Captain America&Agent Carter: New Beginning

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**Captain America&Agent Carter: New Beginning**

by Hollywood1946

**Summary**

AU of Captain America the First Avenger. Where Captain Steve Rogers is found in the ice after the conclusion of World War II, and reunites with Agent Peggy Carter. They kindle a relationship and go through numerous adventures together, and experience the ups and downs of life. Recurring characters like Howard Stark and the Howling Commandos. Prologue is linear to get the bearings of the story and quite cliche for the most part. I'll do my best to be accurate to the eras. Not Canon to Marvel Universe. Plenty of Steve/Peggy moments.

Originally wrote it and posted on fanfiction.net.
Prologue

Captain America & Agent Carter: New Beginning

Edited 27 Mar 2018

A Captain America alternate universe where Steve Rogers makes it back to Peggy. Their life and their future if Steve Rogers made it back. I feel super sad that he never did get that dance. I hope no one has this title. This is my version of this story.

Prologue will be pretty standard with the movie, with a few different dialogue to get the bearings of the story. Go with it for now

Don't Own Captain America etc.

Prologue

Hydra Base

Agent Margaret "Peggy" Carter, a tough, experienced SSR field agent, and hardened woman, but yet still aggressively feminine lacked no confidence. A resilient woman who stands strong whenever she's mistreated, be it by man or a woman. With a "no nonsense" attitude she is very selective who she becomes close to people. However, her resolve is quickly crumbling as she sat behind the radio in the control tower of the hanger in the Hydra Mountain facility. Her usual composed persona faltered with tears building up in her eyes as she tried to talk Captain Steve Rogers away from going down with the plane. She never thought she would feel this strongly for anyone. Though Peggy was no stranger to romance and had her fair share of the feeling of "love," she never once felt a solid connection with anyone until she met the Captain. She never thought he would, but he had captured her heart, and she was in love with Captain America. No, Steve Rogers. Through everything, they have been through, from when he started off as a skinny asthmatic to when he became a hero, his demeanor, and his character never changed. He was so kind, so gentle, and yet tough. A true gentleman. He was everything she loved in a man and never let his position compromise who he really is. To her...he was too damn perfect. Steve Rogers threw wrenches into her strong persona she established by just smiling at her. She would often duck her head to hide the smile on her lips when he would unknowingly compliment her and merely be entirely gentle with her. That man was unfalteringly good with steadfast morals and principals that guided his seemingly perfect moral compass. He's more than a perfect soldier; he's a good man. Peggy couldn't help but stumble on her right partner, but as soon as she realized it, she was in danger of losing what she never had the chance of having.

Peggy stuttered on the radio, "Steve please... don't do this. We have time, we can work it out," she said with her strength fading.

In the Valkyrie, Captain Steve Rogers shook his head and clenched his teeth as the cold air nipped his face through the massive holes punched in the cockpit and fuselage. He said sadly, "right now... I'm in the middle of nowhere, if I wait any longer a lot of people are going to die." He was able to unlock part of the controls of the plane, but only enough for him to rise and dive it. He said sadly on the radio, "Peggy...This is my job..." Back in the base, Peggy closed her eyes as tears slowly ran down her face. Steve continued to speak, "I'm so glad I got to meet you Peggy." She could hear him stutter, "The best thing about this war was you." He smiled sadly and took out his compass that had Peggy's picture in it and placed it on a gauge in front of him. He took a deep breath then dived the plane. The plane screamed toward the Artic at incredible speed. He started to cry as well. He called
for her; he needed her voice, "Peggy…”

Peggy leaned forward to the radio with tears and said with as much strength as she could, "I'm here…”

Steve didn't take his eyes off where the plane was going, "I'm going to need a rain check on that dance okay?"

Peggy took a deep breath as tears streamed down, "Alright. A week next Saturday at the Stork Club."

Steve smiled thinking about it, "You got it."

She mustered her strength again, "Eight O'clock on the dot don't you dare be late. Understood?"

Steve laughed lightly, as the ground got closer and closer, "You know… I still don't know how to dance. I don't want to embarrass you…” The plane shook and rattled as she approached the ground like it would break apart before it hit the Earth.

Peggy couldn't hold back any more, "I'll show you how… just be there."

She heard the crackle on the radio and the last words from Steve, "Peggy… I…” With those last words the Radio cut out.

Peggy closed her eyes and shook her head and called for him, "Steve?" She looked down and cried, "Steve?" There was nothing. Just static.

Colonel Phillips stood in the door way to the tower and he himself was sad. He just lost a good man and even though the Captain was subordinate, he considered Rogers a good friend. He heard Peggy call for Steve again and again. He watched as she cried, helpless to do anything for her. He couldn't watch anymore and he silently left, left with his own sadness.

VE DAY

On May 8, 1945, the Allies have defeated Nazi Germany. The war was effectively over in Europe and everyone was celebrating the peace. The celebrations of VE day raged across Europe and the United States in celebration for part of the war finally being over. Everyone except Captain Rogers' Howling Commandos, Colonel Phillips, and Agent Carter. They mourned the hero that had helped carry them to victory. To the commandos, Captain Rogers was their leader and their brother. To Colonel Phillips, he was a valued soldier and good friend. To Peggy, Steve was the man she fell in love with and a man she would want to share a life with if she had a chance. Victory was bitter sweet for everyone. As everyone settled and started to begin rebuilding the war-torn Europe. Howard Stark was sent to find the Tesseract and any traces of Captain America immediately after victory in Europe.

After days of hunting for the Tesseract, they found it on the bottom of the ocean in the Artic. His crew retrieved it from the ocean floor and expected to go home afterward, but Howard Stark refused and said to keep going until they found Captain America. After another four days of searching around the Artic for any clues, hopes of finding him started to fade. Even for Stark. They've been out in these dangerous waters for almost an entire three weeks past the parties of VE day. But when all hope seemed to be lost in the cold morning, one of the crew on the bow of the ship spotted something to their starboard side. Stark took his binoculars and looked to starboard and saw something that resembled a wing covered in snow. Without question he turned his vessel hard to
They reached the location and had to set anchor to avoid ice, just short of what they hoped was the plane. Before the search team was ready to leave, Stark grabbed a pickaxe and ran as hard and as fast as he could in the snow to the "plane". His search party quickly tried to keep up with him. Stark ran up a little snowy mound with new hope and a new smile that hasn't been seen in a long time. As he got over the snowy mound he saw nothing but white. White snow and ice. No plane. His smile faded and stood still as the rest of his search party caught up to him. They too stopped in their tracks, and their hope was lost again too when they realized they stood on a barren snowy wasteland. One of the men dropped his shovel, "That's it then? We thought this was it… and it was nothing…”

Stark lost all hope again and took a step forward down the hill. Without saying a thing, he took off running down the snow hill and almost falling in the process. His search party looked at each other curiously. Stark stopped at the base and stomped his foot into the snow but felt nothing but snow. He stomped again. His search party called him to come back worried that he is losing his mind. Then Stark took his pickaxe and slammed it into the snow and heard a metal clang. He hit it again to make sure he wasn't delusional hearing another metal clang. He bent down and brushed through the snow and felt metal under his gloves...he found it. He stood up, "It's here!” he called with rejuvenated vigor. His search party didn't need to be told more than once. They ran with another new rejuvenation of energy and enthusiasm. A roller coaster ride of hope and loss.

After hours of moving snow and shoveling in the area, they believed was the front of the airplane they finally cleared enough of it actually to confirm they found the all-glass cockpit of the Valkyrie. The area surrounding the "excavation site" is surrounded by crates, heavy equipment, and a fire almost like a provisional base of operations to bring the Captain home. Stark smashed a bunch of the exposed glass frames to create a passageway for them to search the plane. He decided he was the first one to go in; he tied himself to his team and weighted crates for support as the crew lowered him into the plane with a thick rope. Once he got in, he untied himself from the rope, and discovered how cold and slippery the interior is. As he tried to carefully take one step in front of the other he slipped suddenly onto his back and slid to the controls of the plane at the front. He slowly got up in pain then spotted a curious object on the ground next to him. He picked it up and found out it was a compass with Agent Carter's picture taped to the inside of the cover. The picture of Peggy looked unharmed but the glass on the compass surprisingly suffered minor damage for what occurred to the plane with a thick crack down the glass over the dial. Stark frowned in sadness at the memento the Captain carried with him. He stood up and looked to his right and saw Captain Steve Rogers frozen. Stark fell back onto his back almost having a heart attack.

Steve had his eyes closed and was leaning back against the pilot chair with ice covering him. He was literally an icicle. Stark composed himself and approached the surprisingly lively looking body of the Captain. For someone who's supposed to be dead, he looked surprisingly in good shape. Stark just ignored that fact and approached his dead friend and frowned, "We found you, Captain." He gave a sad smile, "You're coming home." Stark was not unobservant and was extremely smart, but even the stress of the past month could make anyone hallucinate. For just a moment, he thought he saw his chest move up and down. Stark slowly took a step back in shock in what he just thought he saw. He couldn't be right. It's impossible. But when he slowly bent down to look out of curiosity, there he saw Steve's chest move up and down again. Less than a centimeter in height but it still moved. There's no question it moved. No question he's still alive. At least for now…

Stark called to the top, "Guys! Get down here! Now!" There was commotion on the surface before more people roped in.

As I said the Prologue is quite linear to the movie and a bit cliche to get you oriented with the
story.

