can come out in five to seven days, you know the drill.”
Clint shot him a lazy salute and leaned back, retrieving his arm from Bucky’s now nearly-slack grip.

Bucky instantly darted forward to snatch the kitten out of Steve’s hands, cradling it to his chest.

Steve’s look was desperately amused, and Clint hated him, just a little.

“What about Fitzgerald,” he said, as Bucky pressed his nose into the kitten’s fur.

“Calicos are almost all female,” Natasha said, sounding bored. “It’s probably a girl.”

“It’s a female,” Bruce agreed, smiling a little behind his glasses. “She’s small and a little
undernourished, but there’s nothing wrong with her that I could see. Not that I’m a veterinarian.
I’m-”

“Not that kind of doctor, we know,” Steve said, clapping a hand on his back. “Thanks for looking
anyway. And great work today.”

Bruce shrugged, looking faintly pink around the ears as he made his escape. Bruce, like Clint, didn’t
really do feelings.

“So what are you going to do with the cat, Barton?” Sam asked, leaning against the wall next to
Natasha. She flicked a reproachful gaze up at him, but didn’t move away, which was as good as a
glaring admission on her part. Clint made a face.

Bucky turned wide, pleading eyes on Clint.

Oh.

Oh, shit.

Behind Bucky, Steve’s face grew ever-more amused.
Clint heaved a bone-deep sigh as he scrubbed a hand over his face. “Trashcat and—”

“Her name is not Trashcat,” Bucky said, vehemently, and Clint leaned back out of the blast radius.

“Oh, okay,” Clint soothed, reaching for the arms of his suit to pull it on, and then giving up when the accompanying burning pain lanced across his side, and settled for tucking the single sleeve into the waist of the jumpsuit. “Okay, you can name her whatever you want. Her name isn’t Trashcat.”

“You should probably rest, Hawkeye,” Steve interjected, biting down on a grin. “It’s nearly midnight and we need to debrief in the morning. You could just stay in the Tower tonight.”

Clint bit his tongue, hard.

He seldom stayed in the Tower, for a wide variety of reasons including but not limited to the fact that the omnipresent AI freaked him out a little bit and the whole building was a bit too rich for his tastes. But Steve wasn’t wrong. And when Steve Rogers said ‘in the morning’ he meant some godawful hour like 0700, instead of something that more reasonable people would expect, like closer to noon.

“You do have an entire floor,” Natasha added, entirely unconcerned.

Clint hated her a little bit too.

He sighed.

“There’s even room for James,” she continued, and Clint hated her just a little bit less. Because that was the crux of the issue, really. Clint had stayed over at the tower a lot more frequently before he’d embarked on this whatever-it-was with Bucky, but now he spent most every night he wasn’t on mission in Bed-Stuy, on the off chance that he’d be spending that night with Bucky.

It was kind of pathetic, if he let himself dwell on it too much, so he didn’t.

“You have an entire floor in Avengers Tower?” Bucky demanded, still cradling the kitten to his
chest, where she had curled up contentedly and was purring loudly enough that even Clint could hear it.

“Um, yes?” Clint said, scratching at the back of his neck. “Everyone does- all the Avengers. Well,” he amended. “Scott and Thor share because Thor is off-world so often and Scott likes to spend time with his kid.”

“Agent Barton,” JARVIS interrupted, saving Clint from himself.

“Yeah, J?” Clint said, happy for the distraction.

“I have taken the liberty of ordering all of the usual requirements for a kitten to be delivered to your floor within the hour. I have also scheduled an in-house veterinarian appointment for tomorrow morning at ten a.m.”

“Thanks,” Clint said in defeat. Looked like he was staying at the Tower tonight.

He felt very ganged up on.

“I feel very ganged up on,” he told the team, pointing first at Natasha and then at Steve. “This is lateral workplace violence and I’m going to report all of you to HR.” The last he glared at Sam.

Not one of them looked even slightly repentant. Steve was actually smirking.

Clint hopped off of the medical table, hitching his suit up so that his ass wasn’t hanging out and zipping it up high enough to hopefully keep it that way until he got upstairs.

“You wanna see the second-highest floor in Avengers Tower?” Clint asked Bucky, jerking his head towards the hallway.
Bucky blinked in utter bewilderment as he followed Clint - *Hawkeye* - out of the clinical area and into the central bank of elevators. The very same elevators that had brought Bucky to the floor, after Natasha had sent him a series of texts letting him know that Clint had hurt himself and was in the clinic getting stitches, along with a few accompanying pictures of him making absolutely gruesome faces.

He hadn’t thought much of hauling ass to Midtown and Avengers Tower at her subtle prompting, but now, leaning against the mirrored interior of the elevators, which were completely devoid of even buttons, Bucky realized he’d been played.

“Why the second-highest?” Bucky asked after a long moment of complete silence. They’d boarded the elevator and he could feel the sensation that meant they were rocketing upwards, but there was no indication of what floor they were on or which one they were headed to.

“What? Oh, because my floor is the second from the top. I like to be up high, so Tony gave me the highest residential floor.”

“What’s above you?”

“Community space,” Clint grunted, reaching to scratch at his newly-bandaged side, and refraining at the last second. “Like a party room, has a bar, pool table, stuff like that.”

Bucky hummed a noncommittal noise.

It had been clear to him, over the last few months, that Clint had money. He had no idea how much - it wasn’t a subject that came up naturally with someone who perpetually had holes in his socks and a couch that was at least a decade old, if the upholstery was any indication - but he definitely had it. He’d bought Bucky any number of gifts, many if not most of which ranged from fairly expensive to wildly extravagant, and now Bucky discovered he had an *entire floor* in the most infamous building in New York. He’d been prepared to accept that Clint was affiliated with the mob, and then almost relieved to learn he was an Avenger, at least in the sense that it meant he wasn’t a criminal but *this*.

This was a bit much.

“You own this?” Bucky gaped at the huge, tastefully decorated interior of the floor the elevator deposited them on.
Clint laughed.

“No, god no. It’s Tony’s he just- I mean, I guess it’s mine, but Tony gave it to me. I don’t pay for it or- I didn’t buy it or whatever. It’s just headquarters, I dunno. I used to have a S.H.I.E.L.D. bunk.” He shrugged, looking horribly uncomfortable.

The apartment - the floor - looked pretty distinctly un-lived-in. Nothing at all about it said ‘Clint Barton’ to Bucky, and he thought he’d come to know the other man pretty well in recent months. The whole place was neat as a pin, almost sterile in its lack of personal accoutrements, with the small exceptions of a throw blanket, neatly folded over the back of the couch, and a framed photo on the bar of the original six Avengers, taken in some run-down shawarma restaurant.

Nothing about it said home; everything about it screamed ‘hotel’.

“Her name is Persephone,” Bucky announced, scooting around Clint to gently put the kitten down on the couch, still curled up in a fluffy little ball, asleep.

“Okay?” Clint said, hesitantly. He looked relieved. “Do you- you wanna keep her?”

“You don’t want her?” Bucky asked, eyeing him.

Clint visibly backpedaled. “I just- I don’t know anything about cats, you know, and you, you know you like cats and maybeAlpineneedsafriend?”

Bucky laughed.

“We can timeshare her,” Bucky offered. “Like you do with Lucky.”

Clint deflated like a balloon releasing air he was so relieved. “Yeah.” He said. “I can do that.”

“Good.” Bucky said. “Now, where’s your shower? You smell like destruction with a whiff of dumpster diving hobo. I can saran-wrap your stitches and you can get clean.”
They did just that, Bucky carefully taping plastic wrap to Clint’s side, and Clint stumbling into the shower.

The marble tile, gleaming chrome, magazine-quality bathroom.

“Why the fuck do you stay in Bed-Stuy when you could shower here?” Bucky marveled, adjusting the dual shower heads.

Clint was taking his hearing aids out, setting them carefully on the countertop when Bucky said it, and Bucky wasn’t entirely certain he’d heard him until Clint was under the hot spray, his shoulders relaxing in the warmth.

“You’re not here,” Clint muttered, and Bucky was sure he hadn’t been meant to catch that admission; was equally sure Clint hadn’t realized he’d said it loudly enough for Bucky to hear at all.

It did funny, twisty things to Bucky’s insides, but then, Clint had been doing funny, twisty things to Bucky’s insides for weeks now, since before that crapshoot of a mission that had left him stranded in Italy, possibly since he’d turned up on Bucky’s doorstep battered and bruised and in need of some serious TLC.

Bucky was in way, way too deep.

*B*

Bucky woke up flailing, lights flashing around him and a cacophony of beeping that was louder than most club music he had experienced.

“Jesus fuck,” he said, sitting up in bed and looking around in disheveled panic. “What the hell?”

The beeping, blessedly, cut out, though the seizure-inducing lights continued.

“My apologies,” said the ceiling. “I am attempting to awaken Agent Barton for the morning debrief.”
Beside him, Clint snored on, oblivious, sprawled on his stomach and clutching a pillow. He was drooling, a little bit, and it was frankly disgusting how cute Bucky found the sight.

His memory returned in biting increments. He was in Avengers Tower.

*He was in Avengers Tower.*

The ceiling was talking to him. Clint was Hawkeye. Objectively, Bucky had known that for weeks. Un-objectively, this was the first time he’d really had to face up to that reality. They were on Clint’s floor in Avengers Tower (*Avengers Tower, whatthefuck*) and Clint had gotten cut rescuing a kitten and-

“Can you, um. Can you make the lights stop?” Bucky asked the air, squeezing his eyes shut.

The lights stopped flashing.

“Thanks.” Bucky sighed in relief.

“You’re quite welcome,” the ceiling said, and Bucky jumped.

Right. The building talked. Or something. He hadn’t gotten the run-down from Clint.

“Agent Barton is due to debrief in twenty minutes,” the ceiling said, something chiding in its tone. “In the past, Agent Romanov has come to forcibly remove him from bed if he did not arrive to debrief in a timely manner.”

Right. Bucky took that to mean that if he didn’t get Clint out of bed the *Black fucking Widow* was going to come looking for him.

While he was tempted to leave Clint to his fate, he wasn’t tempted to have Natasha Romanov - who he still couldn’t reconcile with his friend Camille - invade the bedroom while he was still in bed.
Bucky got up to make coffee. And feed Persephone, who was yawning adorably from the foot of the bed and Bucky just wanted to put her on his face and let her purr him into unconsciousness.

Lights turned on as he walked out of the bedroom, illuminating the hallway and upcoming rooms just before he entered them, like something out of a sci-fi novel, and he entertained the brief notion that he could get used to that. In the kitchen, the coffee maker - which looked sentient - came to life with a hiss.

Okay, maybe it was sentient.

Bucky decided he was going to treat this like a sort of fever dream, and went with it.

He put Persephone on the floor and opened a can of wet cat food - courtesy the midnight delivery of cat supplies that a robot had brought last night - into the little pink bowl that had also arrived. The kitten dived in, face mashed into the food and paws kneading at the wet mass, and Bucky sighed, knowing he was going to have to clean her up afterwards. He wasn’t entirely convinced she was even old enough to be away from her mother, but here they were. He then rifled through the fridge and pantry, shocked to find a fair amount of food, along with the coffee mugs in the second cabinet he tried. He poured Clint the biggest mug he could find full of coffee and took it back to the bedroom and sat it on the nightstand near his face.

Past experience had taught him that leaving coffee nearby would wake the other man faster than any annoying behavior Bucky could produce.

Although a blowjob would wake him up pretty much immediately.

They didn’t have time for that.

Bucky stored the thought away for later. It would be fun to christen Clint’s Avengers apartment. Maybe after his meeting.

Back in the kitchen Bucky pulled out a carton of eggs - a full, untouched carton, and it was weird how there was stuff in Clint’s kitchen. In Bed Stuy, Bucky was lucky to find leftover pizza in Clint’s fridge, much less eggs and cheese and milk.

It only took a couple of minutes for Bucky to have a ham and cheese omelet going on the stove, and
by the time it was nearly done, Clint was stumbling out of the bedroom like a particularly good-looking zombie, coffee mug clutched in his hand and his hair sticking up everywhere.

“Hi,” he mumbled, slumping into Bucky’s shoulder. “Why’re you up so early?”

Bucky shrugged him off, steering him towards a stool at the bar and dumping the omelet on a plate and producing a fork.

“Oh your talking ceiling woke me up. You have to go to a debrief, and I think I got threatened with violence from Natasha if you weren’t awake.”

The ceiling made a scoffing noise.


This time Bucky made the scoffing noise. Clint grinned at him, all sleep-soft and appreciative and Bucky felt his heart give a painful thud. Clint tugged him closer and pulled him into a coffee-flavored kiss.

“Hi,” Clint said again, his mouth still pressed against Bucky’s.

Bucky rolled his eyes, but he couldn’t stop the smile that tugged at his lips. “Hi,” he said, pulling away.

Clint opened his mouth to say something else, but a chime sounded from the ceiling and Clint groaned.

“Agent Romanov is at the door,” the ceiling said, unnecessarily.

“Let her in,” Clint grumbled, letting go of Bucky in favor of shoveling the still-steaming omelet in his mouth.

Persephone mewed from the floor, and Bucky leaned down to scoop her up and carry her to the sink,
where he used warm water and a paper towel to clean the cat food off of her face and paws while she purred contentedly.

Natasha walked in looking fresh off of a magazine cover - not that Bucky had ever seen her look anything but effortlessly chic - if the magazine were for dangerous, deadly people. Now that she wasn’t pretending to be Camille, she carried herself like a loaded weapon which, Bucky supposed, she was.

He thought of the black catsuit she’d been wearing in the clinic the night before, and he wondered if she still wanted new pictures for her PR page.

Then he thought of Clint, half-naked on the clinic table, with his own uniform half off, and wondered if he could convince him to model *privately*. Bucky shivered.

At the bar, Natasha shoved at Clint until he climbed off the stool, his omelet two-thirds eaten, and shambled back into the bedroom, coffee still clutched between his fingers, and his pajama pants hanging low enough that a strip of skin showed between his t-shirt and the waistband. Bucky watched him go, his mind still on the Hawkeye uniform.

Natasha cleared her throat, the plate in front of her now empty.

Bucky glared at her.

“*We’ll be back in time for the vet appointment,*” she said, amused, and Bucky glanced at the clock. It was five minutes ‘til seven. He made a wounded noise. He could have been *sleeping*.

On the other hand, the vet was coming at ten, and that left him with enough time to go back to his apartment and get his camera and some other things, including, maybe, Alpine. It was good to introduce cats to each other in neutral territory right? It couldn’t get much more neutral than an apartment Clint didn’t really live in. Persephone shifted in his grip, stretching her tiny paws against his palm.

“*Don’t think I don’t know you planned this,*” Bucky told Natasha, severely.

She smirked.
Fucking spies.

Chapter End Notes

Mudak means “asshole” in Russian, per google translate.

Special thanks to the following people for their absolutely terrible kitten name suggestions:

Clara

And

Remsyk

I will never ask again, I promise. 😄😄😄😄
Chapter 8

Chapter Summary

The one where Bucky’s Hawkeye fantasies get fulfilled.
Also, team night.

Chapter Notes

PORN ahoy! Possible undernegotiated kink but nothing crazy.
Also Steve Rogers cheats strategizes like a mofo at cards - pry that headcanon from my cold dead hands. (Dedicated to Mariana O’Connor)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“You’re an asshole,” Bucky informed Alpine, currently stretched lazily across the back of Clint’s (Tony’s?) leather sofa and watching Persephone make every effort to reach him from her short, stubby legs. She was still that cute age of kitten fluff with a Christmas tree tail, and Alpine wanted absolutely nothing to do with her.

Alpine yawned in response, and began grooming his face.

Bucky rolled his eyes.

It had taken him a solid two and a half hours to navigate his way back to Bed-Stuy, shower and change, gather his camera and his cat, and make his way back via Lyft, and Alpine was nothing less than utterly pissy about it. Bucky was equally annoyed with both the hassle and the attitude. He busied himself setting up Alpine’s ‘travel’ stuff, which he mostly kept around for when he was going to visit his parents for a few days, and that included a spare litter box, a few mostly-ignored toys, and a popup hidey-hole. He wasn’t sure how long they might be at Clint’s Avengers apartment, but he was still fairly confident in his decision to introduce the cats here. The travel goodies were easy enough to pack into a duffle bag anyway, if Clint decided to go back to Bed-Stuy tonight. Or if he decided he didn’t want Bucky in his space anymore, which Bucky didn’t expect, but the possibility still grated in the back of his mind like gravel in a shoe. Sharp and unwelcome.

Clint chose that moment to walk through the front door, trailed by Natasha and an unfamiliar woman with curly black hair and a dark complexion. She looked distinctly disgruntled, wore light grey scrubs and a white coat, and carried a battered black backpack. Michelle Capozza, DVM was
embroidered on the coat in faded blue script.

“Where’s my patient?” she asked, without preamble. “I took time off of clinic for this. When I agreed to be on retainer for Stark Industries, I was expecting emergencies, not house calls that could have been done during business hours.”

Natasha rolled her eyes, but Bucky scrambled to scoop Persephone off of the couch, where she was batting at Alpine’s swinging tail. She squeaked a protest, but Bucky ignored her, taking her over to where the vet was unloading the bag onto Clint’s little-used glass dining table.

“Sorry,” he muttered, abashed.

Dr. Capozza glanced up at his sheepish expression, and something about her attitude and shoulders softened. “Let’s have a look then, shall we?” She snapped on gloves and and produced a stethoscope to press against the kitten’s tiny chest. The vet kept a comforting hand on Persephone’s back, scritching behind her ears. The cat started purring.

“Stop that,” the vet chastised gently. “I can’t hear your heart over all those cute little rumbles.” She did not sound at all as though she were unhappy with the development, and eventually took the earpieces out and set the tool aside.

“So you found her in a dumpster?” Dr. Capozza asked, sounding distracted as she began giving Persephone a very thorough going-over, pressing into her little belly and checking her mouth and ears.

“Yeah,” Clint answered, when it was clear no one else was going to. “She was by herself, I didn’t see any other babies or a mother cat.”

The vet hummed an acknowledgement. “Has she been sick at all? Vomiting, diarrhea, sneezing?”

“No,” Bucky said. “She seems fine. She ate some wet kitten food this morning, I hope that was okay.”

Dr. Capozza was now checking Persephone’s temperature, which she was protesting rather loudly. Alpine had come over to investigate, weaving himself around Bucky’s feet and looking up towards the table to see what all the fuss was about. The thermometer went away, and Persephone’s fussing
stopped, though she was now making a concentrated effort to escape.

“She seems fine to me,” the vet said, sounding vaguely surprised. “I’d estimate her age somewhere between six and eight weeks. She’s a little bit undernourished, but nothing too worrisome. I’d add some mother’s replacement milk to her diet for the next couple of weeks as a supplement, and I’m going to vaccinate and de-worm her today as a precaution.” The vet unzipped a new compartment of the backpack and began pulling out vaccine supplies.

Persephone didn’t like any of that any better than she had the temperature taking, and Alpine decided to make himself scarce under Clint’s couch at the first offended-sounding mewl that she made.

“I want to see her back in about a month for another round of vaccines and a check-up,” Dr. Capozza said, when she was finished and Persephone was being safely cradled in Bucky’s chest. “In my office,” she emphasized sternly, as she zipped her backpack of supplies back up, “or sooner if you notice any issues like lack of appetite, sneezing, coughing, vomiting or diarrhea.”

Bucky nodded emphatically. “Got it. Thanks for coming by to check on her,” he added.

“That’s what they pay me for,” she said, more cheerful than she’d seemed when she arrived.

Natasha snorted, and gave Clint and Bucky a sarcastic little salute as she escorted the doctor out of the apartment and, presumably, the building.

After they were gone, Clint wrapped himself around Bucky from behind, setting his chin on Bucky’s shoulder and resting his hands on Bucky’s waist. “So, I take it you went back to Bed-Stuy this morning.”

Persephone squirmed in Bucky’s grip and he leaned over, Clint still plastered to his spine, to set her on the ground, where she promptly wobbled her way straight over to Alpine’s hiding spot.

Bucky snorted as he straightened up. “Obviously.”

“For the cats?” Clint asked, nuzzling underneath Bucky’s ear. The warmth of his words blowing over Bucky’s skin made him shiver.
“Well, I got my camera too,” Bucky hedged, feeling suddenly shy.

Clint perked up. “Oh yeah, what are we gonna do with the camera?”

It sounded so deliciously suggestive that Bucky almost didn’t tell the truth.

“I was thinking we could do new Hawkeye pictures, since your current ones are so godawful.”

The fact was, Bucky just couldn’t let those fucking awful photos on the internet stand. The professional photographer in him absolutely refused. And the draw of photographing Clint in his uniform was undeniable.


Bucky laughed. “I can torture Natasha too, if she wants.” He could just about hear Clint rolling his eyes.

“Yeah, yeah, I guess I’ll ask.” Clint sighed again, but undraped himself from Bucky’s back. “JARVIS, can you ask Nat if she wants to do her Avengers photo shoot with Bucky today?”

“Certainly, sir,” the ceiling responded, and that was a point.

“Okay,” Bucky said, heading across the living room for his camera bag. “What’s with the talking ceiling?”

“What? Oh. That’s JARVIS. He’s, uh, Tony built him? He runs the tower, he’s an A.I.”

“So JARVIS is the building?” Bucky asked, trying to parse it out.

“If I may,” JARVIS interrupted. “I am a constantly evolving artificial intelligence user interface, designed by Sir to manage Stark Industries in conjunction with Ms. Potts and as a security program for Stark Tower. Since being uploaded into the Iron Man armor, I also function adjacently to the
Avengers’ missions. Also, Agent Romanov indicated she will meet you in the practice range in twenty minutes.”

“So you’re like Data,” Bucky said, thoughtfully.

“I contain multitudes of data, yes.”

“No, I mean the android,” Bucky said, grinning at Clint.

This seemed to give JARVIS pause and then-

“In a manner of speaking, I suppose.”

Bucky imagined that if a computer system could sigh, JARVIS would.

“Nice to meet you JARVIS,” Bucky said cheerfully, slinging his camera bag over his shoulder.

“Likewise, Mr. Barnes,” JARVIS answered.

“Well,” Bucky said, this time to Clint, “are you gonna go get changed or what?”

“Or what,” Clint grumbled, slouching against a wall and shoving his hands in his pockets. “Oh,” he said, suddenly, “hey, I got you something. I didn’t know you were gonna go home this morning, so, uh, I dropped by the Stark Store downstairs.” He pulled a flat, black box out of his back pocket and handed it to Bucky.

Bucky turned it over in his hands, then dumped the contents out onto his palm. It was a wireless Stark charger.

Clint looked the same shade of weirdly uncertain he always did whenever he gave Bucky a gift, and he gave a little half-shrug at Bucky’s raised eyebrow.
“I thought you might need a charger for your phone here, since you didn’t have one with you last night. I figured you could raid my stuff for clothes if you needed, but I don’t have a charger that fits your phone. That one’ll work with anything, or that’s what Tony swears.”

Bucky wished he’d thought to raid Clint’s closet, actually. Stealing a hoodie sounded… a lot like boyfriend behavior, and it was the kind of behavior Bucky desperately wanted to indulge in.

“Thank you,” Bucky said. “I forgot my charger at home again anyway. And actually, I was thinking we could go up on the roof? So maybe I’ll grab a jacket or something?”

“Yeah?” Clint said, leveraging himself off the wall. “Grab anything you want. I’ll go get my suit on, be back in five.”

Bucky confiscated a Queen sweatshirt so soft and worn that he almost suspected Clint had owned it since before Freddie Mercury died, except he was pretty sure Clint was like, ten, when that happened, so probably not. It was comfortably loose over his shoulders and too long in the arms, so Bucky pushed the sleeves up to his elbows and went to meet Clint.

* 

Clint sprawled across the leather couch in the living room, still fully decked out in the Hawkeye uniform, though he’d left the bow propped against the wall by the door. He was so very clearly done with being directed and repositioned by both Bucky and Natasha, but he’d been a good sport about the whole thing, and Bucky was confident that the pictures turned out awesome. They’d spent several hours taking all manner of photos in the range, the gym, and on the roof, playing with the lighting and the posing. Bucky’d gone for shadowed badassery for Clint, but he’d tried for a softer, more approachable Black Widow. Or as approachable as she got anyway, he’d at least managed a few ‘lounging in the window’ and ‘relaxed on the roof’ shots, along with a couple of pictures he’d snuck of her with Persephone.

“You done with that thing now?” Clint asked, gesturing at the device still in Bucky’s hand.

And, well, technically yeah, he was done taking official photos but… Bucky chewed on his lip.

Clint raised an eyebrow.
“Or did you have something else in mind?” he asked, like he knew exactly what Bucky was thinking. “Something just for you maybe?”

And okay, Clint definitely knew what Bucky was thinking.

Bucky smirked.

“I think you’re just into the uniform,” Clint continued, but he shifted on the couch until his sprawl was less lazy, I-don’t-give-a-fuck, and more sexy-relaxed. “You a Hawkeye groupie, Buck?”

Bucky couldn’t help the snorting laugh that escaped, but he held the camera up gamely. “Maybe,” he admitted. “The black and purple really do it for me.”

Clint rolled his eyes, but he slid a hand down his chest to his thighs, and then palmed himself through the form-fitting material of the suit.

The camera shutter was loud in the silence of the apartment.

On the sofa, Clint continued to run his hands up and down his body, pausing to squeeze his rapidly-hardening cock through the material, and Bucky continued to snap photos. He grinned, wide and dirty, at Bucky, and Bucky snapped a photo of that too.

“I thought we said no face shots,” Clint mused, stroking himself through his pants.

“It’s not your face I’m looking at,” Bucky snarked back, but truthfully, it absolutely was. Clint had this intensity about him, in certain circumstances. A sort of skilled confidence and focus that, before today, Bucky had only seen in the bedroom, and he had already been trained into an almost Pavlovian response. Today he’d seen it all day long as Clint shot arrows and sparred with Natasha, and demonstrated his insane flexibility and acrobatic skills, and to be honest, Bucky had been hot for it for hours.

Clint hummed a sound that could mean anything, and reached for the zipper at the throat of his suit, unzipping it slowly, revealing pale, freckled skin. As his chest and abs came into view, Bucky swallowed dryly, and almost forgot about the camera in his hand, until suddenly he didn’t. He took several pictures in a row, the clicking of the shutter almost as rapid as his heartbeat. Clint stopped just a couple of inches below his navel, low enough that Bucky could see the start of his happy trail
but not low enough to get the goods, and he made a small sound of disappointment.

Smirking, Clint slid his hands into the suit, cupping himself beneath the stiff fabric, and Bucky wondered if he was wearing underwear.

Fuck, that was hot.

*Click click* - the shutter was still so loud.

“Looks like a tight fit,” he managed after clearing his throat.

“Not a lot of give in Kevlar,” Clint admitted, still stroking himself beneath the suit.

“Might be more comfortable without,” Bucky suggested, and Clint laughed.

He did, however, take Bucky’s suggestion to heart,

The uniform he’d worn today wasn’t the same as the one he’d been wearing in the clinic - that one had had one full sleeve on the left side and was sleeveless on the right, and was nearly solid black. Today’s uniform was sleeveless, with patches of deep purple on the chest. Clint was still wearing a bracer on his right wrist and some kind of glove with only two fingers on his left, and watching him pull his dick out with both of those still in place was giving Bucky some kind of feelings.

“Jesus,” he muttered, as Clint stroked himself firmly and Bucky’s camera *snap, snap, snapped*.

“C’mere,” Clint said, in that tone of voice that made Bucky weak in the knees. He held his left hand out like he expected Bucky to take it, and Bucky was helpless in the face of it. He took a few steps closer, grasping Clint’s left hand in his right, and let Clint tug him into his lap.

“Hey,” he said, smiling down at Clint’s heavy-lidded expression. “Hard to take pictures from here.”

Clint didn’t respond, instead he pulled Bucky down, letting go of his cock to reach behind Bucky’s neck and fit their mouths together. He kissed like a conquering invader, deep and demanding, and
Bucky could only hold on for the ride, tangling his fingers in the shoulder of Clint’s uniform. He barely noticed when Clint took the camera out of his hand and set it aside. Once his hand was free, he took full advantage, trailing his fingers across Clint’s exposed chest and abdomen, reaching for his cock. Clint captured his wrist, and kept him from touching.

Bucky whined into the kiss, and felt Clint smile against his mouth.

“I think,” Clint said slowly, dragging his mouth across Bucky’s throat, “that you have a Hawkeye fantasy.” He nipped at the skin he could reach above Bucky’s t-shirt. “I think you wanna be fucked by Hawkeye.”

“I do get fucked by Hawkeye,” Bucky argued, weakly. It was embarrassingly clear he was getting off on this, the bulge in his jeans undeniable.

Clint hummed, but didn’t agree. Instead, he reached for the hem of Bucky’s sweatshirt and pulled it up and over his head, baring his chest to the cool air of the apartment. The sweatshirt got dropped on the couch next to Clint and he reached for Bucky’s hands, tugging them behind his back and holding him in place with one hand. It forced Bucky’s chest up and out, putting him on display in a way that was simultaneously embarrassing and hot as fuck.

A tiny, high-pitched sound squeaked out of his throat, and Clint smirked. He leaned forward, sucking one of Bucky’s nipples into his mouth and tugging at it with his teeth, before working his way to the other side to lave the other nipple with the flat of his tongue. With his free hand, Clint reached down and grazed against Bucky’s erection, making his hips jerk.

“No,” Clint said thoughtfully, “no, you definitely want to be fucked by Hawkeye.”

And god help him, Bucky did.

“You want me to leave the uniform on, sweetheart?” Clint crooned, reaching down to unsnap Bucky’s jeans and relieving some of the pressure on his erection. He left them on though, and the briefs underneath them still constrained him in a way that was almost uncomfortable, the fabric already damp and clinging. “Just turn you over and fuck you, just like this, desperate and horny?” He sank his teeth into Bucky’s pec, just this side of too painful.

Bucky gave a breathy moan.
“You wanna watch while I do it?” Clint asked, and Bucky finally broke, nodding and panting.

“Please,” he said, arching as much as he could into Clint’s touch.

Clint picked up Bucky’s t-shirt, twisting it into a strip, and the next thing Bucky knew, his hands were tied behind his back with his own goddamn clothes.

He moaned, unable to help it, and Clint grinned again.

“JARVIS,” Clint said, unexpectedly. “Increase the window opacity to 75 percent, and engage privacy mode.”

The ceiling didn’t respond, but the light in the room went from afternoon sunshine to something more like twilight, and when Bucky turned his head, the wall of windows was dim and silvery-grey, blocking out most of the light.

They were also, he noticed with a hitch in his breathing, reflective the way that glass got when the light outside the glass was less than the light inside the room. It was almost a mirror, and Bucky-

Fuck. Bucky hadn’t even known mirrors were on his kink list, but they sure as fuck were now.

The arms of the couch were that low, modern style, just a couple of inches above the cushions, and from this angle, he could see himself in Clint’s lap, arms tied back and chest heaving and Clint in the uniform and *fuck*.

Clint was looking up at him with something like smugness in his expression.

“Stand up,” Clint ordered, and Bucky scrambled to obey, off balance and his legs shaky with arousal. Clint held onto his waist, making sure he didn’t trip or stumble, until Bucky was standing directly in front of him, his jeans sagging on his hips. Clint stared up at him for a moment, drinking in the picture he obviously presented, and then he stood up, stepping in close, until Bucky could feel the heat of his body and the roughness of the uniform against his bare skin, and he shuddered. Clint leaned into him, kissing him again with the same rough possession as before, and Bucky arched into it, let Clint hold his weight. Clint’s hands were stroking along his bare skin and Bucky could feel the worn leather of the glove and the straps of the bracer, along with the edges of Clint’s uniform, and the overall effect combined into something out of deeply-held fantasies he hadn’t actually known he had.
Bucky groaned into Clint’s mouth, and Clint squeezed his hips, just once, before taking a half-step back.