Edited 27 Mar 18. Described Peggy to be more firm and stronger (who she really is)

Edited dialogue, grammar, and added more details.
NEW YORK CITY LATE MAY 1945

Though there was victory in Europe, the war continued to wage in the pacific. World War II was not quite over and the United States geared to continue the bloody fight in the Pacific. While Europe began the rebuilding process, the allies in the pacific brought the fight to the Japanese. The United States relentlessly continued its campaign of bombing the main islands of Japan as the U.S. military continued its slow march through its island-hopping campaign to Japan. The war in the Pacific continued to drag on with every bloody day and every bloody battle.

In the midst of continuing war, Peggy was busy fighting her own struggle. She was in a constant battle of grieving for a man who she has fallen for. Peggy's strong, independent, and resilient with a stern reputation of having a "no-nonsense" attitude. She's the type of woman who is strong and who attracts but never is wooed, by all accounts she can be considered an "ice queen" especially to the men she works around. But Steve, the man, managed to break down her stern walls and send her into a spiral like he was meant to do it. He was a man of character and a man of integrity and had a smile she can get lost in. Above all else, Steve was the man she didn't have a chance of experiencing life with. It was crazy to her, but she was in love with someone who gave everything for the world. But it turned out that the two of them weren't meant to be. But for a brief moment, before he boarded the plane to do what he was meant to do, she kissed him. That one moment, that one beautiful moment, she felt like everything was right in her life. Maybe it was a selfish feeling, but to she could've kissed him forever as if felt time stopped for the two of them. Peggy couldn't regret never kissing him and it was a good thing she did. Now she holds that memory close to her heart.

The two of them knew the risks of the job, but that kiss was long overdue for the two of them. It saddened Peggy of how late it was. The romantic interest and chemistry were there, but neither of them acted upon it until Steve's final mission. If Peggy knew she would never see him again, she would've done so many things differently, especially tell him how she truly felt because Steve was God awful in interacting with a woman, but that was just part of his charm. Unlike most men who ogled her over her body and looks, Steve wanted to know her personally before all else. He treated her like a person instead of a thing like a porcelain doll. He was genuine to her. They had so much in common, and they grew close during the war, but unfortunately, the dream of a future together was suddenly snatched from the two of them.

In the midst of continuing war, Peggy was busy fighting her own struggle. She was in a constant battle of grieving for a man who she has fallen for. Peggy's strong, independent, and resilient with a stern reputation of having a "no-nonsense" attitude. She's the type of woman who is strong and who attracts but never is wooed, by all accounts she can be considered an "ice queen" especially to the men she works around. But Steve, the man, managed to break down her stern walls and send her into a spiral like he was meant to do it. He was a man of character and a man of integrity and had a smile she can get lost in. Above all else, Steve was the man she didn't have a chance of experiencing life with. It was crazy to her, but she was in love with someone who gave everything for the world. But it turned out that the two of them weren't meant to be. But for a brief moment, before he boarded the plane to do what he was meant to do, she kissed him. That one moment, that one beautiful
moment, she felt like everything was right in her life. Maybe it was a selfish feeling, but to she
could've kissed him forever as if time stopped for the two of them. Peggy couldn't regret never
kissing him, and it was a good thing she did. Now she holds that memory close to her heart.

After her tour of duty in Europe, Peggy continued her work with the Strategic Science Reserve still
attached to the US Army but operating out of New York City office that is disguised as a phone
company called "New York Bell Company. A Telephone & Telegraph Company since 1891." But
she wasn't 100% since the battle at the Hydra base, and her coworkers knew it too, but no one would
approach her about it let alone get in her way. She would snap at everyone and everything,
becoming very ice cold to everybody. It didn't help that majority of people who she worked around
were patriarchal and cocky men who took offense to her position as a field agent as a woman. It
came to no surprise that Agent Margaret "Peggy" Carter became an Ice Queen and built more walls
around her to protect people from seeing her broken heart. But under the icy shield she established,
she was grieving. Every morning she would wake up in her high-level midtown apartment in a pool
of tears and go to sleep that night crying. Every day since she got back to the United States, she
would walk around the city for hours at a time after work to try to calm herself down. She would
walk past the Stork Club and imagine her and Steve dancing which hurt her deeply by just looking at
the club. She didn't even know why she continued walking past the club if it brought so much pain
to her. That calm walks she takes on a nearly religious level brought more pain. Everything reminded
her of him. Kids playing in the streets and sidewalks reminded her of when they first met when he
was a short, asthmatic man with so much energy, enthusiasm, and both physical and moral courage.
Captain Steve Rogers, the most infuriatingly good man she ever met. Unfortunately, no matter how
strong she is nor how many walls she built up, grief will always be present.

Steve Rogers, Captain America, became a superstar around the country. He was mourned by a
nation that had admired his heroic rise from the USO stage to the newsreels as a war hero, and who
now believed him to be dead after crashing his plane in the arctic. He left a significant impact on the
nation and even the world. After his disappearance, the idea and character of Captain America was
still widely famous which prompted the stage company that hosted Captain America bond shows to
lend the stage rights of the show to a radio broadcasting service. The radio program *The Captain
America: Adventure Program* was developed using fictional characters and Steve's name to continue
the idea and persona of Captain America. In addition to his pop culture impact, American kids all
over the country ran around with trashcan lids as shields playing Captain America. His heroics were
well known and he was the nations champion. He became such a symbol to the country that no one
ever talked about him in the past tense like he never went missing. He was larger than life. He was
all over the country.

It was getting late in the city; the sun was setting and Peggy decided now was about time for her to
get back home to her apartment in Midtown Manhattan. She was wearing a white dress shirt, black
business skirt, stockings, and black heels, red lipstick, and neutral makeup, a typical work outfit of
hers. It was just another dreadful walk for her. The days of the week just seemed to blend together
and she continued today like any other. Minute by minute, hour by hour, and it was just another day
of mourning and not a lot of closure and healing. As she walked home she thought of Steve, as was
her daily thing nowadays. She wondered what would Steve think of her right now, would he be sad
that she is like this or would he be upset that she's mourning him. She didn't know, she just knew she
missed him.

Peggy walked slowly up the stairs to her apartment on the fourth floor in Manhattan and got her keys
to open the door. She walked in tiredly into her dark home, dropped her purse on the floor, and
plopped onto the couch without turning on any lights. She kicked off her heels and slouched down
with her eyes closed. Peggy, wish she could just forget about the world and remain in this position
on the couch forever, but her moral code dictates her to continue doing her job. The phone suddenly
rang causing her to sigh angrily at whoever was calling. The phone continued to ring and annoy her and forced her to get up and walk over to the kitchen counter to pick up the telephone. She answered with an ice-cold voice, "what?"

It was Howard Stark speaking fast, "Peggy? Peggy? Can you hear me?"

Peggy groaned and rolled her eyes. It may be the first time she heard from Stark since he departed for the Artic a few months ago, but she was too sad and too irritated to be bothered by his nonsense right now. He was sent to the Artic for the Tesseract and to find Captain America, but it was evident from Steve's transmission that he might never be found. She groaned again and spoke in her English accent angrily, "What Howard. I'm really tired get to the point."

Howard responded energetically not caring for Peggy's anger, "Get to the hospital quick!"

She rolled her eyes, "Why?"

"We found him! We found Steve!" he yelled with energy.

Peggy didn't believe what he was saying. She's been mourning him for weeks and she lost all hope that they would ever find him. Clearly hope always seems do die last. Peggy didn't believe him, "What?" she asked unsure of what she just heard.

He yelled at her, "Damn it Peggy! Are you hearing me? Steve is alive! He's in the hospital! Come down here now!" Peggy took a step back from the counter finally realizing what Stark just said. Her jaw dropped. Her free hand made its way to cover her mouth as tears of sadness and relief came down her cheeks as his words sank in. Howard responded calmly, "Agent Carter? Are you still there?"

Peggy wiped her tears from her face and responded shakily, "Yes. I'm here and I'm coming right now."

Howard responded happily, "I'll be in the hospital near his room. It's Bellevue Hospital! Get here!"

Peggy hung up the phone and ran to put her heels on. Within minutes she had her purse in her hands and she was out the door in a flash. She rushed to the side of the street and hailed a cab to make her way to Bellevue Hospital Center.

Bellevue Hospital Center

Peggy's heels clicked rapidly against the floor as she made her way to the hospital. She quickly walked into the lobby and saw numerous police officers and men in suits, presumably SSR agents, standing in a dispersed manner in the lobby. As Peggy made her way to the front desk, ignoring the SSR agents and police officers, she noticed a group of nurses and even a doctor huddled around each other smiling and whispering amongst each other, and even pointing to the hallway down their left. They were busy talking excitedly about Howard Stark being in their hospital and with Captain America. The discovery of Captain America and the fact that he's in their hospital was big news. It's no question that everyone in the hospital knew about the situation let alone talking about it throughout the whole building. Peggy got to the desk and asked, "Excuse me, is a Captain Steve Rogers here?" The nurses looked at her and even gave her a once over, some even looked jealous of her.

The doctor shook his head, "I'm sorry, Ma'am. Given strict instructions to not let any unauthorized individuals to see him."
Peggy spoke rapidly, "I'm Agent Carter, SSR."

The Doctor looked down at his clipboard for a moment to check the list he was handed by some federal agent. Suddenly an SSR agent walked up to the front desk behind him and nodded, "She can see him," he said briskly. The doctor nodded then looked over to his left and nodded to the hallway. Peggy understood and took off down that direction quickly.

Peggy spotted Howard on the far end leaning against the right side of the wall with his hands in his pockets looking down at the floor. She got closer to him and without him looking at her; she could tell he was tired. He had a light beard on his face along with his typical mustache and had bags under his eyes, and he was still wearing his grey artic gear, but she could tell he was physically tired by his posture alone.

Howard rolled his neck and instantly saw her walking his way. He gave her a tired smile as she approached him. He pushed himself off the wall and hugged his friend, and held each other for a moment before separating. He smiled weakly, "Agent Carter. Hope you haven't visited the inside of a bottle."

Peggy gave him a weak smile, "It's good to see you."

Howard smiled weakly, "It wasn't for nothing. We found him and the artifact."

Peggy looked at the closed door next to Howard, "Can I go in and see him?"

Howard smiled and pointed to the door on the opposite side, "It's actually this one." Peggy turned around. He continued, "Go right in. Though he isn't awake yet."

Peggy slowly opened the door. Every thought of him raced through her mind as she opened the door slowly. Every day was a constant battle for her, every day and every struggle for the past few months led her to this moment. This moment to see him again. She opened the door and revealed the man she'd wait forever for laying on the hospital bed with his eyes closed. Under the white bed covers and wearing a white t-shirt. His uniform was folded nicely with his helmet on the table and his shield leaned up against the wall. She took a step into the room not believing what she was seeing. He looked so calm and at peace. He looked like he was sleeping.

Howard stood next to her and placed a hand on her shoulder, "We found him in the ice along with the jet." He said sadly, "He was frozen in place on the pilots chair. We had to cut him out of the ice just to get him on board our ship. We immediately sailed for New York as fast as we could." He sighed, "We thawed him out the best we could but he didn't wake up." He shook his head, "We hoped he'd wake up before we got to New York but he never did, so we rushed him here. It was the closest hospital for us. We even made sure we got some security thanks to your SSR pals and the local police..." Peggy didn't take her eyes off of Steve and didn't respond to the news Howard was giving her. Howard kept explaining what's going on, "The nurses and doctors are doing everything they can for him, but right now it's all up to him to come back to us." Peggy took another step forward to Steve but remained in shock that Steve is back. She was hoping this wasn't a dream. This couldn't be a dream. Peggy started to tear as she gazed at his calm face from the doorway. The incredibly strong agent is being torn apart by a sleeping man. Howard said confidently, "Go to him Peggy. Give him a reason to come back. Give him the reason to see you again." He handed her a small object. Peggy looked down and saw it was Steve's compass. "We found this by him," he said as Peggy took it silently then focused back on the silent Steve Rogers.

Peggy didn't look back at Stark and didn't look anywhere else but to Steve. She walked forward and pulled up an armchair and positioned it right next to the head of the bed but didn't sit. Instead she stood over him and caressed his arm then caressed his face. Her tears continued to slowly fall. Peggy
then combed his hair gently with her hand, "Steve. It's me Peggy." She then gently touched his face, "I thought you were dead. We all did." Her English voice cracked as she spoke, "But I've been trying to stay strong for you. I've been hurting without you. And now that we found you, I need you to come back. I need you to come back to me." There was no response from Steve as he remained in a deep slumber. Peggy cried. She continued to interchange playing with his hair and caressing his cheek, "Steve. Please come back home to me. Come back. I need you." There was nothing but silence. She sat down on her chair and laid her face against his chest. She got up again to plant a kiss on his lips and a kiss on his forehead. She smiled through her tears and cleaned her lipstick mark off his forehead. She decided right then and there that she wasn't going to leave his side for anything.

She rubbed her temple crying then realized what she had with her. She took out the compass and opened it slowly revealing the black and white picture of her taped on the inside of the cover. She covered her mouth as she cried. She remembered when she caught him in a middle of a kiss with another woman and how furious she was at him. But when he felt sorry, guilty, and flustered she admitted to herself how cute he was when he was in that position. She noticed how bad and how sorry he felt for doing that to her. Though neither of them rightfully confessed their express interest in each other at the time, from then on out, there was a silent unspoken romantic understanding between them. She knew he carried this compass with her because she saw it on the newsreel with him, and even saw her picture within it too. All this time he carried this with him, and was thinking of her all the way until he crashed his plane into the ice. This broke her heart.

Howard didn't need her to tell him. He nodded and turned around out of the room to a phone. He used his connections with the SSR to call out of work for Peggy for the next few days. Saying that she is with him on a special assignment that involved the glowing object he found in the ice. The object being the Tesseract. He looked to his right and saw a horde of press at the front desk trying to pass the police officers, SSR agents, and hospital staff. He shook his head at how fast they got here; it was no question that the discovery of Captain Rogers would spread like wildfire. Stark took a deep breath and walked to the front desk to stop the wave of press.

The next morning Peggy woke up from a pat on the back. She was sleeping on the chair but was hunched over Steve's bed with her hand on top of his. Her eyes opened up slowly and turned to her left and saw Colonel Phillips standing over her with a gentle smile across his face with his Army cover under his arm. She greeted the Colonel and was about to stand up, "Colonel Phillips. I didn't…"

Colonel Phillips patted her back, "Don't need to stand Carter. I just came to check on you and Captain Rogers." He heard that Captain Rogers was in the hospital and came as soon as possible. He knew that Agent Carter was not at the SSR New York office and figured she was here. Knowing that she was in extreme emotional pain he wasn't going to get on her case for being here, he'll keep her story a secret from her bosses in the office. He smiled, "How's he doing?"

Peggy looked back at Steve and caressed his hand, "He hasn't woken up yet. Howard told me he was frozen for a while and so far, there hasn't been a change."

"How are you doing Margaret? And be honest with me." He doesn't usually call her by her first name, let alone her nickname "Peggy," but now seemed like an important occasion.

Peggy looked down and continued to caress Steve's arm, "I'm okay. Been a few bad days but I'm hanging in there." Colonel Phillips gave her the look. She shook her head and spoke honestly. "Fine. It's been hard okay! It's been hard since he disappeared!" She looked down and frowned, "I'm supposed to be that strong Agent, Steve always relied on. I think if he saw me like this he would be ashamed of me." She sighed, "I'm crying over a man I didn't even go on a date with…"
"No, Rogers wouldn't be ashamed." Colonel Phillips squatted down in front of her and placed his hand on her shoulder causing her to look hi in the eyes. He gave her a reassuring smile.

She wiped tears off her face, "It's so silly."

"No it's not." He smiled, "Captain Rogers would never think that about you. He thought the world of you." He gripped her shoulder reassuringly, "He would be happy to see you again. And you're sad because you loved him in your own way, and that's why it hurt."

Peggy nodded and looked down, "What about you Colonel?"

Colonel Phillips patted her back, "Here to check on my greatest Agent and greatest soldier." He stood up, "Then for the next few months, I'll be training the Howling Commandos and an Army battalion getting ready to be sent to crush the last of Hydra in Europe." He nodded, "Hitler and Schmidt maybe dead but Hydra is still going. We need to put an end to them and get as much assets before the communists do." He laughed, "Trade an enemy for another."

Peggy nodded, "I would like to aid…"

Phillips smiled, "Your place is here with him for now. He needs you. You can go back and kick in doors later." He chuckled, "We might end up going to the pacific and fight the Japanese later anyway." Peggy nodded. Colonel Phillips walked over to the other side of the bed near the windows and leaned forward and whispered something to Steve that Peggy couldn't hear. "You better make it back Captain Rogers, you have an incredible lady waiting for you." He stood straight and smiled at Peggy then left the room.

Peggy gave a small smile as Colonel Phillips left the room. She leaned over Steve and kissed his still lips, "Steve, I'll be right here waiting for you okay?" She kissed the top of his head, "Come back to me."

Days passed and there was no sign of change in Steve. Peggy maintained a constant vigil over him as he slept in his hospital bed. SSR agents and police officers were posted throughout the hospital to assure security on the Captain. Howard and Colonel Phillips came and went, but Peggy was always there day and night. She ate, slept, and lived in the hospital room dedicated to Steve. She refused to lose hope, he's here now and she is determined that he will wake up. The only time she would leave Steve's side is when the doctors and nurses needed space or she had to get food, clean up, or use the bathroom. Howard kept Peggy's SSR bosses off her back by telling them he was using her experience to help him out with the Tesseract. They didn't question him. Peggy was thankful for Howard's understanding and support.

It's now the middle of June. Just another morning in New York and in the Bellevue Hospital. Peggy slept soundly against Steve's bed and her hand still on its place on his hand. She hasn't been getting good sleep. Plagued by dreams and memories, and uncomfortable sleeping position she hasn't had an undisturbed full nights rest. But all of a sudden, she felt something stir under her cheek. Her eyes slowly opened and she lifted her head and looked at Steve. His eyes were moving under his eyelids signaling intense dreaming, the most activity he had in weeks. Her jaw dropped and suddenly she wasn't tired anymore. She looked at his hand and saw his fingers starting to twitch randomly. She gasped and tightened her grip on his hand and instantly looked at Steve hoping to see his eyes open. But she only felt twitches from his fingers and only saw his eyes move under his lids.

Steve woke up on the cold ground and saw nothing but a bright white light. He sat up and looked around and saw nothing but an infinite white light and space. There was a tap behind him and he stood up and saw a very friendly familiar face smiling at him. It was Doctor Abraham Erskine. Steve
spoke up, "Where am I?"