“Up on the couch,” Clint said, stepping aside and keeping a hand on Bucky’s elbow to help him balance. Bucky shuffled awkwardly into place, on his knees with his chest against the back of the sofa, his jeans still sagging at the waist, and still unable to totally tear his eyes away from their reflection in the window glass.

Clint stepped up behind him, dragging his hands over Bucky’s back, until his thumbs were dipping into the waist of his boxer briefs, and he slid his fingertips around Bucky’s hips, slipping them beneath the waistband in a tease. He mouthed along Bucky’s shoulders and down his arms before tugging the pants and underwear down his thighs until they were pooled at his knees.

Nearly naked, Bucky shivered at the picture they made in the reflective glass - Bucky tied up and naked, helpless, and Clint behind him, still kitted out in his Hawkeye gear. From the angle of the view, Bucky couldn’t even tell Clint’s uniform was unzipped, and he was pressed up against Bucky’s back, so that Bucky looked naked and vulnerable and Clint looked-

Clint looked fucking hot is what he looked.

Bucky whimpered.

“You’re so fucking gorgeous,” Clint muttered, pausing to trail his teeth along Bucky’s neck, and Bucky let his head drift to the side to give him more space. His hands were gliding over the swell of Bucky’s ass, tugging his cheeks apart and fitting his cock there, rutting up against him.

Bucky arched back into the motion.

Clint made a frustrated sound. “I have to go grab lube, babe, I’ll-”

“In my jeans pocket,” Bucky interrupted, breathless and unwilling to let Clint leave even for a second and if it made him look desperate, well, that wasn’t far from the truth.

Burying his face between Bucky’s shoulders, Clint snickered, but he obligingly dug into the pockets
of Bucky’s tangled jeans, coming up with a couple of condoms and a travel-sized packet of lube. “Did you plan this?” he asked, mildly. “I mean, I’m not complainin’, just wondering what you thought was gonna happen.”

Bucky shrugged awkwardly. “Dunno, it was more of a ‘just in case’ thing than a seduction.”

“Well, consider me seduced.” Clint’s hands were back, the left one holding Bucky in place and pulling his cheeks apart, the right hand dipping cool, slick flingers against his ass.

Exhaling in a rush, Bucky slumped forward, leaning more of his weight on the back of the couch and pushing his hips back into Clint’s grip. His head fell forward as Clint’s fingers breached him, slipping in easily, like Bucky’s body knew Clint’s touch. Which, considering they’d been fucking regularly for months, made sense. Clint brushed his fingers over Bucky’s prostate, lightly, just enough to make him jerk and moan, and Bucky could feel the smile Clint pressed against his skin.

“C’mon, c’mon,” Bucky chanted, rocking back against his hand, making Clint tighten his grip and hold him still.

“What’s the rush, baby?” Clint asked, twisting his fingers. “I got nowhere to be; the world doesn’t need saving.”

Bucky’s weak laugh was cut off by Clint thrusting a bit harder with his fingers. He slid a third finger in while Bucky was still trying to catch his breath, still seeing sparks behind his eyelids. “Fuck,” he moaned, slumped against the back of the sofa and nearly boneless. “Want you in me,” he panted.

Distantly, he heard the sound of foil tearing, and then Clint’s fingers slipped out of his body, only to be replaced a few seconds later by the wide, blunt head of Clint’s cock. He pushed his way in with short, sharp thrusts that rocked Bucky against the back of the couch, forced his straining, leaking dick against the cool leather.

“This what you wanted?” Clint growled into his ear. His hands were braced on either side of Bucky on the back of the sofa, which was shaking under the force of his thrusts.

Bucky moaned helplessly, trapped between Clint and the couch and unable to move with his hands still restrained behind him.
“Well?” Clint asked, as he changed the angle of his hips, pushing downwards in a way that forced his cock over Bucky’s prostate in a long, continuous drag every time he moved.

The garbled noise Bucky made in response should have been embarrassing, but he didn’t have any shame left. “Y- yes,” he managed. “Fuck. Please.” Bucky wasn’t even sure what he was asking for.

“You’re supposed to be watching,” Clint reminded him, and, sluggishly, Bucky tried to lift his head and turn it. Clint reached up and cupped his jaw, so gently in contrast to the nearly savage way he was fucking into Bucky, until Bucky was watching them in the window.

Oh.

Oh fuck .

Bucky was plastered against the leather of the couch, his lower chest and abdomen and cock pressed against the pebbled upholstery. His chest was heaving and his skin was flushed and he looked punch-drunk even to himself, wrecked in all the best ways, his shoulders and thighs straining. And Clint- Clint was leaning over him, his hips snapping in hard, measured thrusts, his biceps standing out in relief as he held himself up and over Bucky, looking like he was completely dressed except for his cock, the black leather and kevlar shifting with every movement, with the way his ass clenched and his back rippled with muscle.

Clint reached down with his right hand, between Bucky and the couch, and cupped his cock, the touch light and warm and still slippery with lube, and that was all it took - Bucky’s brain went supernova, the image of Hawkeye fucking him stupid seared into his memory for all eternity as he came with blinding force and choking out Clint’s name.

Shivering and shaking, Bucky collapsed as much as his position allowed, Clint still pounding mercilessly into his ass for another minute - long enough for the overstimulation to make Bucky want to squirm away and simultaneously arch back into it - before he wrapped his arm around Bucky’s chest and pressed his face into Bucky’s hair and came with a quiet, punched-out sound that almost might have been Bucky’s name.

He could feel Clint’s heartbeat thundering against his back, just slightly out of sync with his own, and his harsh breath against his neck. They stayed like that, wrapped up together, incongruous in the window reflection, for a moment. Long enough for Clint to catch his breath, and then he moved immediately to detangle Bucky’s arms and massage the stretch out of his shoulders.
“Okay?” Clint asked quietly, rubbing at the muscles next to Bucky’s spine.

“’M great,” Bucky slurred, listing sideways.

Clint laughed, and pulled Bucky back to his feet, ignoring the grumbling he got in response. Within a few seconds he had Bucky stripped of his jeans and underwear, and was tugging him back onto the couch, where Bucky ended up sprawled across Clint’s chest. He’d pulled the suit down off of his shoulders and let it hang around his waist, so Bucky wasn’t lying on Kevlar.

“You know, for someone who hates the Avengers so passionately, you definitely have a thing for Hawkeye,” Clint said, idly stroking through Bucky’s hair.

Bucky snorted, already drifting halfway towards a post-coital nap. “I like you ,” he mumbled into Clint’s bare chest. “The way you look in the uniform is just a bonus. Like roleplay, except you’re actually a badass.”

Clint went utterly still beneath him, his fingers still tangled in Bucky’s hair, long enough for Bucky to pointedly press his scalp into Clint’s palm, which jolted him back into awareness and running his fingers through the strands of Bucky’s hair.

“I like you too,” Clint said, quietly.

“Mmmm,” Bucky agreed, his eyes drifting shut. “I’m awesome.”

Clint huffed a laugh that was more air than sound, and Bucky fell asleep listening to the slow beat of his heart and the steady rhythm of his breathing.

Clint was honestly in shock.

He was pretty sure that’s what the blank, cotton-stuffed feeling in his brain meant.
Bucky liked him. Which, yeah, obviously he liked him but-

The statement seemed like it was more than just the amazing sex and the fancy camera lenses and Clint had no idea what to even do with that. Clearly, he liked Bucky - more than liked, probably, which was an idea his brain skirted around in pure self-defense - but he’d just assumed Bucky was here for nebulous reasons that Clint didn’t question too much.

And probably still shouldn’t. It was a comment that had been made in the heat of the moment and-

“Agent Barton,” JARVIS intoned. He was quiet about it, for which Clint was grateful, because Bucky was still snoozing quietly on top of him, and Clint was enjoying the hell out of it.

“What’s up, J?”

“Captain Rogers wishes me to inform you that there’s an informal ‘Team Night’ in the common room tonight, and he’d like to extend an invitation to Mr. Barnes.”

Clint mulled that over. “Who’s gonna be there?”

“Agent Romanov, Captain Rogers, Corporal Wilson, Mr. Lang, and Ms. Maximoff. Sir is expected to be in Venezuela for at least another twenty-four hours.”

That was… probably alright then, Clint figured. Bucky already knew three out of five, that was pretty good odds. And Scott was cool, he’d already kind of met Bucky, and Wanda was-

Well, she was Wanda and Clint loved her, and of the people Bucky could meet who’d be a bit overwhelming, she was on the low end of the richter scale.

“Alright,” Clint said, finally. “If Bucky’s up to it, we’ll go.”
When the elevator dinged to announce their arrival, Bucky was stiff at Clint’s side, nerves and tension radiating off of him like a scent. Clint squeezed his wrist in encouragement then wrapped an arm around his waist, tucking it into the back pocket of his jeans. The elevator opened directly into the common room, and at least two people looked up at their entrance.

“Barnes!” Scott exclaimed, knocking over the card tower he’d been industriously building. “Hey man, I have a very important question for you.”

Sam rolled his eyes. Clint braced himself, felt Bucky tense up beside him.

“Are you gonna be like, our arch nemesis? Is this like a villain origin story? Like if Clint breaks your heart, you seek vengeance and become, I dunno, some fucked up supervillain with a dumb name?”

Bucky narrowed his eyes.


“I’m gonna shoot you,” Bucky announced.

“That’s the spirit!” Scott said, cheerfully. “Oh! You can be the Winter Soldier! Then you can shoot lotsa things!”

“Shut up, Scott,” Natasha ordered, from the chair she was lounging in. “Or I will shoot you myself.” She was painting her toenails a deceptively soft shade of pink. Wanda was reclining on the floor next to her chair, painting her fingernails their signature scarlet color.

“Hello James,” Natasha continued, like she hadn't just threatened to maim a teammate.

“That's enough threats of violence from the peanut gallery,” Steve said, walking into the main room from the kitchen area, a glass tumbler of something in his hand. Probably Thor’s secret stash. “Save it for training day next week. Nice of you to join us James,” he continued. “We’ve been hoping to meet you for a while.”
Clint closed his eyes.

When he blinked them open, Bucky was giving him a kind of bewildered side-eye. Clint sighed.

“Everyone, this is Bucky. Bucky - this is everyone. You already know Sam and Natasha-”

“Obviously not,” Bucky muttered, mutinously, but Clint continued over him.

“And that’s Wanda on the floor, and you sort-of met Scott when he came by the apartment that time.”

Scott waved like the cheerful asshole he was, his card house already halfway back to built. Wanda gave Bucky a small but sincere smile from her place on the ground as she recapped her nail polish.

“You want a beer, man?” Sam said, getting up from his seat and heading for the kitchen.

“Sure,” Bucky said, a little stiffly. Clint nudged him in the shoulder a little bit, and Bucky nudged him back with more force than was strictly necessary.

Alright, Bucky was still pissed at Sam. Fair enough. He’d been mad at Natasha for a fair bit too, but they’d gotten past it. He hadn’t even had 24 hours to digest the news about Sam.

Clint and Bucky made their way the fully into the room and Clint tugged them towards the sofa near where Natasha and Wanda were sitting. Sam brought Bucky’s beer over and handed it to him before relegating himself back to his chair.

“So,” Bucky said, after a moment of painful silence, “what do you guys usually do for team night or whatever?”

Scott snickered, Sam rolled his eyes, and Steve put on his big aw-shucks stage smile.

“No,” Clint said, pointing a finger at him.
Steve deflated.

Bucky blinked.

“Rogers is a goddamn swindler,” Sam said, grumbling about it as he lifted his own beer to his lips.

Bucky’s eyebrows went up to his hairline.

Wanda elaborated. “It is… very difficult to find a group activity when the group is superhumans and magic users,” she said, somewhat diplomatically. “We cannot play darts with Clint because even with a handicap he beats everyone without fail. We do not play pool with Steve for the same reason. Thor broke the foosball table, three separate times, and Tony is still working on modifying it so that it’s unbreakable. Video games are fun, but Bruce loses his temper over them, which is a bit problematic. And Tony cheats at monopoly.”

“So that leaves….?” Bucky paused in thought. “Charades and, what, cards?”

Clint felt the shark-like smile crossing over his face, caught Natasha giving him the barest hint of a smirk.

Sam and Scott both groaned. Steve toned down the stage smile, but Clint could still see the hint of ‘how could I, an American Icon, possibly be anything other than innocent’.

“Guest’s choice,” Clint said, deliberately casual, and leaned back into the couch, tossing an arm over Bucky’s shoulder.

Bucky gave him a sidelong look like he knew he was being played, and Clint grinned at him.

“Fuck it,” Bucky said, shrugging. “I hate charades. What kind of card games do you guys like?”

“Poker,” Steve, Clint, and Natasha all said at once.
Scott and Sam sighed the sigh of the deeply aggrieved. “You just remember you brought this on yourself,” Sam told Bucky, shaking his head. “What the hell man, I thought we were friends.”

Bucky’s indignant retort was cut off by a pack of cards dropping onto the middle of the table from seemingly nowhere, still wrapped in plastic.

“A brand new pack,” Wanda said, “as per the usual agreement. Sam shuffles and deals every hand, Steve, Clint, and Natasha are banned from touching any cards that aren’t *in their hands*, and there will be no mercy from any higher power.”

“Five card stud?” Steve suggested.

Sam ripped the packaging of the cards open and began shuffling them *extremely* thoroughly.

It only took a half dozen hands for Bucky to catch on.

“Someone’s cheating,” he announced, glaring around the table. He, Sam, and Scott had yet to win a single hand. Clint and Natasha were evenly matched, trading off winning or folding at precisely the right time. Every hand that Steve didn’t win went to either Clint or Nat, or, occasionally, Wanda, who seemed to be only barely paying attention to the game at all. Steve was far and away the poker champion.

Scott folded. “I’m out. My pride can’t take anymore. I do magic tricks with cards and I can’t figure out what the hell you people are doing.”

“Man, cards are *random*,” Sam complained as he folded as well. “There’s no way we should be losing every hand.”

Wanda tossed her cards face down onto the table and went back to the book she’d been reading at the same time as she was playing the game. She seemed more relieved than anything, and it made Clint grin. She had to know exactly what was going on at the table, but she never, ever gave him away.

Natasha made a very tiny disbelieving noise. Bucky narrowed his eyes at her.
Steve laid down a straight flush. Natasha and Clint both laid down full houses. Bucky laid down three of a kind with a huff of irritation.

“Which one of you is it?” he demanded, glaring between Clint and Natasha.

Steve broke first, collapsing into barely-restrained chortling. Bucky turned wide eyes on him.

“All of my notions about Captain America have been destroyed,” he informed Steve. “Every single one. What else do you do - take candy from babies?”

Steve laughed harder. “I’m not cheating!” He managed, finally, in between hiccupping laughter.

“Counting cards is cheating Steven,” Natasha drolly informed him.

“It’s not my fault I have an eidetic memory!” Steve argued.

“Memorizing the cards is the same as counting them,” Clint added, reaching out to gather everyone’s cards into a pile and began rapidly shuffling them. After a moment he dealt new hands to himself, Natasha, Steve, and Bucky.

When the cards were laid out, Bucky had a Royal Flush, Clint a straight flush, Natasha four of a kind, and Steve a full house.

“Natasha and I cheat like motherfuckers, though,” Clint told Bucky, laying a smacking kiss on his cheek.

Sam looked utterly betrayed. Scott looked fascinated. “Okay but how do you mark the cards so you know which one is which?” he asked Clint.

“A good magician never reveals his secrets,” Clint intoned, passing the deck back to Scott for perusal.

“Tell the truth,” Scott said, as he fanned the cards out on the table and looked over them thoroughly.
It took a second for Clint to realize the comment was directed at Bucky - Scott actually had to look up and meet his eyes to get his attention. “How much more do you hate the Avengers now that you know half the team cheats at card games?”