Doctor Erskine gave his signature chuckle, "Don't worry about it Steven. You're only passing through."

Steve looked around, "What happened? The last thing I remember was when I was in Schmidt's plane…and I was talking to…Peggy…" He remembered everything. He remembered how much Peggy hurt, how much pain he caused her. He remembered that he had a date.

"You okay, Steven?" Erskine asked.

"I had a date…" Steve said ashamed.

Dr. Erskine smiled, "You're mind was dead for a long time." Steve suddenly realize who was in front of him. His face turned into one of a thousand questions. Erskine smiled, "do you remember what I told you before the operation?"

Steve nodded and said, "Not to be a perfect soldier but to be a good man." Erskine smiled and nodded. Steve looked down, "I tried to be a good man…to be a better man. I truly tried. But, I know I screwed up along the way."

Erskine nodded, "You are a good man Steven." He patted his shoulder, "You saved the world and you didn't change who you are."

Steve nodded a bit sad, "What now?"

Erskine smiled gently, "What's the matter."

Steve shrugged, "I'm here. That's got to mean…"

"Remember, I told you that you're only passing through." He smiled, "I couldn't be anymore prouder of you than I am now. You are everything I dreamed you to be. A good man, a good soldier, and a hero." Steve smiled sadly at his dead friend. Erskine nodded, "There are two people here who want to see you before you go," he turned and directed Steve's attention to a young woman and man standing in the distance waving at him. Steve gasped and realized who the two people were. They were his mother and father. Erskine smiled, "Last thing. A good man never keeps a lady waiting." Steve looked up and looked at Doctor Erskine with a confused expression. Erskine patted his shoulder, "Time to go home Steven."

Steve felt a rush of air and Erskine started to fade away from him quickly. Getting smaller and smaller. Steve called out, "Wait Doctor! What about you! What about…" He just saw a faint wave then everything went bright.

Peggy saw Steve starting to try opening his eyes, her jaw dropped and she gave an extremely happy smile as she leaned over him. She felt Steve's hand gently grip hers rendering a bigger smile on her face. Steve struggled to open his eyes. He felt pressure on his hand and he gently squeezed it tighter. His eyes finally made it open but everything was blurry mixed with bright and blinding light. When everything came into focus, the first thing he saw was Peggy's beautiful face framed by the light like a halo. Her lips were light red and her face had a light shade of make up on, but he was amazed how beautiful she was. Like it was the first time he saw her. She giggled and gasped as she saw him recognize her. Steve formed a small smile on his face adoring her beautiful face. He weakly said, "Hello beautiful…"

Peggy laughed and couldn't hold back and kissed him. Steve didn't mind it at all, and he gladly
reciprocated. They held the passionate kiss for a while until Peggy had to come up for air. She released the kiss and rested her forehead against his and smiled, "Hey." She breathed a sigh of relief and said, "I missed you…"

Steve frowned, fully realizing how long he's been gone, "I'm sorry Peggy."

Peggy leaned back and looked into his eyes, and caressed his cheek. She smiled reassuringly, "For what? You're awake now and you're home." Her English voice soothed Steve to no end.

Steve said weakly, "I think I missed the date."

Peggy laughed and kissed him again happily. She smiled, "You know it's not right to keep a lady waiting." She caressed his cheek, "I said don't be late." She laughed.

Steve laughed. He slowly brought his hand to Peggy's cheek and caressed it, "I never got to tell you how beautiful you are." Peggy held his hand on her cheek and smiled as tears of joy fell from her eyes. She smiled her first wide smile in a long time. He smiled too, "Still owe you a dance."

Peggy laughed, "Damn right you do." She kissed him again. Then laid her head on his chest.

Since Steve has almost zero experience with women he has no idea what they are to each other. He was extremely thirsty but he had to ask, "Peggy?"

She looked at him, "Hm?"

"Does this mean we are going steady?" He said nervously. He licked his lips as thirst started to bug him, "Just want to know…"

Peggy laughed and kissed him, "You still don't understand women do you Steve?" She smiled, "We may have not gone on a proper date but I'd say we are." He smiled weakly. She asked concerned, "Need anything?"

Steve nodded weakly but able to smile at her, "Water?"

Peggy nodded, "Okay, I'll be right back." She kissed his cheek then left for water and decided to get him food when he needs it.

Peggy was walking back to the room with a cup of water and food when she spotted Howard Stark and Colonel Phillips walking her direction. Colonel Phillips stopped in front of her and asked, "Morning Agent Carter. Any news?"

Peggy smiled which alarmed Howard and the Colonel, since it's been so long since they seen her smile. She said happily, "He's awake. He's thirsty but I figured he needs food." Howard and Phillips both smiled and quickly walked into the room. Phillips held the door for Peggy as she walked in first.

Steve smiled as he saw Peggy, Howard, and Colonel Phillips. Peggy sat the tray of food down on the table in front of his bed then brought Steve the glass of water. Steve happily took the glass from her and downed that glass in seconds. He licked his lips still thirsty. Peggy kissed the top of his head, "I'll get more." She turned to the bathroom to get more water from the tap.

Steve nodded at Howard, "Mister Stark." Then nodded at the Colonel, "Sir."

Howard was about to speak but was too late. Colonel Phillips spoke in his loud military voice, "Captain Rogers! Want to explain to me why you want AWOL on me!" Peggy stopped in her tracks
in the doorway of the bathroom with a glass of water. Steve had his eyes wide at what happened. Colonel Phillips smiled disarmingly and laughed, "Welcome back Captain."

Steve smiled, "Thank you sir." Peggy walked to him and gave him another glass of water, which he drank more slowly this time. Peggy rested her hand on his stomach, caressing his tone core.

Howard chuckled, "Talk about milking the drama." He nodded, "Welcome back Captain." Steve nodded toward him. Howard walked to the door and said, "You got some guests." As he opened the door a mass of press walked in spewing a load of questions at Steve and flashing countless amount of photographs of him and Peggy who was still holding on to him. The press are extremely excited about the return of the nation's champion. Peggy stepped out of the way from the countless photographs and questions from the press. Steve looked to her and she gave him a reassuring smile as they interviewed the hero.

It was in the early evening by the time all the press were finally forced out of the hospital room. Captain Rogers would probably be on the front page of every English-speaking newspaper around the world by tomorrow. Peggy shut the door then strolled happily to her chair and sat down next to Steve's bed. She held his hand and squeezed it affectionately and brought it up to her cheek. Steve smiled at her, "How long have you been sleeping here?" He knew that she was but didn't know how long.

Peggy shrugged, "I actually didn't count the days. But it's been days."

Steve looked down feeling ashamed for putting her through that pain, "You could go back home if you want to. I don't want you to be uncomfortable here."

Peggy stood up and kissed him and caressed his cheek, "Darling, I waited for you all this time. I think I can manage your duration in the hospital, for however long that is."

Steve smiled and laughed, "I'm so glad you're here with… me. I know I screwed up a lot."

Peggy smiled, "You didn't screw up." She laughed, "You just don't understand women, but that will change."

Steve laughed, "Sure hope so. I don't want to screw up with you."

"You'll never do that to me Steve, I know you." She caressed his arm. She then took out his compass she was holding on to and showed it to him, "Howard found this with you." She opened it to reveal her picture, "this is actually really sweet."

Steve smiled slightly then gently took his compass from her. He softly spoke, "Peggy… do you know why I had this? Do you know why I had to have it open when I was in the plane?" Peggy shook her head. He continued, "When I was weak you were strong. When it was my team of seven versus an army, I didn't know how to do it. I was only a guy from Brooklyn who got super-sized." He gripped Peggy's hand, "You gave me the strength the serum couldn't provide. You were strong when I lost Bucky." He smiled sadly at her, "That's why I had to hear your voice and see your face when I…went into the ice. I knew you would give me the courage to do it. Give me the courage to do my job, to finish the job." He caressed her cheek, "you are everything… and I'm sorry to have put you through the pain. Can you forgive me."

Peggy smiled and kept her strong side but still kissed Steve passionately. She released and said, "Don't be sorry, Steve. You done nothing wrong. Now you came back home to me." She kissed him again.
Steve smiled, "You think they'll let me walk around?"

Peggy laughed, "You think you can? You been asleep for a very long time and you were frozen for the beginning."

Steve shrugged, "I kind of have to use the bathroom." Peggy laughed.

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**AWOL: Absent Without Official Leave**

**BAM! Enjoy Chapter 1! Chapter 2 now in progress**

**UPDATED: 1 April 2018. Added more details, fixed grammar.**
Chapter 2 Brooklyn

Chapter 2 Brooklyn

Updated 25 April 2018

I don't own Captain 'Murica

New York City, Late June 1945

It's now late June of ‘45 and the Second World War continues the bloody struggle against the Imperial Japanese Empire. After bloody fighting, American soldiers and Marines are now facing a scattered enemy in Okinawa, the last stepping point to the main islands of Japan. All organized resistance from the Japanese on the small island ended at the beginning of June, but the brutal fighting continued. Victory is very close for the Americans over the once powerful Imperial Japanese Empire. Though Victory maybe close, the American public and the rest of the world were already tired of a seemingly unending war and the rising body count. People just wanted the war to end.

As the war raged, Colonel Phillips and elements of the SSR are still busy preparing for the continued fight against the remnants of Hydra and the race to reach their assets before the communists do. The Colonel fully intends to get Captain Rogers back in the fight once again, but only once he's fully recovered. Though time is a factor, the Colonel won't deploy his Battalion or the Howling Commandos until he's sure his unit is combat ready despite massive pressure from President Truman.

For Captain Steve Rogers and Agent Margaret "Peggy" Carter, the war might as well be over for them. Peggy has been extremely happy and thankful since Steve woke up from his frozen slumber, and her happiness shows in her reinvigorated energy during work. Although she is still relatively hard to approach because of how driven she is in the predominately male workplace, she is less stern than the previous months. Though Peggy may be happy and reignited, she still maintains much of her ice queen persona as a way for her to get her job done in a career where women weren't expected to succeed for very long. She knew her value, but set out to prove that she can do anything the men can do. But every day after work Peggy shifts from the serious, no-nonsense federal agent to a relaxed in love young woman when she sees Steve. There hasn't been a day since Steve woke up that she hasn't been thankful for the chance she got. Even with the war continuing to rage on, Peggy felt like all was right in the world for her. She felt better and more relaxed because of Steve, and felt a strange feeling of security with him. Peggy is in love and she's proud to admit it. Steve managed to get through her stern and severe walls and saw her soft and sweet side she showed very little people. He turned the tough, strict, and sometimes cold SSR Ice Queen agent that many men found discouraging into the most loving and happiest woman in the world. Many people don't see that side of her. The romantic relationship didn't happen overnight; it evolved to that point. What started out as professional relations turned into a friendly relationship. Then from just before Steve's surgery to right before he jumped into the Valkyrie was one of romantic interest with neither acting upon the emotions for the other. The culminating point was that short but sweet kiss before Steve disappeared. Then when Steve was found in the ice months later, Peggy was determined to not live with the regret of not acting on the feelings she had for him. Steve made sure he let her know of the true feelings he had for her when he woke up. From there, their relationship quickly rocketed into a deep romance. Outside of her personal feelings for Steve, Peggy awaits her chance to go back out and put an end to Hydra and finish the job with a reinvigorated sense of purpose. Steve did his part and now she wants to do more with hers. Though she's enjoying time in New York now.

Captain Steven Rogers, on the other hand, is delighted that he has a second chance at life and happy
that he's with Peggy. To him, he sees everything in Peggy. She isn't like most women in the sense that she is very headstrong, independent, and not afraid to stand up for what she believes in. Since recovering, Steve couldn't help but feel like part of him died when he went into the ice, and someone else immersed. Someone who was ready to be done with fighting and war. Someone who wanted to settle, plant roots, and live without the regret of never experiencing peace. Peace. A word he didn't fully experience all his life. His life has been a constant battle whether it was against his health, adversity, or people, he never knew the word "peace." Now that he has a second chance, he aimed to find some slither of peace finally. But, the living soldier in him feels differently. Yes, he's happy and longing for peace, but he feels guilty that he is here while others never made it home, and many are still fighting. As much as he's grateful for being alive, he still wants to do his part and fight the Japanese and Hydra. He always aimed to do the right thing and knows that eventually, he has to go back out and fight, but he still feels like he isn't doing enough in this war. On top of that for the past few weeks, he has been beating himself up over the loss of his best friend Bucky, a wound that might never heal. The loss of Bucky has been the repeating record that symbolizes the loss and pain he experienced during the war. Like any combat soldier, Steve experienced the harsh, brutal realities of war and the evil side of humanity. The public only saw his heroics but never saw the burden he carried and never saw what man could do to another.

Since waking up from his frozen slumber, Steve is regaining his strength every day. He's able to walk with no problem the day after waking up, and he gets to spend a lot of time with Peggy after she gets off work. After being released from the hospital just a few days after waking up, Steve was able to go home to his small Brooklyn apartment. Nothing in his tiny home has changed, and nothing has been touched since he left for the war. But he rarely sees it since he works out during the day and walks with Peggy to late in the evening. When that's all done, Steve walks her home. Although Steve saw her place from the doorway, Peggy has never been in his place at all. He doesn't usually spend time in his place and instead works out in privacy until Peggy is off of work. He only spends his nights at home. Compared to Peggy's apartment, Steve looks like he lives in a cardboard box compared to hers. He doesn't really mind since he doesn't spend enough time at his place to care.

In the public Steve was easily recognizable and a national superstar. Not one day goes by when people look in awe at him. He is a god among men. Thor himself would find Captain Rogers worthy. He is the nation's champion after all.

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SSR New York City Branch

Peggy sat down on her office chair and prepared to leave work for the evening. She leaned back and shook her head; the war was still going on, and she's treated like a secretary. Hydra was still out there, and she wanted to end them and give them a little payback. Since she got transferred here after the fall of Nazi Germany, she hasn't been given many chances to work in the field or conduct challenging assignments, and she itched to do more. She knew Colonel Phillips would ask her in a heartbeat to help participate in finishing off Hydra, but he didn't need her yet while he trained his men. She sighed and ran a hand through her dark brown hair. She's just frustrated with the people she works with and the work in general. At this point of the day, Peggy's highlight of her day would be able to see Steve. She thought of him for a moment as she packed up her things from her desk, and chuckled at the fact that he's probably working out again.

It's been weeks since Steve was able to leave the hospital and she has been spending every evening with him, and much of her weekends when she's not working. Peggy smiled to herself then she slowly opened a drawer to her right revealing a vial of blood. One of twelve vials of blood the nurses drew from Steve after Doctor Erskine's death. After Steve disappeared in the artic, Howard Stark was entrusted with one of the vials from the U.S. government and gave it to Peggy as a way for her
to keep Steve with her. She kept it as the only thing she had of Steve. The vial had accompanied her through her long walks and sleepless nights when she mourned him. Through all this pain, this vial was the only physical thing she had of Steve when she thought he was gone forever. She smiled gently and said softly, "Thank you for coming back…" She heard her boss behind her. She turned around and saw Chief Roger Dooley.

Chief Dooley nodded at her, "Carter. I thought you left," he said in his usual stern sounding tone.

Peggy nodded and said with a straight face, "I'm about to."

Dooley nodded, "I'll see you tomorrow then. Have a good night." He turned and walked off.

Peggy stood up from her desk and took a moment to carefully place the vial in her purse before heading for the elevator. She decided that today is the probably the best day for her to finally rid the pain she once was so familiar with carrying. She has Steve now; she doesn't need the vial anymore. She got into the elevator and pressed the button for the first floor. As the elevator descended to the ground floor, she smiled at the potential future and is confident that she wasn't stuck in a dream.

The elevator dinged and stopped on the third floor bringing her back to reality. A tall, young man walked in and joined her in the elevator. Another agent for the SSR named Andrew Lewis, he scanned her up and down then stood with his back toward her. She rolled her eyes, almost sensing what is going to happen next. As the elevator descended again, Andrew turned and smiled at her. "Any plans tonight Peggy?" He asked confidently.

"A walk home," Peggy responded calmly.

Lewis grinned at her, "Want…" Before he could finish, Peggy cut him off abruptly. "No, I can manage by myself." She said shaking her head.

Andrew stammered trying not to get on the bad side of the ice queen, "I... I heard Captain America might be returning to the fold." He continued with small talk, "Heard the SSR and the army need him to take the fight to Hydra again."

The elevator ringed signaling they made it to the ground floor. Peggy stepped around him and exited it first, "I just want Hydra to disappear for good," she said coldly as she walked off to meet with Steve with her heels clicking against the hard-tiled floor. It wasn't what Lewis said that irritated Peggy so much, it was how he was saying it. Andrew checked her out and whistled to himself as he watched her walk away before he walked out in the opposite direction.

Peggy's feelings for Steve and the true extent of their relationship wasn't exactly public knowledge. The newsreels that showed Steve's compass and Peggy's picture taped to the inside only gave the public a glimpse of their relationship, though at that time they weren't an official couple. So much of their relationship still wasn't known too much of the public. Newspaper headlines after Steve woke up didn't expose the duo's partnership either. The front page of newspapers after he woke up read, "CAPTAIN AMERICA RETURNS!" and the picture accompanying it was a picture of Peggy holding onto Steve's hand as he weakly smiled. The caption read, "Captain America and dedicated agent reunite again!" Peggy is glad her relationship wasn't known, it be tough to explain at work. She knew, without doubt, there was probably rumors about her relationship with Steve long before he was discovered, and she didn't care.

Gym
Steve wore a white t-shirt and grey sweats and was sweating heavily as he was punching the daylight out of a heavy punching bag in the gym with the only tape covering his knuckles. He was alone, and the only sound in the large gym was his strikes against the bag. Nobody was there as a usual weekday, so he stood alone at the center of the gym flanked by two boxing rings as he exercised. Saying that he has been working out for a long time was an understatement. He continued to punch the bag with such intensity that he didn’t even realize his hands were bleeding and didn’t even hear or see Peggy entering the gym. With every strike on the bag, the gym echoed with each loud thud his fists made to the heavy bag. His only focus was hitting the bag and couldn't stop looking at it.

Peggy walked into the gym and watched in amazement at Steve's physical physique and condition. He sure was easy on the eyes that was for sure. Not to say she didn't like him when he was skinny, but his new physique is just a bonus. As Peggy watched from a distance at the doorway, she got a brief glimpse of his face. He was in pain, not physical pain, but emotional pain. Every punch he threw at the bag made him cringe, and the bag shook vigorously with each blow. She heard a clang on her left, and she turned to see the owner of the gym carrying trashcans. The balding, grey-haired, short Italian man named Alfonso Porcelli was a once great heavyweight prizefighter and coach from Italy before Mussolini took power. The old man wearing a grey sweatshirt and sweats smiled at Peggy as he passed her, "Good evening Ms. Carter. Molto Bello as always."