Surprisingly, Bucky laughed.

“I don’t hate the Avengers,” he said, and literally everyone stopped what they were doing to look at him.

“Yes you do,” Sam said. “Man, I have heard you bitch about the Avengers for the entire time I’ve known you.”

“I’m in your class,” Natasha reminded Bucky.

Clint just stared in complete disbelief.

“Okay, I hate the Avengers a little bit,” Bucky said. “But it’s not, like, personal? I don’t hate superheroes. Actually, it’s harder to hate you because you cheat at cards.” He gave Steve a dirty look. “You’re just people right? Trying to do a good thing or whatever, I can respect that. You do good things, I’m not stupid, I know that. I just think you should-” he waved his hand kind of vaguely- “do the good thing somewhere else. Not in the middle of the largest city in the country, you know? You attract trouble. Go to Jersey or something, who the fuck needs Jersey?”

Steve snorted a laugh.

“You let Tony fucking Stark put you in the tallest phallic symbol in New York - which is an impressive feat, by the way - and then you let him put a giant Fuck Off ‘A’ on it like a damn target, and then you wonder why Dr. Doom, and A.I.M. and the fucking Mole Man show up and want a piece of you. It’s dumb. Move your base. Even people who love the Avengers think it’s dumb. And I would know, I’ve interviewed like a thousand of them.”

“He has,” Natasha said. “He’s turned in like twelve papers about how people love the Avengers but wish they’d move to Canada.”

“I’m not going to be Captain Canada,” Steve said.
Bucky rolled his eyes.

“Hey,” Scott leaned forward. “Who’s the fan favorite?”

“What?”

“You know, who does everyone like best on the team?”

“He is not going to say Ant-Man,” Wanda said, not even glancing up from her book. “No one even knows who Ant-Man is. They think you are Giant-Man.”

“I am Giant-Man!” Scott protested. “And Ant-Man. It’s the same man, and I’m him.”

Sam was grinning. “It’s Falcon, right?” He rubbed his hand over his goatee. “The handsome man with the good facial hair.”

“Tony’s got good facial hair too,” Steve pointed out.

“The handsome black man with the good facial hair,” Sam grumped.

“Hawkeye,” Bucky said, before the argument could devolve further.

“Present,” Clint said, automatically.

“No, dumbass, the fan favorite is Hawkeye,” Bucky said, elbowing him.

“That’s not true,” Clint argued. “The polls always pick Steve or Tony.”

“He didn’t ask me who the most popular Avenger is, he asked who the fan favorite is, and the
“Answer is Hawkeye.” Bucky rolled his eyes again, but he was looking at Clint fondly. “Look, when they poll people, half the time Hawkeye isn’t even on the poll, but even when you are, people always pick Tony or Steve because they know who Tony and Steve are. They’re household names. But they’re polarizing. Stark’s got that whole ‘Merchant of Death’ ‘spent my twenties on a coke binge’ thing going on, and Steve used to be the Republican poster boy but now every time he tweets something the conservatives lose their collective minds.”

Steve and Sam clinked their glasses together in a toast. Steve pulled his phone out, clearly intending to tweet something offensive while it was on his mind.

“But if you ask people which Avenger they think is the best or you talk to them about the Avengers as a whole, everyone loves Hawkeye. You’re just a random regular dude keeping up with superheroes and gods, using a medieval weapon and sheer badassery, and you’re not dead yet. You’re the dream, babe - everyone can grow up and be Hawkeye ‘cause you did it.”

There was a moment of silence while everyone pretty much processed that and Clint absolutely did not have a lump in his throat or the threat of tears in his eyes.

“It’s a Paleolithic weapon,” Clint muttered.

“Anyway,” Bucky continued, draining his beer and ignoring Clint’s pathetic attempt at diversion, “you’ll be the most popular Avenger as soon as I post those new photos.”

Natasha cackled.

Later, back on Clint’s floor and crawling into cool, crisp sheets - Bucky announcing that he fucking loved the robot cleaning service - Clint was still a little bowled over by Bucky’s declaration.

“Hey,” he said, nudging his nearly-asleep bedmate. “Thanks for coming tonight.”

“Thanks for making me come,” Bucky answered, sleepily, then snickered.

“That’s not what I meant,” Clint grumbled. “I meant hanging out with the team.”
“I know.” He yawned, wide and deep. “You’re welcome. It was fun, actually, but you owe me.”

“Whatver you want,” Clint agreed, pressing a kiss to Bucky’s shoulder.

“Good,” Bucky mumbled, “cause my ma’s got a family dinner thing and I’m making you go with me.”

“I- what?” Clint said, startled.

“‘Night,” Bucky answered.

Chapter End Notes

Many many many thanks to aw-hawkeye-no for the veterinarian information and the beta read of that section. She makes a small cameo here as recompense for her expertise :)

Chapter 9

Chapter Summary

Soft and scary family times followed by soft and scary shopping times

Chapter Notes

Finally, we get to see some Bucky day-in-the-life things <3 I hope you love the Barnes family things as much as I loved writing them.

And Natasha is a scary, scary wardrobe shopper.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“I should have dressed nicer,” Clint fretted, making Bucky snort.

“It’s a birthday party,” Bucky stressed. “For a child.”

Clint glanced down at his outfit. A t-shirt - one he’d gotten at a St. Baldrick’s event a couple of years ago - and a pair of jeans that weren’t his worst, and sneakers. He’d looked worse, granted, but he’d looked a hell of a lot better, too.

“But-”

“There’s going to be paint,” Bucky reminded him. “Do I look dressed up to you?”

And while that was a fair point - Bucky was wearing a plain black v-neck t-shirt and jeans as well - he made them look infinitely more presentable than Clint. Bucky looked like he’d walked off some celebrity gossip page in designer jeans and a tailored t-shirt, whereas Clint just looked like a slob.

They were on the subway, headed into Brooklyn for the birthday party of one of Bucky’s numerous cousins or nieces or- something, Clint had already forgotten.

“No,” he admitted. “But you look nicer than me.”

Which, fair.

Clint blew out his breath in a sigh that was part annoyance and part actual nerves.

This was stupid. Clint had faced down aliens. Clint had fought Nazis. Clint had blown up a dozen of Dr. Doom’s robots only a few weeks ago, and he’d used his homemade boomerang arrows to do it. Meeting Bucky’s family should not be this intimidating.

Clint was going to puke.

“I’m going to puke,” he announced.

Bucky rolled his eyes. “You’re going to be fine. This is not a big deal.”

It felt like a big deal.

August was not a good time to be a passenger on the subway. It was hot. It was sticky. It was crammed with more human beings than was strictly necessary for any aspect of human existence. At least in New York people had the decency to pretend you didn’t exist, even if they were crammed under your armpit and their bag was banging into your knees. Luckily it didn’t take that long to reach their destination - fast enough, in fact, that Clint thought they might walk back, despite the sweltering sunshine overhead.

“What’re we doin’ again?” Clint asked, shoving his hands into his pockets as they headed towards the address Bucky’s mom had texted him.

“It’s a paint party,” Bucky explained, looking casual and relaxed behind his sunglasses.

Clint raised an eyebrow, because was he actually supposed to know what that meant?
“Right, okay,” Bucky said, correctly interpreting Clint’s look, “it’s a party where the kids paint. The place gives ’em canvases and paints and all the stuff, and then a teacher walks them through how to paint a picture. Like everyone paints the same picture? It’s a thing.”

That sounded boring as shit to Clint, but then, he hadn’t had a birthday party as a kid that he even cared to remember, and his birthday in the circus went largely overlooked if he was lucky, or was a source of humiliation if he wasn’t. These days, only Natasha took note, and generally a gift of some sort mysteriously appeared, without a note, and Clint just knew it was from her.

“And then there’s pizza afterwards,” Bucky added, because he knew Clint well enough to know what a good hook was going to be.

Clint heaved a sigh from his bones. “Okay. Pizza, right. Good. Who’s the kid again?”

“My cousin. My mom’s sister’s kid. She’s turning six. Her name is Sarah.”

“Sarah. Cousin. Got it.” Clint nodded firmly, though he was quite certain he didn’t have it and he was going to make a fool of himself.

* 

Art Fun Studio

Well, at least the name was spot on. Couldn’t miss the point of that, Clint figured. The exterior door opened to a little desk that was staffed by a teenager who managed to project a thin veneer of excitement over her obvious apathy when she greeted Bucky and Clint.

“Can I help you?”

“We’re here for the Mindel birthday party,” Bucky answered, hooking his sunglasses in the collar of his shirt.

The teenager dimpled up at him, raking a completely unsubtle and appreciative gaze over Bucky. Clint rolled his eyes. “Follow me,” she chirped, leading them down a short hallway and into a long,
narrow room, where a folding table was set up with about ten blank canvases, and at least as many children were chattering, shrieking, and generally being utterly terrifying.

Clint froze in the doorway, observing the chaos.

The kids ranged in age from walking, but only kind of, to early teen, if he had to guess. He wasn’t great with guessing ages, but none of the kids looked old enough to drive, except one girl sulking in a corner with a phone in her hand. She reminded him, wildly, of Kate, and he smirked a little at the sight.

There were a slew of adults, of various heights and looks and ages, and Clint felt swamped with the overwhelming knowledge that he was meeting Bucky’s entire family.

Holy shit.

“Bucky!”

A short, plump brunette broke away from a group of women similar enough to her in appearance that Clint could safely assume they were related. Actually, he reminded himself, they were all related. But this one also looked a bit like Bucky, in the angle of her cheekbones and the color of her eyes, and, although her hair was wildly curly, it was the exact same shade of brown as Bucky’s was.

“Hey, Ma,” Bucky said, accepting a hug that was clearly unavoidable, at the same time that he reached back and wrapped his hand around Clint’s wrist and pulled him forward.

“Oh!” Bucky’s mother - Clint frantically searched his memory for her name and came up blank - turned to Clint with a wide, beaming smile. She had the same dimple on the left side of her face that Bucky did, which was surreal.

Clint had basically zero experience with families. His had been a shitshow, before he’d run off with Barney to join the circus, and he didn’t remember either of his parents with enough clarity to even know which of them he looked more like, or if he had his mother’s eyes or his father’s nose.

“Oh, you must be Clint,” Bucky’s mother said, derailing that depressing line of thought. “We’re so happy you came!”
“We brought a gift,” Clint blurted out, holding up the streamer-trailing gift bag, almost in self-defense. “Sorry I didn’t make it to dinner,” he continued, his mouth running off without his brain’s permission.

Clint had missed the family dinner that Bucky had coerced him into, having been off in Canada, blowing up an A.I.M base full of knock-off Chitauri weapons, the night of the meal. He’d privately thought he’d dodged a bullet, but if he’d known an extended-family birthday party was going to be the alternative, he’d have set the charges a little faster.

Bucky snorted next to him, very, very quietly.

“Oh, no, that’s fine!” Bucky’s mother said. “Bucky said you were out of town for work, we understand, these things happen.”

“Yes ma’am,” Clint said, hesitantly.

“Oh, call me Freddie, everyone does,” Bucky’s mother waved him away and her name finally came to Clint in a flash of knowledge - Winifred. And his father was George. And he had three sisters, and Clint hadn’t a hope of remembering much of anything about them, except that Bucky’s twin sister was Becca, because he’d made fun of their matching names.

Mrs. Barnes - Freddie - took the package out of Clint’s hand and set it off to the side on a table set up for just that reason, and then slid her arm around Clint’s elbow to pull him - and, by proxy, Bucky - deeper into the room. “Come on, come on, come meet everyone. Bucky doesn’t tell me anything, you’ll have to tell me all about yourself. He says you work for the government?”

Clint turned wide eyes on Bucky, who gave a little shrug, because really what was he supposed to have said.

“I- ah, yes ma’am, I work for, um-” Clint dug into his brain for some kind of cover story he’d used in the past that might pass muster here- “for the Treasury Department. Currency analyst.”

There. That was vague and obscure enough, probably.
“Do you travel a lot?” she asked, making a beeline for the group of other middle-aged women, and if there had been a polite way for Clint to dig his heels in and head the other way, he’d have done it.

“A fair amount,” Clint said, cautiously.

“That sounds lovely, dear. Oh, and James Buchanan,” she turned sharp eyes on the man in question, who was still trailing along with Clint, their fingers tangled together and looking bemused. “Sarah picked the party theme out, and you will keep your opinions to yourself, young man.”

Bucky held his free hand up in surprised self defense. “What’re you tryin’ to say, Ma, I wouldn’t ruin a kid’s birthday party, what the hell? I can’t believe you full-named me,” he whined.

She ignored him with the casual attitude of a mother who’d had a lot of practice.

_Buchanan_, Clint mouthed at Bucky, smirking.

“Shut up,” Bucky grumbled. “It was on my rental application which you didn’t even bother to read.”

Clint bumped his shoulder against Bucky’s, hopefully subtle. “It’s alright,” he murmured. “My middle name’s Francis.”

Bucky’s laugh at that revelation was mildly terrifying.

There was no time to respond, however, because they were being herded into a half-circle of women whose avid faces made Clint want to track down a terrorist cell and let them take pot shots at him.

Before he could make some kind of horrifying mistake and reveal what a disaster he was, there was an ecstatic cry of “Uncle Bucky!” and then a three foot tall hurricane barrelled past him and directly into Bucky’s knees, nearly taking Bucky, and Clint with him, to the ground.

Bucky let go of Clint to swing the tiny terror up into his arms, laughing, and Clint’s chest did some kind of internal convulsion that could not be healthy.
“Heya, pits’l, I’ve missed you.” The child was tiny, adorable, and dressed in some kind of leggings-tutu-ribbon situation that left Clint baffled but instantly endeared. “Are you behaving yourself?”

“Never!” she cried, squirming as Bucky tucked his face into her neck and pretended to chomp on it. She squealed with laughter.

“Do you want to meet my friend?” Bucky asked her, once he ceased tormenting. The little girl - Clint guessed her age at around three - peeked around Bucky’s jaw to look at Clint, overtaken by sudden shyness.

“No,” she said, very clearly.

Clint laughed.

The women around him smothered smiles, and Clint tried not to notice how closely they were watching this interaction.

“C’mon,” Bucky cajoled. “He’s nice, I swear.”

“Uh-uh,” she whined, burying her face in his neck.

Bucky rolled his eyes. “Alright then, little menace, go back and play with your cousins, okay? He wants to meet Bubbe.”

That got her attention, and she ducked back out to look at Clint with wide eyes. She didn’t say anything, just looked him over like she was deciding something, and then announced, “I’m Eva.”

“Hi Eva, I’m Clint,” Clint said.

She gave him another very serious look and then squirmed in Bucky’s arms until he let her down, where she immediately scrambled away to where the other children were running amok on the other side of the room.
Bucky shrugged at him apologetically, and Clint shrugged back.

Kids, man.

“So,” one of the women announced, and Clint turned to find he was being addressed by what was clearly the matriarch. The other women were giving him the kind of appraising look that other mothers at other times had given him and found him lacking, but they all looked warm and welcoming. “You want to meet me?”

“Bubbe,” Bucky said, rescuing Clint by stepping in and leaning over to hug the woman and kiss her cheek. She accepted the show of affection, thumping his back a few times before releasing him.

“So this is the boy we’ve heard so little about?” she asked, eyeing Clint speculatively.

Clint flushed and cleared his throat, reaching back to scratch awkwardly at his neck.

“Nice to meet you, ma’am,” he offered, weakly.

“Bubbe, be nice,” Bucky pleaded.

“When have I ever?” she asked, and one of the other women snorted.

Clint could do this. Clint had faced down the world’s most notorious assassin and convinced her to switch sides. One Jewish grandmother wasn’t going to kill him.

Probably.

“Are you Jewish?” she pointedly asked.

“No,” Clint coughed out, caught by surprise. “I think I went to a Seder, once?”
She pursed her lips. “Are you Catholic?”