Peggy smiled at the man, "Thank you."

Porcelli smiled at Steve punching the bag, "Your man over there has been here all day punching these bags." He laughed, "At least he pays for the ones he destroys." He waved his hand, "If he ever retires from the Army tell him to see me. I'll train him to be the world champion heavyweight," he said with a chuckle.

Peggy laughed, "If you only knew how much of a fighter he really is," she said admiringly.

Porcelli chuckled, "Well tell him I can coach him." He excused himself, "I must clean up, Ms. Carter. You have a wonderful evening."

Peggy smiled, "Have a good evening." Porcelli nodded and smiled then slowly walked into a maintenance room. Peggy turned and continued to watch her Steve destroy the punching bag.

Steve was lost in his own world while punching out of reflex and wasn't aware he was hitting the bag harder and harder. He was hearing bullets flying, hydra guns blasting past his head, explosions, and the scream of his best friend Bucky followed by the agonizing plea from wounded soldiers. The image of Bucky falling just short of his grasp on a high-speed train played back over and over in his head. He hit the bag harder unknowingly, and the bag started to split, and Steve's hands bled more with each strike. Then suddenly the final conversation with Peggy before he crashed that plane began to play in his mind. Her sweet English voice echoed in his head from their last conversation. While her voice played back in his head, the images of his best friend falling from the train played back in his eyes. Her voice and his scream continued to dig itself a deeper wound in Steve's chest. Broken promises to both of them. Steve yelled and threw a hard punch at the bag, punching it right off its rings. The bag rocketed to the wall that was about twenty feet away then slumped down to the ground and poured sand onto the ground when it landed. Steve came back to reality and was breathing heavily as he observed his destruction. He shook his head, That's the second bag today… He looked down at his taped hands and saw it was bleeding heavily. He didn't even realize until now when he started to relax from his long round with the bag. He felt eyes on him then looked over and saw Peggy. She smiled a gentle, affectionate smile at him, he dipped his head and smiled to himself sheepishly.
Peggy slowly walked around a boxing ring to meet Steve face-to-face. Steve looked down and away from her ashamed dropping his hands to his sides. Peggy approached him and smiled at him. She gently cupped his face forcing him to look up at her and into her warm gaze. She smiled and he couldn't help but smile back. She kissed him on the lips gently and greeted, "Hey." She then took his hands in hers and caressed them with her own, calming him down.

Steve smiled, "Hey Peggy." She smiled then started to slowly unravel the bloody tape on his hands.

Peggy kissed his cheek, "Darling, are you alright?" She looked at his hands then at the destroyed bag against the wall then said, "You looked pretty tense."

Steve contemplated his answer. He couldn't lie, Peggy would see straight through him. He shouldn't lie to her anyway, so he told the truth, "I was thinking, and I was remembering." Wasn't the whole truth but it's the truth.

Peggy sensed Steve's hesitation. She gave him another kiss on the lips to help him relax, "Wait for one-second darling I'll be right back." She put her purse on the ground then turned around and grabbed Steve's towel that was resting on one of the boxing rings. Peggy then walked over to a water fountain and soaked it in water before returning back to him. Peggy took Steve's hand and directed him to sit on a stool next to the ring. She strolled over to the other ring and got another stool and sat in front of him then proceeded to clean his hands with the wet towel. She said softly, "What were you thinking about? It's okay to tell me."

Steve breathed deeply. Her sweet English accent made her irresistible. He slowly but surely started to speak the truth, "I was thinking..." Peggy raised a brow as a silent gesture to encourage him to open up to her.

Peggy pressed the towel gently onto his open knuckles, "Steve, I won't ever think you're weak and never think any less of you if you open up to me," she said softly.

"I was thinking about Bucky. How I lost him," he said softly.

Peggy continued to clean his hands gently, "Steve it wasn't your fault. You did everything you could."

Steve shook his head, "I know... I just...I wish I could've done it differently. Been there to protect him." He started to tear slowly, "He protected me when I was defenseless so many times. Then when it was my turn to protect him, I couldn't."

Peggy used a free hand to caress his face having him meet her eyes. She smiled and said softly, "You respected your friend, and he respected you. I know I don't know him as you do, but I know you two were very close. So, I know he would never think less of you. I'm sure he saw you do all you could." She smiled, and he returned it. She continued to clean his hands, "What else is bugging you, darling?"

Steve shook his head, "You."

Peggy stopped cleaning his hands and looked at him shocked, "What?"

Steve shook his head flustered at what he said, "Not like that." Peggy nodded. He continued, "I feel like this is a dream. That I'm still asleep." He chuckled to himself, "I felt like I waited too long..."

Peggy's soft voice calmed him down, "Darling. This is real this is no dream. You're here. You're home and you're with me." She caressed his cheek. She leaned forward and kissed him, they held it for a while before she broke the kiss. She laughed, "You obviously didn't wait too long because look
"Yeah..." Steve responded calmly. He looked down at his bloodied hands as Peggy continued to gently wash the wounds with the damp towel. He chuckled, "I didn't even realize how hard I was hitting that bag." He laughed, "That's the second one today."

Peggy laughed and finished cleaning his hands, "Let's go darling, and go for a little walk. I got something to show you."

Steve nodded, "Okay." They both got up, but Steve strolled around the ring first to pick up another heavy bag and with ease hung the bag back up to where the original one was hanging. Steve then kindly took Peggy in his arms and walked out the gym tossing the dirty bloodied towel to a laundry cart at the exit. Peggy didn't mind that Steve was sweaty and leaned into him as they exited the gym.

The sun descended closer to the horizon in a brilliant orange yellow glow over the city. It may be evening but this is the city that never sleeps, everything was still buzzing with life. Another beautiful evening in the city. Steve had his arm draped over Peggy's shoulder as they enjoyed conversation as they walked through the city. Peggy had her arm around his back and nuzzled his neck as they happily talked on their way to the Brooklyn Bridge. As they walked across the bridge, the couple stopped halfway and gazed out to the ocean together. Peggy looked out to the ocean with her arm around Steve's back and smiled, "Beautiful view."

Steve wasn't looking at the ocean but rather was staring at Peggy, he smiled, "It's some view."

Peggy looked at Steve and saw his loving stare. She blushed and giggled and kissed Steve on the lips again. He hugged her and kissed her head. She smiled against his chest, "Darling?"

Steve smiled, "Yeah?"

Peggy released herself from his tight hug and cupped his face so he looked at her, "I have something to show you." Steve didn't break his loving gaze as she reached into her purse and took out the blood vial. She opened up her hand and showed it to him, his face crunched trying to figure out what it is.

Steve looked at her with a curious expression, "A blood vial?"

She laughed and caressed his stomach with her free hand, "Not just any blood vial. This is your blood vial from after the procedure."

He looked at her curiously, "Peggy. Why do you have this?"

Peggy looked down at her hand, "when you disappeared Stark gave me this. This vial was the only thing I had of you. The only physical thing I had of you that wasn't a memory." She looked down and fiddled with the vial on her hand, "I didn't even have a picture of you." She shook her head not looking up, "I know it sounds silly."

Steve covered his hand over the vial then rolled her fingers over it causing her to look up at him with an affectionate gaze. He caressed her cheek and moved a lock of her brown hair to behind her ear, "It's not." She smiled weakly. He brushed her hair then after a moment of silence he said softly, "I love you, Peggy." Peggy's jaw dropped at Steve's declaration of love. Those three words temporarily left her in shock and caught her by surprise causing her to remain speechless. Steve suddenly felt uneasy like he did something wrong, "I'm sorry." He took a step back, "I'm sorry if...I'm going too fast."

Peggy reacted quickly and grabbed his shirt and brought him close to her, "No." She kissed him with
as much passion as she could muster. She broke the kiss and gazed at him smiling, "I love you too." She caressed his cheek and reiterated with as much sincerity as possible, "I love you, Steve." Steve smiled and kissed her. Peggy hugged him close, "It's not too fast. Considering everything...this is perfect."

Steve smiled and kissed the top of her head, "what are you going to do with the vial?"

Peggy took a step back and opened up her hand to see the vial. She smiled, "I think it's time to bury the pain."

Steve smiled, "are you sure? This has been with you all this time."

"I don't need this. I have you." She smiled and kissed him. Steve kissed her head as she turned to face the ocean. She closed her eyes briefly and breathed the cool air then unscrewed the cap and slowly poured the blood into the water below. She looked at the setting sun on the horizon and breathed steadily like a heavyweight was taken off her shoulder. Peggy closed her eyes and hoped this wasn't a dream. She felt an arm draped over her shoulder, and she breathed a sigh of relief. She opened her eyes and turned to see Steve smiling at her. She kissed him, "Hello darling."

Steve kissed her, "Ready to go home?"

"I think I'd rather see your place for once." She smiled.

Steve laughed, "Hope you know that my place is like a bread box compared to your place." He turned her and led the way to the other end of the bridge, holding her close with his arm over her shoulder.

She caressed his chest, "I don't mind." Once they got to the end of the bridge, she smiled, "I love you, Steve."

"I love you too." He brought her close and kissed the top of her head.

Brooklyn

The sun finally set beyond the horizon but this is the city that never sleeps, so the hustle and bustle of the city goes on. The couple walked across the lively streets and approached a set of old brick apartment complexes on their left. They continued walking down the street next to the brick apartments arm in arm, enjoying each other's company. As they walked they were greeted with happy shouts, waves, and hero praises. Steve was easily recognizable and as war hero, he was famous before, but since returning from his deep sleep there was a resurgence of fame to his name. Every time a woman praised Steve on their walks, Peggy would tighten her hold on his body showing her possessiveness. She's just thankful that the press hasn't gone ballistic on his personal relationship. But give it time and the press will soon find out.

Steve slowed down next to a five-story old brick apartment complex. A few of the windows were illuminated. He smiled and looked up, "This is it. I'm on the top floor." Peggy smiled. He led her up a few small steps and opened the front door for her, "Little humble home."

They walked up the steps to the fifth floor then led the way to apartment number 511. He smiled at Peggy as he unlocked his door, he had to force it a little with a hard shoulder check to fully open the door. He let her in and smiled, "welcome to my home." He turned on the lights.

The apartment was indeed small. To the left was the small kitchen. Just a foot behind the kitchen was another door that led to a bathroom that had a toilet, sink, and shower, the room was cramped. The
dining table located a few steps into the apartment was a small wooden table and had four plain wooden chairs around it. There was a small wall that spanned to the middle of the room behind the table to divide the kitchen and the living room. Around the wall led to the living room with the far wall made of brick and had two windows with tan curtains. The living room had a small green couch against the right wall and a brown coffee table in front of it. To the right; in the corner was a green armchair next to a lamp and on the opposite corner sat a record player and a tall radio. To the left of the living area was the only bedroom in the apartment. The bedroom had a plain grey queen sized bed flanked by two nightstands each holding lamps and a dresser holding picture frames that sat under a window with tan curtains. An extremely small apartment compared to Peggy's.

Peggy stepped in and smiled, "It looks comfortable."

Steve laughed and closed the door, "It's okay to say I live in a small apartment."

Peggy draped her arms over his shoulders and kissed him, "It's not bad. I do love it. It's humble."

Steve smiled, "that's all that matters." He walked around her to the small kitchen, "You want to eat? I got some choice meat that I was able to pick up." He laughed, "I can finally show off my actual talent for cooking."

Peggy laughed, "I could eat." She walked to the table and sat down on one of the chairs and laughed, "Captain Rogers knows how to cook?"

Steve walked over with a bottle of soda pop, "I picked up a few things around here." He opened it for Peggy and set it down in front of her, "Sorry if the drinks are too cheap, it's all I got."

Peggy smiled, "It's okay, darling. I like pop." Steve smiled then got to cooking. She smiled, not many men did the cooking outside of barbeque and grilling. It was usually up to the woman to do that in this society. She smiled and drank her soda pop and looked curiously at the pictures on the wall. There were a few pictures of Steve's family, his parents and him as a child. No other photographs of the whole family on the wall, but there were a lot of hand drawn pictures on all the walls. Really good drawings she may add. She smiled, "Steve, you're quite the artist."

Steve smiled as he cooked, "I was a skinny kid with asthma back then, who found solace in creating things with pencil and paper."

She smiled, "These are wonderful." She said honestly.

After a bit of conversation, Steve finished making two steaks with vegetables. They weren't grilled but it still looked good. He served Peggy and sat down next to her. She smiled and enjoyed the sweet aroma of the steak, "Smells good, Steve."

He laughed, "Try it first before you complement me."

Soon enough they finished their food and Peggy was on her fourth bottle of pop while ranting about work. Steve smiled happily at her and listened silently to her rant. She was frustrated at her superiors for shortchanging her and not giving her opportunities to do her job. She said coldly, "They don't even respect me professionally. They barely respect me as a woman, and the men at the SSR are even terrible at doing that." She sighed, "There of course a few who treat me with professional respect, but of them don't. Proving myself to the men doesn't really matter…"

Steve smiled and caressed her hand on the table, "You don't have to prove anything to them. You know what you're worth and that's all that should matter."

Peggy sighed, "I don't know Steve. I love what you said, but that doesn't happen in my world."
"Change your world." Steve said instantly as he gripped her hand affectionately, "You are the master of your fate and the captain of your soul." He smiled, "You and I know this. They will keep telling you NO a thousand times no, until all the no's become meaningless. All your life they'll tell you no, quite firmly and very quickly." He gave her a smile, "And you will tell them yes. You will do the things they tell you that you can't, and you'll do it because it's your job."

Peggy smiled and didn't know what to say. "Thanks darling," she said as she put her hand on top of his.

Steve smiled, "Anytime." He got up and kissed her on the cheek then started to clean up. Peggy got up and helped him.

After cleaning up at the sink, Steve turned and smiled at Peggy and asked, "So, Peggy. May I have a dance?" Peggy looked at him surprised. He smiled, "You said you would show me how. I think I would like to have a chance to practice before my big debut in the Stork club."

Peggy laughed, "Of course darling. I'll show you everything," she said almost in a whisper.

Steve smiled, "I got something slow." He led her to the living room. He found a record and placed it on the record player, playing the Bing Crosby song "The Day After Forever".

The song was slow and steady, a perfect song for them to dance. Peggy smiled happily as she took one of Steve's hands and placed it on the small of her back and gripped his other hand and began to teach Steve how to dance. He was rather good at it actually, almost like it naturally came to him. As the couple slowly danced, Peggy could sense Steve's nervousness dancing and be so close in this intimate setting. Peggy couldn't help but blush as she held on to Steve as they danced slowly. Though she had to break the comfortable silence between them and talk about the music to add teaching points, this dance and atmosphere were very romantic. The longing they both had for each other continued to climb while the music continued to fill their ears.

Peggy woke up alone in a bed that wasn't hers under the sheets. She was still in her work clothes from the day before minus her heels with her hair down. She sat up in bed and scratched the back of her head and looked around tiredly. She noticed she was still in Steve's apartment which wasn't exactly a bad thing. Peggy smiled and stretched and noticed that Steve wasn't in the bedroom. Looking at the clock on the nightstand she saw it was 6:30 in the morning. She moved the sheets off of her then got up and ran her hand through her hair a couple times before walking out of the bedroom.

Steve stood in the living room gazing out the window in a collared dress shirt and khaki pants. He breathed steadily relishing in the memory of the previous night. The bedroom door opening caught his attention, he turned and saw Peggy walking tiredly out of the room yet with a loving smile. She smiled, "Good morning, Steve."

He smiled, "Good morning, Peggy." He looked back at the kitchen, "Sorry. I don't have any coffee or tea here."

Peggy waved, "It's no problem." Steve smiled and continued to gaze out the window. She walked up and hugged him from the back. She leaned her head against his shoulder and asked curiously, "Where were you last night? Did you sleep in your bed?"

He caressed her had that was wrapped around his torso, "No. I didn't feel right to join you. So, I slept on the couch."

She smiled at his morals, "Darling, I wouldn't have minded."
Steve laughed, "Next time."

She smiled and kissed his back, "I love you."

BLAM FLUFF IT UP!

UPDATE 25 April 2018
It's now August and it's been roughly two months since Steve woke up from his frozen slumber, and his relationship with Agent Carter continues to grow and evolve. They do their best to spend as much time with each other as they can, but Steve is now back in the Army serving under Colonel Phillips training the Howling Commandos and the new Army Battalion Raiding Team or BRT at Camp Lehigh. In addition, the Strategic Science Reserve helps support logistics, intelligence, and technical expertise for the BRT for when they deploy to finish Hydra and any resistance they encounter. Although Camp Lehigh might be on the border of New Jersey and the state of New York, Steve always manages to make it to the city and spend time with Peggy when they're both off of work. He usually stops training the BRT and Howling Commandos around six in the evening and makes it back to spend time with Peggy at 7:30 to 8pm every evening. An hour drive on his new requisitioned motorcycle sanctioned by Colonel Phillips gives him excellent mobility to make it back see his partner. After they go their separate ways for the night, Steve would wake up bright and early at 3am and makes it back to camp for the next revolution of training.

Honestly, the commandos are already set to deploy but the BRT isn't. The BRT is a new Army unit sanctioned by the War Department to be backed extensively by the Strategic Science Reserve. Their mission is to quickly raid enemy positions, neutralize and pacify the enemy, and direct action against enemy combatants designated by the SSR. But the force numbered 350 soldiers, a small sized Battalion. The BRT is led by the decorated officers: Colonel Chester Phillips and Captain Steve Rogers. Many of the soldiers are young and were drafted just before the unconditional surrender of Nazi Germany, so they had little to no combat experience. The lack of experience in these young men made Colonel Phillips train them hard to prepare for their upcoming combat deployment in Europe. The seasoned Colonel and Captain Rogers made sure that the BRT would be ready and that they will fully complete their training regimen before they are shipped off to Europe.

For Peggy, her life is still as busy and difficult as ever from the constant sexism from the men she works within the SSR field office in the city. On the upside, Steve has been fantastic to her and always been very supportive of her and her work. Pushing her to be better, to stay motivated, and to give a 100% effort a 100% of the time regardless of the situation. She could not imagine a life without him. Without him, she was sure she'd be one depressed individual like many of the women who lost their loved ones in the war. Though the constant care from Steve did bother her at times, especially when she had a long day of work, she never could stay upset with him for long. It almost seemed like Steve was babying her which annoyed her, but she knew he meant well, so she didn't stay upset. Peggy loves and cares for Steve as much as he does for her, so they'd talk about it and move on to the next day.