“No,” Clint said, and almost laughed. “No. I’m not religious at all, but I’m definitely not Catholic.” Natasha had told him once that he felt guilty enough to be a good Catholic, but the whole liking dick thing kind of put a kibosh on it.

“You’ll do,” Bucky’s grandmother decided.

Clint blinked at her in surprise.

“Bucky’s been bringing home boys since his Bar Mitzvah and he’s never brought home a good Jewish boy yet, but at least you aren’t Catholic.”

“Mom, I wish you’d let that go,” one of the other women finally interjected. “We’ve been married seventeen years.”

“Seventeen years of Christmas,” the older woman grumbled, like it was a dirty word, while shifting her weight. She was using a cane, and Clint wondered if he should offer to get her a chair, and then he wondered if she’d kneecap him for the suggestion.

“Anyway!” Bucky said, loudly, “Clint this is my grandmother, Frances Brand, but everyone just calls her Bubbe.”

“You’ll call me Bubbe,” Bubbe added, staring Clint down.

“Yes ma’am,” he said, automatically, and she grinned, and he recognized the same look of mischief he’d often seen on Bucky’s face.

Families were weird.

“And my aunts, Judy, Barb, and Elizabeth. It’s Elizabeth’s daughter’s birthday today. Everyone, this is Clint Barton.”
Clint gave an awkward little wave, feeling completely out of his depth.

The three women and Bucky’s mother all looked startlingly alike, with the same curly brown hair, cheekbones, and chins. Only Bucky’s mother had the same steel-grey eyes she shared with her son, the others shared dark brown eyes that matched Bubbe’s. Elizabeth was significantly younger than her sisters, probably closer to Clint’s age than Bucky was, a fact which Clint was suddenly deeply aware of. She’d clearly been a late-in-life baby.

“Speaking of which, I should probably round these monsters up for the painting so we can have the cake and then we can go home,” Elizabeth said, standing up. “It was very nice to meet you Clint.”

“You- you too,” he managed as she headed towards the ruckus of children.

It was all extremely overwhelming, and Clint didn’t really have high hopes for it to improve much.

Elizabeth herded all the kids - even the surly teenager - into chairs in front of the canvases, and then an employee, dressed in an apron, moved to the front of the room where she had her own canvas and paints set up. Most of the adults settled into seats on the perimeter of the room, and someone, from somewhere, produced wine and glasses were passed around.

There was one empty chair and canvas at the table.

Bucky elbowed him. “You should go paint,” he said, smirking, with laughter dancing in his eyes.

“ You should go paint,” Clint hissed back at him. Clint had no artistic talent to speak of. He could draw a quick rendering of a building layout with passable efficiency and skill, but that wasn’t art.

Before the argument could devolve into anything worse than hissed whispers, a tall, slender young woman planted herself in the empty seat beside Bucky, glass of wine already in hand.

“Becca!” Bucky said, hushed but filled with delight.
“Hey Bucky Bear,” she said, teasing, and when she smiled, it was like an exact, more feminine version of Clint’s favorite Bucky-smile.

There was a jostling hug, during which Becca’s glass of wine nearly tumbled down Bucky’s back and Clint’s front, before Clint darted a hand out to right it, and a lot of snickering before the two of them settled down.

“Becca,” Bucky hissed, elbowing her the same way he had Clint, “you should go paint.”

She rolled her eyes.

“Abby is going to do it,” she said, instead, taking a deep drink of wine. “Betcha five bucks.”

“Nah,” he drawled. “Hannah’s gonna.”

They exchanged smirks, and then Bucky climbed out of his seat to go hassle another woman, this one a redhead, on the other side of the room, sitting next to a tall, lanky man with a heavy beard.

Clint and Becca sat, one seat empty between them, in awkward silence for a few seconds before Becka turned to him with a serious look on her face.

“If you hurt him, I’ll murder you and no one will ever find the body,” she promised.

Clint believed her.

“Wasn’t planning on it,” he assured her.

“Good,” she said. “I’m Becca.”

“Clint.”
“Hmmm,” she agreed. “So I’ve heard.”

And wasn’t that cryptic as hell.

Bucky returned before Clint could pursue it, though, looking very smug. Sure enough, the redhead he’d been talking to got up and took the empty seat at the table of soon-to-be paintings, and Becca groaned loudly before passing Bucky a wrinkled bill.

“Ok everyone,” the instructor said, finally settling in with a palette and a brush, “unlike those other places we won’t name,” a few adults laughed, “here at Art Fun, we like to let the birthday boy or girl come up with their own, special theme for their painting.”

The kids all cheered.

“And I believe that the birthday girl today is Sarah, is that right?”

At the front of the table, a little blonde girl with carefully-styled ringlets gave a little cry of joy and her hand shot straight up in the air.

“Okay Sarah,” the instructor said, “I’m Olivia, and I’m going to help you paint whatever you want. What did you decide you wanted for your birthday painting?”

Sarah was practically bouncing in her seat, and out of the corner of his eye, Clint could see Bucky’s mother giving Bucky a heated, pointed stare.

Bucky rolled his eyes.

“The ‘Vengers!” Sarah shouted, nearly knocking over one of her paint cups in her excitement. “I wanna paint Captain America!”

Bucky choked on his wine, but Clint-

Clint thought he was going to have to leave the room. His shoulders were shaking with suppressed
mirth, and he could feel tears forming in the corner of his eyes as he buried his face in his hands and tried to breathe through his amusement.

He should have let Bucky goad him into painting, he could have taken it home-

Oh God, he couldn’t wait to tell Steve.

The rest of the party passed in a blur of paint-covered children, Captain America paintings of various degrees of recognizability, and Avengers-themed party decorations.

There was a Hulk pinata.

Clint wished he’d brought a camera.

He was introduced to a dozen people, including Bucky’s father, and a couple of his uncles, until the faces and names were a blur, and he explained his very boring and not at all dangerous job in currency to anyone who asked, watching as their faces glossed over in disinterest, and mentally patted himself on the back.

It was going amazingly well, right up until it wasn’t.

One of the young party attendees - clearly hyped on too much sugar, between the fruit punch and the cupcakes and the candy gift bags - came thundering around a corner, attracting Clint’s attention, and caught his foot on the edge of a table, heading for a nasty tumble.

Clint reacted without thinking, dropping his thankfully-empty cup and diving for the kid, catching him under the arms just before he face-planted on the floor, and thereby averting disaster.

Except, he didn’t.

Avert disaster, that is.

Because the kid was holding an entire cup full of paint, which, to the surprise of no one who knew
Clint, ended up sloshed all over both of them, covering Clint from neck to knees in vibrant purple paint, and on the little boy’s face and arms.

There was a single moment of stunned silence, and then Clint saw the kid’s lower lip wobble.

“Hey, hey,” he said, immediately, crouching down on one knee so he was on the boy’s level. “It’s alright. You’re okay, I’m okay. No worries, right?”

The kid took a deep, wobbly breath. “I got paint all over you,” he said, and still looked on the verge of tears.

“Yeah,” Clint said, shrugging. “That’s okay. Purple’s my color.”

The chin was now wobbling with the lip, and Clint was panicking.

“It was an accident,” Clint rushed to assure him. “I’m not mad.”

“You’re not?” the little boy said, and Clint’s chest made another one of those horrible twisting motions.

“Nope,” Clint said. “Mistakes happen. You just apologize and do your best next time, right?”

The kid nodded, a little uncertainly, and then more sure of himself. “I’m sorry I spilled paint on you.”

“Apology accepted, kid,” Clint said, reaching out to take the now-mostly-empty paint cup from his fingers.

“Daniel,” one of the women at the party called gently, and the little boy turned his head to look at her. “Come on, let’s go get cleaned up.”

Daniel walked away, hand in hand with his mother, and Clint glanced up to find half the room watching him. He flushed, climbing awkwardly to his feet.
Bucky was staring at him with an indecipherable look on his face.

Then everyone burst into motion, as though a spell had been broken, and Clint found himself cleaned up with baby wipes of all things, and a fresh t-shirt - which, hilariously, was Avengers merchandise - pressed into his hands as he was led away to the bathroom and ordered to change.

All the while, Bucky watched him with the same, soft look.

Frank Sinatra crooned at them as the Yankees celebrated another victory at home, the stands slowly emptying out as Bucky stood up to stretch his back and legs. Late August was still summer, but there was enough of a bite to the evening breeze to remind them all that fall was just around the corner. Bucky shivered in his t-shirt, wishing he’d thought to bring a jacket - the wind whipping through the wide open space of the stadium was colder than he’d expected.

He and Natasha were edging out of their seats to leave when Bucky heard someone shout his name.

Correction.

Bucky heard *Aaron fucking Judge* shout his name.

Aaron Judge remembered Bucky’s name. What was his life?

He was standing at the edge of the field near the bottom of the stands, in the same place he’d been standing the last time Clint had brought Bucky to a game. His look, this time, was less friendly excitement, and more glowering.

Bucky made his way down the stands, Natasha trailing casually behind him.

And she was Natasha, today. Bucky hadn’t seen Camille at all, outside of classes, since the big reveal, and he was simultaneously grateful and resentful of it. He missed his friend, and while he and Natasha were a kind of friends, the ease of their camaraderie was strained by the knowledge that
- for Bucky - most, if not all of it, had been a lie.

So when Clint had left the tickets on Bucky’s coffee table with a note to take a friend, because he was going out of town on S.H.I.E.L.D business again, he’d called Natasha.

Well, actually, Bucky had called his friend Darcy first, but she was busy, so he’d called Natasha second.

She seemed to know that, and find it slightly amusing.

At the bottom of the stands, Aaron Judge was waiting and glancing between Bucky and Natasha suspiciously.

“Are you cheating on Hawkguy?” he said, without preamble.

“What? No!” exclaimed Bucky, affronted. “And it’s Hawk eye.”

Natasha snorted.

“Okay. Okay,” Judge said, his face relaxing slightly. “Your boyfriend is a good dude, he doesn’t deserve that. Who’s your friend?”

Natasha leaned against the metal barrier between the stands and the field and curled her lips up into an inviting smile. “Mr. Judge,” she said, offering her hand. “I’m Natasha.”

Aaron Judge’s eyes widened as he seemed to finally place the red hair, the black clothes, and the cool but deadly grace. “Oh,” he said. He took her hand gingerly. “It’s uh- it’s nice to meet you.”

“You gave Clint the tickets to the game?” She asked, still leaning over and showing what, in Bucky’s opinion, was an impressive amount of cleavage. She’d worn her standard black jeans, boots, close-cropped jacket ensemble, but she’d managed to find a v-neck Yankees t-shirt for the occasion.
“Yeah, he saved my life you know?” Judge looked, for the first time, slightly uncomfortable. “Got stranded on the subway with those giant mole-rat-things a few months back. I tried to give him season tickets but he wouldn’t let me, so now I just call him up when my mom can’t make the game, give him her seats. She said she didn’t care - he could have all her tickets - but he won’t take ‘em.”

Natasha made a small, thoughtful sound. “That’s very nice of you. Clint’s out of town for work this week, so Bucky brought me instead. Thank you for an enjoyable afternoon.”

“Su- sure,” Judge said, swallowing. “Anytime. Seriously, let me know.”

She smirked at the man and straightened back up. “I’ll keep that in mind,” she assured him, and turned to saunter off.

Bucky rolled his eyes and gave Aaron Judge a ‘what can you do’ smile and shrug. “Thanks for the tickets, it was great! I’ll tell Clint you were asking about him.”

“Yeah, thanks,” Judge said, still watching Natasha.

“What was that all about?” Bucky asked, as he hurried to catch up with Natasha, finally meeting her at the top of the second set of stairs.

“Clint never lets himself have nice things,” she answered, sounding put-out about it. She gave Bucky a sidelong glance. “Thinks he doesn’t deserve them.”

Bucky made a disbelieving noise, because that was just stupid. Clint did a million things for the people around him all the time, and then he nearly bent himself over backwards to pretend he hadn’t done a good thing. Bucky didn’t understand it at all.

“Why not?” he asked, instead of voicing his opinion.

Natasha shrugged. “He had a difficult childhood.” Bucky waited for her to elaborate. They had plenty of time, after all. “Clint has done some things he isn’t proud of, so he is always attempting to make up for them.”
Bucky let that process for a minute.

“Do you know how Clint acquired his apartment building?” Natasha asked, after three blocks of utter silence between them.

“Said he inherited it.”

Natasha snorted indelicately. “Hardly. Clint has lived there for years - since before we met. Until one day the Russian *bratva* purchased it, which I’m not sure he even noticed until they started shaking the tenants down. All the classics of mob ‘protection’ - raised the rent, started trying to force people out of the building. Clint showed up one day as they were hassling Simone - you know Simone?”

He nodded, wincing. Simone lived on the first floor of the building with her kids. She was a single mom, and Bucky had helped her haul groceries in on more than one occasion. Clint was kind of protective of her, more than some of the other tenants.

Natasha shot him a knowing look. “Well Clint didn’t like that, so he wiped the floor with the enforcers the mob had sent; told them to get out and not come back.”

Bucky felt an odd stirring of pride at the same time that he realized there was no way that could have ended well. Natasha watched him, and then smirked a little.

“Yes, the mob didn’t exactly appreciate it,” she admitted. “So they sent more enforcers. To make a very long story short, eventually Clint crashed a *bratva* poker game, and bought the building outright in cash. Refused to take ‘no’ for an answer. That’s where he got Lucky, too. He said he didn’t like the way the guys were treating him.”

Bucky’s eyes widened. Clint had taken on the mob, bought their building out from under them, and stolen their dog.

He’d known Clint had money but to just *buy* an apartment block-

And how the fuck was he not *dead*? 
“Not that the mob liked that any better,” Natasha went on, breezily. “Didn’t take long before Clint was running himself ragged between Avengers missions and patrolling the apartment block, beating up tracksuit thugs and A.I.M. minions alike. So,” she said, examining her nails, “I dropped by one day. Made it clear that the Black Widow didn’t really take kindly to the mob activities in Clint’s neighborhood.”

Cocking his head to the side, Bucky gave Natasha a long, considering look. “I’m missing something,” he said.

She nodded, but she looked pleased with him. “I wouldn’t have known there was a problem at all, except that Kate - have you met Kate?”

Bucky gave a vague shrug. He’d seen Kate, picking up or dropping off Lucky, but he hadn’t really met her yet. “Clint’s landlord apprentice?”

Natasha actually laughed out loud. “Landlord apprentice?” She shook her head. “Clint’s been teaching Kate archery for years, and I’m quite sure she’s got some sort of vigilante business on the side. Anyway, Kate mentioned something about patrolling for Clint so he could get some sleep, and it didn’t take much questioning for me to get the whole story out of her. When I asked Clint about it, he said it wasn’t an Avengers thing, so he didn’t want to bother me with it.” She huffed an exasperated sound. “He’s an idiot. It was a friend thing.”

“It’s a friend thing to beat up members of the mafia for each other?”

She laughed again, her head thrown back in amusement. “Sure,” she agreed, “if that’s what your friend needs. Mostly I meant it is a friend thing to ask for help. Clint isn’t good with relationships, friendship or otherwise.”

Bucky hummed, and got the feeling he was supposed to be taking more from this conversation than was immediately obvious.

“Yeah,” he said, nodding. “He’s kind of bad with the asking for help thing.”

Natasha rolled her eyes, and Bucky knew she thought he’d missed the point.

He hadn’t, not really. He’d gotten the ‘Clint sucks at relationships and communicating his needs’
message, he just wasn’t sure that it applied to him. Six months in, and he still wasn’t sure exactly what he and Clint had - he thought it was boyfriends, but they didn’t use the word boyfriend. They didn’t use any words at all, actually, to talk about them. Because they didn’t talk about them at all. Which Bucky was well aware boded badly.

His thoughts were interrupted by Natasha passing him a heavy, embossed envelope that had a stylized domino mask on the front.

“What’s this?” he asked, turning it over in his hands.

“Party invitation,” Natasha said. “Tony is jealous he hasn’t met you yet, so he’s having an entire party with the express intention of having you attend, instead of just asking to meet you like a normal person.”

“Oh...kay?” Bucky said. Since that first game night with the Avengers, Bucky’d so far managed to meet just about everyone else, including Mockingbird, which had been weirdly uncomfortable because Clint hadn’t mentioned that they’d been married for a hot second until about five minutes before Bucky was looking at her face to face. Somehow, though, Tony Stark had been left out, always managing to be off on business or away with Pepper anytime Bucky was at the tower.

He tore the envelope open, which expanded into some sort of origami nightmare of people dancing, with a time, date, and address at the bottom. “It's masquerade themed? Isn’t that more a... Halloween thing?”

“You’d think so,” she said, lightly. “Or Mardi Gras.” The middle of September date on the invitation was neither of those. “But it happens that Tony knows Clint was in Venice a few months ago, and that he made a trip to Ca’ Macana, and has assumed, therefore, that you have a mask to wear. I’m sure it all makes perfect sense in his head. You do have a mask, don’t you?”

“Yes,” Bucky said, but didn’t elaborate.

Natasha made a little noise that Bucky didn’t know how to interpret. “Well, you’ll need a tuxedo,” she said, instead of whatever she was clearly thinking. “You’re still free Thursday afternoon?”

“Why do you know my schedule better than I do?” Bucky complained.
“I’m a spy,” she reminded him. “Keep your schedule open. I’m taking you shopping.”

“I- what?” Bucky asked, but Natasha just pecked him on the cheek and melted into the crowd.

*

Natasha knocked on his door at exactly 4p.m. on Thursday afternoon, this time in her Camille persona, which gave Bucky a nasty jolt when he opened the door.

“What the fuck?” he said, flatly.

“It’s hard to shop with an Avenger,” she said, shrugging. Then she held up a black plastic card. “Also, I’m using a card that goes with the Camille identity, so.”

“This is weird,” he complained, but he put on his shoes and followed her out of the apartment building.

“You get used to it,” she said, and then motioned him into the backseat of something sleek and obviously expensive.

“I thought we were going shopping?” Bucky asked, as the car pulled away from the curb and smoothly into traffic.

“We are,” Natasha said.

They ended up in front of a pair of plain glass doors in a granite surround, without so much as a sign on the door, just the number 16 above the entrance.

“What the fuck?” Bucky breathed, glancing through the window. It was so understated and tucked away that it practically screamed ‘only rich people know about this, much less shop here’. “I can’t afford this.”

“No,” Natasha agreed, climbing out behind him. “But you aren’t buying, so that’s not a problem.”
Bucky rolled his eyes. Natasha Romanov was buying him a tux with Tony Stark’s black card. This was his life now. What even.

The door made a very gentle chiming sound as Natasha opened it, and the inside of the shop was quiet and hushed, as though the bustle of the city outside didn’t even exist. A tall, pretentious-looking man appeared before them, sizing Bucky up and dismissing him immediately, before catching sight of Natasha, at which point his whole demeanor changed.

“Ms. Brevard,” he said, oozing gentility. “So nice to see you again. It’s been quite some time.”

“Yes,” Natasha said, and Bucky had never noticed until this moment how much her voice changed when she was Camille and not Natasha. It was subtle, but effective. “Well, I’ve been quite busy.”

“What can we do for you today?” he asked.

“Mr. Stark is having a small soiree, and I’d like to outfit this one… appropriately.”

Bucky felt vaguely offended.

Then again, he was wearing ripped skinny jeans, the sweatshirt he’d stolen from Clint and never given back, and had his hair pulled back in a sloppy bun. He could kind of see their point.

In his defense, he hadn’t known this was what Natasha meant when she said shopping.

“Black tie?” the tailor asked.

“Of course, Gerald, what else?” Her lips curved into the smallest of smirks, something private for the tailor, and Bucky absolutely didn’t want to know. “But perhaps a few other things, while we’re here.”

Bucky felt suddenly nervous.
“Certainly,” Gerald answered, and Bucky was all but herded into a small, private room in the back of the store, where he was summarily divested of his hoodie, his shoes, and the t-shirt he was wearing over his undershirt, almost without his input. He balked at removing his jeans, but Natasha just stared at him judgmentally until Bucky handed them over, flushed and disgruntled.

Natasha passed him a tumbler of whiskey in return that probably cost the equivalent of Bucky’s paycheck, based on how smooth it was.

Now, like any self-respecting, broke millennial, Bucky had harbored plenty of ‘Pretty Woman’ fantasies - the kind where a big, strong man swept you off your feet and bought you a new wardrobe and put you up in a high rise apartment so you never had to work a day in your life if you didn’t want. Mostly, though, Bucky tried to keep his dreams realistic.

Like winning the lottery big enough to pay off his student loans and still afford groceries.

Today, Bucky found himself living out at least part of his Julia Roberts dreams - stripped, measured, and forced into and out of a dozen different pairs of trousers, shirts, coats and blazers, and at least four different suits.

“What does your mask look like?” Natasha idly asked, after the third suit, as she flipped through a magazine and pretended she didn’t care about his answer.

“It’s- it’s gold,” he said. “Filigree. Looks a little… a little like a cat,” he admitted, sort of sheepishly.

Natasha didn’t look up, but Bucky could see the edges of a smile on her face.

“A tuxedo next,” she ordered, and Gerald rushed to fill. “Blue accents, I think,” she added, just before he swept out of the room.

Regardless of whatever fantasies Bucky had had, he’d never once dreamed of being whisked off by a world-famous assassin he wasn’t even sleeping with for a bespoke tuxedo, a precisely tailored blue peacoat, two different suits, a half-dozen dress shirts, three pairs of trousers, and ties to match them all.

His head was swimming by the time they made it to the front, where most of the purchases were being wrapped up, having been efficiently tailored as needed while Bucky tried on yet more items,
and informed that his tux, trousers, and two suits would be available for pick up in two weeks.

“On Mr. Stark’s tab?” Gerald asked, breezily, already reaching for the ledger. At no point did he even mention the total, which Bucky interpreted as ‘if you have to ask, you can’t afford it’ and kept his mouth shut.

“Oh, no,” Natasha said, sliding the card across the counter. “Mr. Barton will be taking care of the bill this time.”

“Of course, madame,” Gerald said, accepting the flimsy bit of plastic and swiping it efficiently before handing Natasha the receipt, where she scribbled something illegible across the bottom.

“Thank you Gerald,” she said, smiling serenely.

“My pleasure, Ms. Brevard.”

“Excellent,” Natasha said, passing the last of the bags to Bucky. “I’ll be back in a few days with Mr. Barton.”

Gerald bit off a long-suffering sigh, which made Bucky grin through his sticker shock.

The humor lasted for the exact amount of time it took for the driver of the swanky car - which had parked discreetly to wait for them - to load the bags into the trunk and usher Bucky and Natasha into the backseat.

“Holy shit,” Bucky said, his stomach dropping a little, and then a lot. He hadn’t seen the receipt, but he could make a fairly educated guess on the total she’d just spent on him. That Clint had just spent on him.

Natasha raised on perfectly manicured eyebrow.

“Holy shit,” Bucky said again. “Does Clint know you just spent the equivalent of someone’s annual salary on clothes for me?”
She put her chin on her hand and looked at him for a long, drawn-out moment.

“Minimum wage isn’t quite that low,” she said, finally, before leaning casually onto the leather upholstery. “I told Clint I was taking you shopping because you needed something for Tony’s little gala, and he handed me the card and told me quote ‘go nuts’ unquote. He was well aware of where we’d be going, and trust me when I say he won’t be the slightest bit upset, assuming he even notices, which I doubt. He’s probably hoping that I’ve sated my sadistic shopping habits by inflicting them on you rather than him.”

She reached into the mini-bar Bucky had taken note of on the drive over, and poured a tall glass of vodka with a splash of soda.

She handed it to Bucky, then poured a second.

“Clint is very bad at taking care of himself, or using his big boy words, but he’s extremely good at taking care of the people he’s attached to.”

Bucky really didn’t know what to do with that, so he drank his vodka instead of responding.

Chapter End Notes

Special shout out and thank you to thepinupchemist who was a wonderful sounding board for all things Jewish Bucky in this chapter. While not Jewish herself, she was nice enough to point me in the right direction for a few resources and was very helpful in helping me feel out how I wanted this chapter to go.

That said, I'm also CLEARLY not Jewish, and if any of this is in anyway egregiously long or terribly offensive, please please please let me know, so I can learn and grow and also fix it.

pits’l (Yiddish) - "A little piece," used to mean a small, adorable child, as in the English "little bit."

Finally: special thanks to “Kissing Jessica Stein” for giving a bisexual girl a happy ending even though it wasn’t Jessica herself
Chapter 10

Chapter Summary

The one where Tony Stark happens.

Chapter Notes

This fic has been a truly fantastic rollercoaster! I hope everyone has loved inept sugar daddy Clint as much as I have, and especially millennial Bucky, because he is all of us broke and thirsty af

This is the end, dear readers, and I hope you’re satisfied with where I left it thank you all for your support!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Ain’t no party like a Tony Stark party.

Both tabloids and reputable press releases had shouted it for years. Bucky had debated it, himself, amongst friends and acquaintances, laughing at the tabloid descriptions of raucous, coke-fueled, members-only debacles, while looking more thoughtfully at the press photos of canapes and evening gowns, sparkling decor and famous faces.

His imaginings didn’t quite match up to reality.

There weren’t, to his relief, any coke lines in the bathrooms, or strippers in the ballroom. There was a very exclusive guest list, smaller than Bucky would have expected, consisting mostly of Avengers and Avengers-adjacent people and their partners, along with a few in-the-know S.H.I.E.L.D agents, from what Bucky had been able to gather.

The masquerade theme made sense in this context, at least. A lot of superheroes - Tony Stark and Steve Rogers being obvious exceptions - had a secret identity. But that didn’t mean they didn’t want to go to parties, Bucky supposed. He’d seen Mockingbird, already, in a black and white evening gown that was disturbingly similar to her super suit, and a white domino mask that Bucky thought might actually be part of her superhero costume. He’d also caught sight of Sam - in a black tux and a red mask - and really, could any of these people not stick to their theme?
Steve walked by in blue tux with black lapels, and, no, apparently not.

Bucky snorted, very quietly, into his glass of champagne and eyed the crowd, searching for a familiar blonde head.

Originally, he’d intended to arrive at the gala with Clint, but Natasha had texted him hours ahead of time to let him know the mission she and Clint had been on was running behind and that they would meet him at the party. Bucky had resigned himself to taking a Lyft or, God forbid, a taxi to the tower, but a car had shown up twenty minutes before he’d planned to leave. It was the same sleek, expensive vehicle Natasha had taken him shopping in, and Bucky had been grateful, because he hadn’t been looking forward to wearing formal wear in a taxi.

He’d almost looked like he belonged when he’d climbed out of the car outside Avengers Tower for the gala.

The too-expensive-to-contemplate tuxedo had helped, he was forced to admit.

Bucky even liked the tuxedo, which annoyed him on some level because it meant that Natasha still knew him very, very well, even though he continued to feel a lot like he didn’t know her at all.

It was a blue so deep it was very nearly black, and the jacket was velvet and silk, and she’d paired with a black shirt and black trousers, and an indigo tie. The tuxedo was literally perfect, and Bucky hated it a little bit while at the same time he loved it. It fit like a damn glove, and he knew his ass looked amazing, but he still felt completely out of place, here in one of the conference rooms turned ballroom gala, surrounded by superheroes and their… whatevers… even if they were all masked and ‘anonymous’.

So now he was hovering around the edges of the party like a moth to a flame, feeling deeply uncomfortable and horribly out of place and where the fuck was Clint, anyway?

Out of the corner of his eye, Bucky caught a splash of color amongst all the black dresses and black tie attire; a green silk gown with a high neck and a higher slit, and a slender throat surrounded by a tumble of curls in an extremely familiar shade of red. The lacey black mask affixed to her face did nothing to hide her identity, what with that vibrant, copper hair. Natasha turned, just a bit, and Bucky found the back of the dress was so low he was legitimately worried he should offer her some fashion tape. Then she tilted her head up to smirk at the man standing next to her and-
Bucky nearly swallowed his tongue.

He’d known, okay? He’d known Clint was a super secret spy in addition to being a fucking superhero, but this man in that tux- _Jesus_.

Bucky hadn’t known he had James Bond fantasies, but look - there they were, dancing behind his eyelids. He’d never aspired to be a Bond Girl (boy?) before, but damn.

_Damn_.

Clint could complain all he wanted about Nat forcing him into a tailor (and he had, at length, to Bucky’s general amusement and lack of sympathy) but Gerald did good work.

It was a basic black tuxedo - or as basic as anything bespoke got, Bucky assumed - black silk and a white shirt, with black buttons and a matching bow tie, but it had been very precisely tailored to broad shoulders and trim waist and Bucky wanted to _lick him_. Clint’s mask was plain compared to Natasha’s - hell it was plain compared to Bucky’s - just basic black with gold trim along the edge, but he was clean-shaven and unbruised, and someone had styled his hair into something neat and presentable and _Bucky was going to die_.

Their eyes met and Clint smiled at him, broad and _happy_, and something warm unfurled in Bucky’s gut in response. He found himself smiling back, probably with far too much emotion, entirely too much enthusiasm, and part of him hoped the mask hid some of the look on his face.

It felt like Bucky blinked and then Clint was standing in front of him, faster than he could follow, with Natasha dangling off his elbow, looking amused and pleased with herself.

She’d planned this, Bucky realized, then wondered if there’d been a mission at all.

He wondered if he cared.

As first looks went, this was a doozy.

“Hey,” he croaked, clinging to his half-empty champagne flute like a lifeline.
Clint looked a little like he’d forgotten how language worked. He was looking Bucky over with some combination of heat and pride and something else Bucky couldn’t quite place, and they all stood there until Natasha snorted and rolled her eyes. She elbowed Clint, and he stumbled under the assault, shooting her a dirty look.

It broke the spell, a little bit, because when he turned back to Bucky he at least was able to speak.

“You, uh- you look amazing,” Clint managed, and Bucky felt the flush crawl up his throat to his ears.

“...you too,” Bucky answered.

Natasha muttered something obviously unflattering under her breath and slipped away, making a beeline for the bar.

It made Bucky laugh, made the whole interaction seem easier somehow. “I don’t know why she puts up with us,” he said, grinning.

Clint shrugged. “Me, either.” He looked thoughtful for a second. “She’s probably wondering the same thing, right now.”

They both turned to look, and Natasha was leaning casually against the bar, martini glass in hand, pointedly ignoring them. They shared an amused grin, and then both burst into snickers at the same time.

Clint stepped in closer, until Bucky could almost feel his body heat through the layers of velvet and silk and cotton, and slid a hand across Bucky’s hip.

“You really do look great,” he said, smiling down at Bucky. “Very fashion-forward.”

Bucky rolled his eyes. “You wouldn’t know fashion if it smacked you in the face. But classic is a good look for you,” he added, reaching up to run his fingers over the lapels of Clint’s jacket. “Very James Bond-ish.”
Clint huffed. “I’m way cooler than James Bond. I’m real, for one thing.”

“Yes, but can you dance?” Bucky asked, smirking.

Both of Clint’s eyebrows rose above the mask at the obvious challenge. He plucked the champagne glass out of Bucky’s fingers and dropped it on the tray of a passing waiter without looking.

“Dancing is spy 101,” Clint announced, and before Bucky could argue that, actually, he couldn’t dance, Clint had them both out on the dance floor, and was leading him through an extremely respectable waltz.

Bucky only stumbled a few times, and Clint was quick to cover for him, somehow managing to make it look seamless, and then they were circling the dance floor with ease.

“Alright, I’ll admit I didn’t expect this,” Bucky said, after he’d mostly gotten the hang of it.

Clint grinned down at him. “I’m deep. I contain multitudes.”

“Did you just misquote Whitman to me?” Bucky squinted. Clint schooled his features to complete, and completely unbelievable, innocence.

“Natasha and I do a mean tango,” he said, conversationally, as they avoided Steve and Maria, shuffling slightly awkwardly nearby. “But only in special circumstances.”

“What kind of circumstances?” Bucky asked, despite himself.

“Oh, the kind where we need a distraction,” Clint shrugged.

On one hand, Bucky kind of wanted to see what kind of tango could produce enough distraction for two world-renowned spy assassins, and on the other, it made Bucky vaguely want to plaster himself to Clint’s body and declare him off limits, even to his partner in the spy-assassin business.
He wasn’t stupid, he knew what a tango looked like.

He’d seen Mr. and Mrs. Smith.

Whatever look crossed over his face made Clint grin wider. He leaned in closer, until Bucky could feel his breath brushing against his neck, making him shiver.

“We can do the horizontal tango later, if you want.”

Bucky couldn’t help the snort of laughter that escaped, and he missed at least two steps in the waltz Clint had been painstakingly teaching him, his shoulders shaking with mirth.

“That was fucking awful,” he informed Clint, when the snickers subsided.

“Yeah,” Clint agreed, eyes crinkled up behind his mask. “Never said I was smooth.”

The music changed and Bucky allowed himself to be led off the dance floor, back towards the bar where Natasha looked slightly less exasperated with them, or had at least chosen to ignore their mutual stupidity for the moment.

Sam and Steve were already there, and Sam handed Bucky a tall glass of vodka soda at the same time that Natasha passed Clint a beer.

It was really nice, Bucky decided. Just hanging out with Clint’s friends, his friends, at a fancy party, drinking really top-notch liquor. He could get used to it.

“Well,” said a voice that was simultaneously familiar and brand new to Bucky. “I guess I can see what Birdbrain sees in you.”

Bucky turned and came face-to-face with Tony Stark himself.

Which, yeah, he’d met a lot of superheros in the last few months, and yeah, they were all arguably as famous as Tony Stark, and yet…
There was something to be said for meeting the inventor of the ARC reactor, who’d revolutionized clean energy industries around the globe, and who’d flown a nuclear missile into an interdimensional portal to save New York from aliens.

“But the real question...” Stark said, cocking his head to the side and wow, he was much shorter in real life than Bucky had expected. “…is what you see in him.” There was a pause while Stark looked him up and down. “Other than the obvious. Gerald’s work?” he asked, jerking his chin at Bucky’s tux. Bucky nodded reflexively, and Stark hummed.

“I hate to ask-” Bucky started, but Stark had already moved on, turning to Clint instead.

“You’re really taking this Sugar Daddy thing seriously, huh?”

There was a moment of stunned silence as Bucky tried to wrap his head around the unexpected revelation. The party wasn’t quiet - somewhere in the periphery Bucky could still hear strains of music, tinkling of glasses, and the murmur of the crowd - but it was like his whole brain had been sucked into a vortex, a place where he was re-evaluating all of the last several months with new eyes.

“I- what?” Bucky said, turning to Clint, and the sinking sensation in his gut solidified into a knot of throbbing hurt just beneath his breastbone. He sucked in a breath around it, swallowing convulsively.

Because instead of laughing or shrugging it off or telling Tony Start to fuck all the way off, Clint had a death grip on his beer bottle, and his face had taken on a pale, sickly pallor that did nothing at all to reassure Bucky. A quick glance around the circle of Avengers - of friends Bucky had just been congratulating himself on - revealed nothing but uncomfortable faces and a distinct lack of anyone meeting his eyes. Except Natasha, who was glaring at Tony furiously.

That couldn’t-

Surely there wasn’t-

A small, choked sound came out of his throat, and Clint turned wide eyes on him.
“Buck... I-”

Bucky plastered a smile on his face, digging it out of reserves he hadn’t been entirely sure he possessed and turned back to Tony motherfucking Stark.

“Tony Stark, right?” Bucky asked. He plowed forward without waiting for a response. “I’m Bucky Barnes. I’d say it’s nice to meet you, but that would be dishonest and I make it a point to be honest with people.” The words were delivered pointedly, and not just for Tony. Out of the corner of his eye, Clint flinched, and even Natasha looked uncomfortable. “Bar’s on you, right?” he blithely continued.

Stark seemed taken aback by the venom in Bucky’s words, but he gestured at the bar expansively. “Yeah, absolutely, whatever you like, I’m sure we’ve got it.”

Bucky turned to the bartender, who was obviously eavesdropping and just as obviously trying to appear industriously busy as he stacked glasses. “Whatever your top shelf vodka is, I want a double on the rocks.”

A short tumbler appeared, and the bartender scooped ice into it as he poured a generous helping of vodka (the label was one Bucky didn’t recognize) over it. Bucky took the glass, smiled a brittle thanks, and downed the liquor in a few quick swallows. The glass hit the bar with a thump that was just shy of a slam.

Turning on his heel, Bucky walked away from all of them, from their secrets and their lies and their dishonesty and-

“Congratulations Tony,” he heard Natasha say, as he strode off, “you’ve moved up two spots on my ‘To Be Killed’ list, which puts you in the Top 5.”

Bucky kept walking, although it almost, almost made him smile around the crushing sense of disappointment squeezing his heart.

A hand grabbed his elbow before he got halfway across the room, and Bucky whirled, ready to lash out at Clint.

It wasn’t Clint.
It was Sam.

Somehow, that made it all the worse. That Clint hadn’t even come after him. Over Sam’s shoulder he could see Clint leaning on the bar, beer replaced with a short tumbler of something dark brown, Steve leaning in close to talk to him. Clint was shaking his head at whatever it was, and Steve reached out to squeeze his shoulder.

Natasha and Tony were nowhere to be seen.

“Let me go, Wilson,” Bucky said, low and hurt.

“No, man, I’m your friend and-”

“All you people do is lie to me!” Bucky exploded, and luckily no one was really near enough to hear his words. “Friends don’t do that, Sam.”

Sam let go of his arm. “Okay,” he said, soothing, and Bucky hated that Sam was using the therapy voice on him. “Okay, you’re right. We weren’t honest with you, and that’s on us. Me and Nat, we did that. But don’t punish Clint for our mistakes.”

“I’m perfectly capable of punishing Clint for his own mistakes,” Bucky retorted.

“That’s fair, man, but I think you should talk to him before you just storm out of here.”

“I don’t want to talk to him.” Bucky was horrified when his voice cracked. “I just- I just wanna go, Sam.”

“Yeah, I know you do. But let me ask you something first.”

Bucky looked up and met Sam’s concerned expression. He looked genuinely remorseful, but also serious and determined. Bucky nodded, once, giving his permission.
“What are you gonna regret more? Leaving here without any answers, always wondering? Or manning up and making Clint tell you what’s really happenin’ between you two?”

Bucky chewed on his lower lip but didn’t answer, and Sam took that as an invitation to continue.

“Look, no one knows what you’re doing except the two of you, okay? Tony’s an ass- he means well, but he opens his mouth and shit falls out, and he never thinks about the consequences of the crap he says. Give Clint a chance to explain, and if you don’t like what he’s got to say, you can still leave. But the guy cares about you, anybody with eyes can see that.”

“You’re ruining my dramatic exit,” Bucky said, weakly, and Sam laughed.

“That’s what you’re worried about here?”

“I’m gay and a millennial - what else do I have?”

Sam snorted. “A thriving photography business, a promising career, and friends who give a shit about you, but who’s counting. If it’s that important to you, go ahead and storm all the way out to the elevator, and then ask JARVIS to take you to Clint’s floor. I’ll send your boy up after you.”

Bucky hesitated, hovering between fight and flight, and then he slumped as all the adrenaline of it drained away, leaving him tired and cold and aching with hurt. “Fine,” he said eventually, and Sam gave him a small smile.

Bucky slunk out of the ballroom and into the elevator, and he didn’t even have to say anything before JARVIS’ carefully modulated British accent piped in through the speakers.

“Shall I take you to Agent Barton’s floor or to the lobby, Mr. Barnes?”

The A.I. sounded suspiciously sympathetic, and Bucky sighed. “Clint’s floor,” he muttered, scuffing his shoes against the floor of the elevator car.

“Very well sir,” JARVIS said, and then nothing else as Bucky felt the sensation of racing upwards tug at his gut.
“Is that what this is?”

Clint flinched.

Clint didn’t know what Sam had said to Bucky, didn’t know what he’d done to convince Bucky to come here instead of walking out of Clint’s life, and part of him was grateful for whatever it was, and the rest of him was dreading every aspect of what was about to happen.

Because this was it, this was the moment of truth. This was when Clint laid everything on the table and it all went to shit, because that was the story of Clint’s life. The fundamental truth, which was that he wasn’t, and had never been, what anyone wanted or needed in their life. Clint was a self-proclaimed disaster of epic proportions, and he proclaimed it so that no one else had to say it. So he didn’t have to hear anyone else tell him he wasn’t good enough.

He’d had enough of that growing up, from his dad, from Barney, from everyone in his life.

The sheer hurt in Bucky’s voice though— the hesitance under the false bravado, the hunched in way he was holding his shoulders, that wasn’t what Clint had wanted and it wasn’t what Bucky deserved.

Clint shrugged. “I- it’s whatever you want it to be,” he answered, defeated.

Bucky was standing across the room, in the shadow of the windows where the light didn’t quite reach and the twinkling nightlife of the city spread out behind him. Clint couldn’t see his face.

“That’s bullshit,” Bucky said, low and with a thread of anger. “I’m asking you what you think it is. Stark seems to have a pretty good idea. But it’s not the same idea that I had, and I’m asking you to tell me the truth.”

Clint took a couple of steps towards Bucky, one hand outstretched, but Bucky shuffled backwards. Clint dropped his hand, collapsing onto the couch. He scrubbed his hands across his face, knocking his mask askew. He ripped it off and tossed it onto the coffee table.
His hands were shaking and shoved them into his lap, fingers curled together.

“I don’t know what *else* you could possibly even want from me, Bucky,” Clint admitted, after a few moments of painful silence.

“What?” Bucky sounded genuinely bewildered. “What are you talking about?”

Gesturing vaguely at himself, and maybe that wasn’t the best example. Natasha had forced him into a bespoke tailor, then stuffed him into a monkey suit and made him look anything but like what he was, but it was all Clint had in response. “I’m a disaster. I’m never on time and I forget important things, like birthdays and anniversaries and your sisters’ names. My apartment’s a mess and I can barely take care of my dog. I’m an Avenger, which is usually a point in my favor, except you hate the Avengers. I’m a terrible partner and an even worse example of a human being, so I don’t know what you could possibly see in me, other than the fact that I’m stupid-rich and I’m good in bed. So yeah, if sugar daddy is what I’m gonna get, then I’ll take it, because it’s better than nothing.”

“So- what? You just- you’re buying me things so I’ll stick around?”

Clint made a frustrated sound. “No. Yes. I don’t know!” He took a deep breath. “I’m just *trying* okay? You’re young and you’re gorgeous and you’re brilliant. You’re getting amazing degrees and going places, and I can’t compare with that. I’m just- you need things so I get them because I can, and you like things so I buy them because you like them and I can afford them. I wasn’t really thinking too hard about it, I just- I just like you. I just want you to be happy.”

Bucky was silent for a long time. It felt like an eternity to Clint, who huddled further into himself as the minutes dragged by.

“You’re an idiot,” Bucky grumbled, and Clint felt it like a punch to the solar plexus.

“Yeah,” he laughed without humor. “I’ve been told.” He closed his eyes.

The next thing he knew, Bucky’s hand was curled around his jaw, tilting his face up to look at him in the dim light. His mask was gone too, though Clint hadn’t seen him take it off, didn’t know where it had ended up.
“I just wanna be your boyfriend,” Bucky said, looking at Clint all soft, like he meant something. “I thought we were boyfriends. I introduced you to my family, for fucks’ sake.”

Clint made a small, surprised noise.

“You introduced me to your family,” Bucky reminded him. “And I guess that makes Tony Stark the asshole uncle, huh?”

Clint snorted. “Yeah, somethin’ like that. He’s not so bad, once you get to know him.”

Bucky leaned down and pressed his lips to Clint’s, something chaste and gentle in it that brought a lump to Clint’s throat.

“I love you, you fuckin’ dumbass,” Bucky said, against Clint’s mouth, loud in the quiet of the dark room.

It took Clint a second to realize the harsh, pained noise that followed had come out of his own throat.

“Too soon?” Bucky asked, but he clambered into Clint’s lap, straddling his thighs and settling there, a warm, welcome weight.

“No,” Clint croaked. “No- just caught me by surprise is all.” His hands wrapped around Bucky’s hips, slid up against his spine underneath the tuxedo jacked, against the fine weave of the cotton of his shirt. “Can I... I just-” he tugged at the hem of the shirt.

Bucky huffed a laugh, leaned down to kiss Clint again, leisurely, nipping at his lower lip and flicking his tongue out in a tease.

“Let me take you to bed,” Clint said, breathless. “Let me take care of you.”

Bucky leaned back to stare at him, eyes flickering over Clint’s face, thoughtful, and then he smiled. “That’s your thing, huh? Taking care of people.”
Clint shrugged. It was what Clint could do, so that’s what he did. It wasn’t something he spent a lot of time agonizing over.

“Yeah, sure.” Bucky said, “Take me to bed.”

Clint hooked his hands under Bucky’s thighs and stood, lifting Bucky easily to head down the hallway and into the bedroom. He eased them both down onto the bed, Bucky beneath him, and focused on kissing all the thoughts out of his head. On making Bucky feel so good he forgot how badly he’d felt before. On fixing whatever he’d broken.

“Fuck, that’s hot,” Bucky panted, once Clint broke away from his mouth to nip along his jaw, working at Bucky’s tie and the buttons on his jacket.

“What is?” Clint asked, distracted.

“That whole caveman act you just pulled.”

Clint snorted. “I’ll show you caveman,” he grumbled, fumbling at the tiny buttons on Bucky’s shirt, yanking it free from his trousers.

His fingers were still trembling.

Bucky wrapped his hands around Clint’s, stilling their motion, and Clint looked up to meet his eyes. “I’d rather you showed me how you feel.”

Clint swallowed hard.

The L-word wasn’t… freely available in Clint’s vocabulary. And yeah, sure, he probably did love Bucky. He-

He couldn’t say it.
He could barely think it.

And Bucky’s face, soft and accepting and hopeful, was killing him.

“Okay,” Clint breathed. “Okay. I can... I can do that. I want... I... please.”

Bucky’s eyebrows were up near his hairline.

Clint never said ‘please’ in bed. Clint mostly told Bucky what to do, or told Bucky what he was going to do. He didn’t do a lot of begging.

“Whatever you want, baby,” Bucky said, shifting so that his arms fell, loose and relaxed, on either side of his head.

All the saliva in Clint’s mouth dried up at the gesture. The trust it implied.

Clint reached again for the buttons on Bucky’s shirt, his fingers slightly more steady, and they slipped apart easily, revealing Bucky’s skin inch by inch, until Clint could spread the shirt and the jacket apart, and get his hands and mouth on Bucky’s body.

“Fuck, you’re gorgeous,” he breathed, leaning down to mouth at the skin he’d exposed. “Just wanna make you feel good,” Clint mumbled into Bucky’s collarbone.

Bucky’s hand came down to tangle in Clint’s hair, fingers dragging roughly through the strands at the back of his head. Clint heard him take a deep, shuddering breath.

He leaned back, pulling his own tux jacket off, tossing over the side of the before loosening his bow tie and undoing the top button of his shirt.

Bucky made a short, sharp sound that made Clint grin.

“That James Bond thing wasn’t just idle commentary, huh?” He teased, sliding the bow tie from around his neck slowly.
Bucky shook his head mutely.

“Mmmm,” Clint said, thoughtful. “Another time,” he decided. “Sit up,” he said, instead, and Bucky leveraged himself up off the bed, crunching his abs and using his elbows, until he was upright enough for Clint to remove his jacket and shirt. He eyed the tie, pulling Bucky further up with it, into a sweltering kiss, and then he unknotted that too, and tossed it aside. He didn’t bother to see where it landed.

“That tie probably cost more than my tuition,” Bucky grumbled, but there was a smirk on his face that let Clint know he wasn’t really complaining.

“I’ll get you another,” Clint assured him, before pushing him back down into the mattress and reaching for the button on his trousers.

It took next to no time to strip Bucky bare, now the complexities of the shirt and tie were gone; just shoes and socks and pants. Simple and easy and pooled at the foot of the bed, forgotten, leaving Bucky sprawled out over the sheets in nothing except the tiniest pair of black briefs Clint had ever seen.

Stretched out over Bucky’s already-hard cock they were absolutely obscene.

“Fuck,” Clint said, emphatically.

Bucky was all his favorite fantasies, laid out on Egyptian cotton.

Clint dragged his fingers over the bulge in the black fabric, watching as Bucky twitched under his touch, as his stomach clenched and unclenched.

“I think,” Bucky managed, already flushed, “that one of us is overdressed.”

Sitting back on his heels, Clint began cuffing the sleeves of his shirt, rolling them up to his elbow. “No,” he said thoughtfully. “I think we’re both exactly the right amount of dressed.” He reached out and hooked a finger in the edges of Bucky’s underwear tugging it down far enough that the flushed, damp head of his cock was exposed.
“I like these,” Clint added, with a grin. “I like them a lot.”

And Bucky- Bucky actually blushed.

“Aw, babe, don’t get shy on me,” Clint said, still grinning. “I said I liked ’em, didn’t I?”

Bucky muttered something Clint didn’t quite catch.

“What was that?”

Rolling his eyes, Bucky begrudgingly admitted- “Natasha bought them with everything else.”

Clint couldn’t help the snort of laughter that escaped. “Remind me to thank her for them, then,” he said, and bent down to suck Bucky’s cock into his mouth.

“Fuck,” the other man hissed, back arching and fingers clutching the sheets underneath him.

Swirling his tongue around the head, Clint kept his eyes firmly fixed on Bucky’s reactions, watched him come apart under his hands. He had his eyes squeezed shut and his lower lip between his teeth, and just as soon as it looked like he was getting a little too close, approaching orgasm a little too quickly, Clint eased off, replace the tight suction with light, brief kisses and licks.

Bucky flopped back onto the mattress, breathing hard. “Fuck, Clint .”

“Mmmm,” Clint said, against the skin of Bucky’s hip, that sharp v where thigh and groin met, with it’s thin, sensitive skin. He bit down, just rough enough to leave a mark, and Bucky hissed. “I like when you say my name like that,” Clint told him. He moved up, working his mouth across to the other side, where he sucked a matching mark onto the left hip before working his way upwards. Clint trailed his mouth across Bucky’s stomach and chest, pausing to pay special attention to his nipples, and dragged his hands up Bucky’s sides, pulling his hands up over his head to pin them at the wrists.
“Hi,” he said when he was positioned directly above Bucky’s face, staring down into his lust-drunk expression.

Bucky was rocking upwards, rubbing his partially covered cock against Clint’s ass almost unconsciously, seeking out the friction he needed to get off.

Clint lifted his hips higher, pressing Bucky’s wrists further into the mattress.

Bucky whined.

“Don’t worry sweetheart,” Clint reassured him, shifting so that he could hold Bucky’s wrists with one hand and use the other to cup Bucky’s jaw, trailing a thumb across his swollen bottom lip, red from where Bucky’d had it tucked between his teeth. “I’m gonna take good care of you, I promise.”

He bent down to press his lips where his thumb had been, sucking that same lip into his mouth and taking it gently between his own teeth. Bucky groaned into his mouth. Clint’s free hand wandered lower, tweaking at a convenient nipple and making Bucky press his chest up into the contact.

“I owe you an apology,” Clint said, moving his mouth across Bucky’s smooth jaw, to his ear, taking the lobe between his teeth and biting down delicately.

Bucky made a vaguely protesting noise.

“I do,” Clint insisted. “I made you feel bad - I hurt your feelings. I didn’t mean to, and I wanna make it up to you.” He moved lower, sucking bruises onto Bucky’s throat. He kept his hand firmly on Bucky’s wrists and his hips hovering just out of reach above Bucky’s torso.

“I made you think I didn’t care about you, about your feelings, and that couldn’t be further from the truth, babe.” He pressed gentle, feather-light kisses across Bucky’s cheeks, his eyes, and the furrow in his brow as he tried to protest Clint’s words. Clint shut him up with another kiss, this one deep, open-mouthed with the slide of lips and tongue, until they were both breathless.

Clint rested his forehead against Bucky’s, eyes closed, as they breathed together, short and choppy. “I’m not good with my words,” Clint admitted quietly. “But I’m good with my hands and my mouth, and I wanna show you how much I care. I don’t want you to doubt me.”
When Clint opened his eyes, Bucky was watching him, his eyes a deep, stormy grey mixture of affection and sympathy and something that was probably the word Clint shied so hard away from. Clint was too close to see the rest of his expression, but Bucky tilted his chin up and pressed their lips together, light and easy, and Clint took it for permission.

He sat back up.

“Can you keep your hands right here for me babe?” Clint asked, pressing Bucky’s hands down into that same position.

Bucky swallowed roughly, but nodded, and Clint released his hands. Bucky kept them exactly where Clint had left them, just above his head on the mattress.

Clint leaned down for another leisurely kiss, and then he reached across the bed into the nightstand, digging for the lube and condoms he knew was there from the last time they’d stayed in the tower. He dropped them on the bed by Bucky’s side and slid lower, dragging the fabric of his trousers across Bucky’s damp cock, making him twitch and groan.

“I thought you were apologizing,” Bucky panted, “not torturing me.”

“A little of column A, little of column B,” Clint admitted, pressing his mouth back to Bucky’s skin, right in the middle of his sternum. He dipped lower, dragging hot, wet kisses across taut abs and the soft skin of Bucky’s lower stomach. He stripped his own clothes off as he went, kicking them to the floor without a thought. Bucky’s briefs got tugged down and tossed away this time too, leaving Bucky completely bare.

“Hey,” Clint said, propping his chin on Bucky’s hip. “You’ve got more of those, right?”

Bucky managed something that was almost a laugh, strangled though it was by arousal. “Yeah, I got a few more pairs.”

“Good,” Clint said, and slurped Bucky’s dick back down, this time taking it all the way to the hilt in one fast, sloppy move.
Bucky gave a choked shout, his hips jerking up, and Clint braced a forearm against his pelvis to hold him in place. Clint bobbed his head almost lazily, no kind of rhyme or reason, just applying enough suction and pressure to keep Bucky’s attention, and not nearly enough to get him off. With his free hand, he fumbled for the lube, finally managing to snag it and squirt some onto his fingers.

Thank fuck for pump bottles, really.

Propping one of Bucky’s knees over his shoulder, Clint reached down to circle Bucky’s entrance with slippery fingers, making him cry out again, his thighs trembling.

“You okay up there sweetheart?” Clint asked, still circling the twitching muscle under his fingertips. He mouthed over Bucky’s cock as he said it, waiting for an answer.

“I’d be better if you’d fuck me,” Bucky said, lifting his head to glare half-heartedly.

“Patience is a virtue,” Clint retorted, bending to take Bucky back into his mouth, and drawing a searing swear word out of Bucky’s.

Clint pressed his middle finger into the tight heat of Bucky’s body, slipping past the tight ring easily, and Bucky groaned in response, grinding down into the touch and taking it even deeper.

Clint hummed a little laugh around Bucky’s cock, making him swear again.

Bucky couldn’t seem to decide if he wanted to grind down on Clint’s hand or thrust up into his mouth more, his body jerking back and forth erratically as hot, delicious noises fell out of his mouth.

Clint added a second finger, curling them up in a ‘come here’ motion that scraped across Bucky’s prostate, and that seemed to make the decision for him.

“Jesus fuck,” Bucky said, pushing down against Clint’s hand. Clint repeated the motion, and Bucky dug his heel into Clint’s shoulder, trying to force him deeper. Clint eased up on Bucky’s cock, until only the head was in his mouth and he was massaging the sensitive underside with his tongue.
“Please,” Bucky said, sobbed, his shoulders flat against the bed and his entire back arched, using Clint as leverage to lift himself.

Sliding Bucky’s cock out of his mouth, Clint crawled back up and over Bucky, fingers still buried deep, still stroking across Bucky’s prostate. He pressed his thumb up into the sensitive spot behind Bucky’s balls, massaging his prostate from both sides.

“Please what?” Clint asked, teasing at the rim of Bucky’s hole with a third finger.

“More,” Bucky said breathlessly, his eyes squeezed shut. “Fuck me, god, something.”

Clint made a small sound of agreement, and pushed the third finger in, past the resistance he met, until all of them were squeezed tightly inside Bucky’s body.

“I’m trying,” he said, dragging his mouth across Bucky’s jaw, “to make love to you.”

Bucky’s breath hitched in his chest and his whole body tightened up like he was going to come, and Clint stilled his hand, no longer thrusting or curling, just resting there, keeping Bucky stretched open.

Eyes flying open, Bucky stared at him in disbelief.

“If that’s okay with you,” Clint added, suddenly nervous.

“Yeah, yes, that,” Bucky said in a rush, exhaling harshly. “Please.”

Clint gave a few more experimental thrusts with his fingers, satisfied that he wasn’t going to hurt Bucky, that he was ready, and then he pulled his hand away. Bucky whined and arched his body again. Clint shushed him, reaching for a condom and pressing soft kisses to Bucky’s throat, where he could bury his face and not be seen, not see the awe-struck look on Bucky’s face. Where his admission didn’t feel so overwhelming.

After a few seconds to gain his composure, Clint was able to lean back again and roll the condom on, watching Bucky from above, where he was flushed and pleased and wrecked underneath him. Gone was the perfectly coiffed hair of the party, the hunched line of pain across his shoulders, the
uncertainty in his gaze. Instead, Bucky looked punch-drunk and wanting, which was exactly how Clint liked him.

Finally getting the condom rolled on, ignoring the way his hands were shaking again, Clint wrapped Bucky’s right leg around his waist and leaned into him, pressing their mouths together for a sloppy kiss as he nudged his dick up against Bucky’s ass.

“You good?” Clint asked, and Bucky rolled his eyes.

In retaliation, Clint thrust forward, pushing up into the tight, wet heat of Bucky’s body.

Bucky gasped, arching up onto his shoulders again.

Clint reached up to thread their fingers together, less holding Bucky’s arms in place now, and more just holding his hands. Fitting them together as closely as he could manage as he worked his way deeper into Bucky. He fucked into him the same way he’d sucked his dick - in measured, leisurely thrusts, working until he bottomed out, and then sliding in and out, slow and steady and deep.

“You feel so fucking good,” he murmured into Bucky’s ear, punctuating the statement with a harder, sharper motion. “Best thing I ever felt.”

“Oh god,” Bucky groaned, pulling his left leg up so that he could wrap both legs around Clint’s waist.

It changed the angle to something Bucky clearly appreciated, based on how his cock jumped between them, trapped between their stomachs and leaking sticky precome everywhere.

Clint let go of one of Bucky’s hands to hitch his knee up even higher under his arm, and Bucky took the opportunity to wrap his arm around Clint’s shoulder and hang on for dear life, his blunt nails digging into Clint’s back.

“There you go, baby,” Clint said, rolling his hips. “Tell me what feels good. This better?”

“Fuck,” Bucky panted. “It all feels good, fuck.”
“Just wanna take care of you,” Clint groaned, as Bucky tightened down around him. “Wanna make you feel good, wanna make you feel as good as you make me feel.”

Bucky’s fingers tightened around his own, and Clint reached down to pull Bucky’s hip up a little further, until his legs were almost around Clint’s chest, and thrust again, trying to find the right angle-

When Bucky nearly yelled in response, Clint doubled down on the motion, still slow, but even deeper, so fucking deep Clint didn’t know where Bucky ended and he began, couldn’t focus on anything except the heat surrounding his cock, the feeling of the man underneath him coming apart.

“I want you to come,” Clint said, picking up the pace. He was so, so fucking close himself. “I want you to come on my dick, I want to watch, come for me sweetheart, I love it when you come.”

“Ah, ah, ah,” Bucky panted out with every harsh breath, with every thrust of Clint’s cock. It was the guttural, uncontrollable sound he made when he was beyond words, when he was about to fall over the edge.

Clint was watching him, watching the microexpressions crossing his face, the way his brow was scrunched up in concentration as he chased pleasure, the way he had his bottom lip between his teeth, biting until it was nearly bloodless, and Clint dug his knees into the mattress for more purchase and thrust even harder, getting as deep as he could get, dragging his dick across Bucky’s prostate with every thrust, and all the tension in Bucky’s body coiled up, the muscles in his arms and shoulders tensing up and then suddenly releasing as he came on a gasp, shouting Clint’s name.

And that- that was enough to set Clint off, his name in that low, hoarse, wrecked tone.

“Fuck, Bucky, fuck,” Clint managed, stuttering his way through an earth-shattering orgasm, his fingers gripping Bucky’s hand and hip hard enough to bruise but unable to let go. “God, love. Fuck,” he panted. His hips jerked a few more times, chasing the last spikes of pleasure in his system, and then it was all he could do not to collapse on top of Bucky as he held himself up on his shaking arm and trembling thighs.

Clint opened his eyes when he felt Bucky’s fingers combing through his hair, brushing it off his forehead.

“Wow,” Bucky said, but then smirked up at him, and Clint felt an answering grin cross his face.

Bucky tugged him down into a kiss that was somehow sweet, and then used his legs to pull Clint fully down on top of him, into the sticky mess on his stomach and the warmth of his body, wrapping his arms around Clint as he collapsed.

Clint nuzzled into the side of his neck, pressing kisses to the sweaty skin there as his heart rate slowed and his breathing returned to normal.

“You just wanted to make me lay in the wet spot,” he accused, but without any heat.

Bucky snorted. “I am the wet spot.”

“True,” Clint agreed, yawning. “Lemme clean you up, just… gimme two minutes to recover.”

“I’m fine,” Bucky said, soft, something unreadable in his voice as he scratched his fingers across Clint’s shoulders and through his hair against his scalp. If Clint were a cat, he’d be purring.

Clint lifted his head to look at him, found some unfathomable expression on his face.

“What’s wrong?” He asked, reaching out to run his thumb along the corner of Bucky’s mouth.

“Nothing,” Bucky said, smiling. “Nothing at all. Everything’s perfect.”

* 

They were eating breakfast the next morning when Bucky’s perfect, post-coital post-love confession, post-best night ever was interrupted.

“Sirs,” JARVIS announced, startling Bucky enough that he splashed the milk he was pouring. One day he’d get used to having a talking ceiling, but today was not that day. “You have a delivery.”
Clint was leaning on his fist at the bar, barely conscious, and he waved a hand vaguely.

The door chimed, then opened to allow no less than five delivery men, each laden down with baskets, boxes, or balloons, all in truly obnoxious red and gold foil.

“What the fuck?” Bucky muttered, watching with wide eyes.

“Sir would like to extend his deepest apologies, and wants to know if, quote, you’re ‘cool’ now.”

Clint snorted a laugh, but Bucky just kept staring. There was an edible arrangement with enough fruit to feed Steve and Thor, probably, along with some kind of wine and cheese basket, and an unidentifiable package that Bucky deeply suspected contained a weapon of some sort, judging by the gingerly way the delivery guy was holding it.

And the balloons.

“What the fuck are we supposed to do with all these balloons?” Bucky asked, baffled.

Clint shrugged. “I can use ‘em for target practice. That’s what I usually do.”

Bucky blinked at the implication that Clint often had enough apology balloons that he was accustomed to using them as moving targets. “Seriously?”

Clint shrugged again, raising an eyebrow in question, and Bucky sighed.

“Yeah.” Bucky told the ceiling. He figured Tony’s ill-timed and massively fucked up commentary was the impetus that got him to use his words and Clint to sort of use his, and he probably shouldn’t hold a grudge, since it meant he now had exactly what he’d wanted. “You can tell Tony we’re cool.”

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