Though most women in the society today are housewives, nurses, and teachers, all of them were expected to be highly domesticated while the men did most of the work. That's where Peggy is different, she loves to work, she loves to kick down doors, she loves to catch the bad guys, she loves to shoot guns, and she loves to make sexist men look bad. Just because she likes doing these things doesn't mean she doesn't want the girly stuff too. Peggy loves to cook, dance, and dress in beautiful
clothes like any other woman. But when she's at work, her sex is the only thing her male coworkers see. Most of the men in the office continually test her patience solely because she's a woman. They don't listen to her, and they don't treat her equally, plus even some men try to flirt with her shamelessly. Honestly, if she were able to shoot some of them, she would, but Steve would probably get mad at her. She's been getting crap paperwork clerical jobs lately regardless of how well she performs physically while the men get all the exciting and challenging tasks.

Captain America made headlines again by returning to duty at the beginning of July. The hero was praised still for the heroics he did during the war and then praised for his bravery for volunteering to go back to the fight. Captain America's identity, Captain Steven Rogers is exceptionally well known, and both names praised all the same. Captain Rogers, the famous war hero became a celebrity during the war and maintained that status after Nazi Germany fell. Everyone knew what he looked like, but no one knew of his personal life and especially his relationship with Agent Margaret "Peggy" Carter, not even the press. But, of course, there were rumors of who the hero was seeing. Rumors spread about a brunette or even a blonde woman he's been seeing captivated the press and the public. Every girl from the youngest age to the oldest age fell in love with Steve. People already loved him from his stint in, but then he rocketed into stardom after his raid against Hydra resulted in the rescue of hundreds of prisoners. Then his fame took off yet again from his heroics and bravery during the war, and his glory culminated it when there were reports of him saving the world. News buzzed about him regularly somewhere. But fame never changed Steve and never got in the way with his relationship with Peggy. They maintained good anonymity for the most part.

Tuesday, August 14, 1945

Camp Lehigh

It was just another midafternoon day in the summer of 1945 during wartime. Captain Steve Rogers was on the trails running PT (Physical Training) with the Howling Commandos. Because Steve was enhanced and ran twenty times faster than the fastest Olympian on Earth, he had to carry a ninety-six-pound pack and a rifle to make it somewhat fair for the Howling Commandos running with him in the hills. The commandos were carrying a combat load and their weapon while they ran, mostly jogging, behind Steve. Even with that ninety-six-pound pack, Steve was easily outrunning all of them, and he was taking it easy. As Steve lead the head of the Howling Commandos column on an "Easy" trot through the hills. Easy being easy for Steve, the Howling Commandos column was more of a tactical gaggle than an actual uniformed column. The panting, gasps for air, and the boots crushing the ground were the only sounds around the trail. Dugan was right behind Steve's massive ninety-six-pound pack, he rubbed the sweat from his brow, "Damn sir! I thought you said this was an easy pace!"

Steve didn't miss a beat, "It is an easy pace." He turned and smiled to Dugan and his tired team, "Got to work that beer out of your stomach, Dugan."

Dugan dipped his head in defeat, "This is about me asking you to open a tab on all those beers we drank back then, huh?"

"You can say that." Steve pushed them on, "We're almost to the halfway point!"

The tactical Howling Commando gaggle pushed on toward the halfway marker. James Montgomery Falsworth wiped the sweat from his eyes and adjusted his beret then said tiredly, "Going to feel those blisters tonight!"

Jim Morita coughed behind him, "I lost feeling in my feet three miles ago…"
They finally made it to the flagpole, which signaled the halfway point of their run. Steve signaled his team to halt. Everyone stopped and panted, gasping for air after the first half of the hard run. Steve smiled at his team, "Good job fellas." He laughed as he observed his sweaty team, "There won't be a lady on Earth that will resist you now." He walked to the middle of the trail and faced his team.

The team chuckled. Then Jim fell on his butt then sprawled out on the dirt and looked up at the sky. Steve laughed and shook his head. Dugan laughed, "All the beautiful dames are after you, sir."

Steve shook his head and waved it off, "They are after anyone in a uniform." He nodded, "Now drink water."

Gabe Jones laughed, "I think the Captain is saying that he's off the market." He looked around his fellow commandos, "Means we got a chance with ladies now." Everyone including Steve laughed, minus Jim who fell asleep on the dirt. Well, everyone thinks he's asleep.

Dugan nodded, "Oh. I think I know who it is."

Steve took out his canteen smiling, "I bet you do." He took a swig of water and enjoyed the good feeling as it went down. He didn't really mind his Commando's finding out about him and Peggy, they were family to him even though he was their commander. Steve didn't want to be that leader no one knew anything about. Besides he was pretty sure they knew already. If they didn't know, then they probably suspected it.

Dugan snapped his fingers and smiled under his mustache, "Ingrid Bergman!"

Steve spat out his water and coughed, "What?"

James Montgomery poured water on his head and looked at Dugan with a confused expression on his face, "Yeah. What?"

Gabe shook his head, "Suddenly understand why they call you 'Dum Dum.'" The French men Jacques Dernier tapped Gabe on the shoulder than spoke in French. Gabe replied in French and they both laughed. Everyone looked at each other curiously, except Jim who was on the ground. Gabe looked back at Steve, "Jacques said you're with Agent Carter."

Dugan snapped his fingers, "Dang it, I was going to guess that next."

Steve laughed and rolled his eyes, "Yeah. Jacques got it." He took another sip of water, "Seriously? Dugan, you couldn't put two and two together?" He chuckled, "I thought I was clueless with this subject."

Dugan laughed and took his canteen out, "Oh we knew, we were just messing with you sir."

Everyone laughed.

Steve put his canteen away, "Alright guys family time is over." He leaned to his right, "Someone wake up Jim."

Jacques turned around and crouched next to Jim's body and started yelling in French. Jim didn't want to move, so Jacques took out his canteen and poured water on his face. Jim kicked and stood up, "Gah!"

Gabe smiled, "Good morning sunshine."

Jim coughed, "How long do we have left?" Everyone smiled at each other than looked forward to move out with Steve.
Steve shook his head then stood at the head of the column, "Alright. Move out!" But then there was a honk behind them and the faint sound of a jeep coming down the trail.

Steve turned around and saw Colonel Phillips driving in a green jeep honking his horn repeatedly. The jeep stopped next to the commandos abruptly with a skid then Colonel Phillips said excitedly, "War is over!" The commandos looked at each other like they didn't know what he said. The Colonel smiled and leaned to the passenger seat, "The war is over, Gentlemen! The Japanese finally surrendered."

After a few moments of surprise the Commandos finally cheered and howled of the news of victory in the Pacific. Steve stood at the head of the column with a shocked expression on his face, not believing the war is actually over. The rest of the commandos jumped around him excitedly and patted him on the back repeatedly cheering him. Steve looked at Colonel Phillips who nodded at him with a small smile. The war is finally over, but the feeling wasn't quite real to him yet. The Colonel smiled, "Get in gentlemen!" The commandos smiled and piled into the small jeep grabbing a seat wherever they can and leaving the passenger seat for Steve. Phillips nodded at Steve "Get in Rogers, got a 96 for you all!" Steve nodded with a smile and got into the jeep. Everyone cheered and screamed at the news of victory as the Colonel drove them back to camp.

"The War is over!" Gabe cheered loudly as the jeep bumped along the trail.

SSR New York City Branch

Peggy closed a file drawer and took the file of a Hydra General named General Werner Reinhardt back to her desk. She sat back down at her desk and placed the file in front of her and sighed to herself wanting the boring workday to end. The most exciting part of the day so far is that she's helping Colonel Phillips plan the deployment of the Commandos and the BRT to Europe in order to take down the last of Hydra's organized resistance. But, she is still frustrated that the men in the SSR get to do more fieldwork than her. Her work now has been majorly paperwork and other clerical duties since the German surrender. She ran a hand through her smooth brown hair then fixed her bright blue shirt that was coming out of her black business skirt. She couldn't wait to see Steve in the evening and relax…

Suddenly her procrastinating ended when a man in a plain business suit barged into the office space out of breath. Everyone in the office looked at him funny wondering what was going on. The man yelled excitedly, "War is over!" Everyone gasped and looked at each other. The man continued with a wide smile on his face, "The Japs quit the war is over! It's over! I swear to God!"

Another man came in cheering. The man yelled out, "The Japanese announced their surrender!"

Another young woman came out of small private office happily yelling, "The President said it on the radio! War is over!" Suddenly the office erupted in cheers and screams. Everyone shouted and paraded in the office over the news of the Japanese announcement of surrender. Every man and woman stood up and threw papers and hats into the air cheering over the news. The office was complete chaos at the announcement of victory.

Peggy leaned back on her chair and slowly smiled a wide smile across her face. Her jaw dropped in a little shock from the news causing her to cover her mouth with a hand. The war is over; its finally over. This meant her and Steve will finally celebrate and maybe have a long anticipated dance date. She happily thought to herself for a moment, about a future without this prolonged war. For years the country got used to the feeling of war in the everyday life, but now it's over. So now, a pleasant life is no longer just a dream but can actually become reality. Her reverie was disturbed when people started to rush to the office windows. Peggy happily joined her coworkers to look out the windows
and surprised to see the city coming alive. Crowds of people were quickly gathering in the streets, cheering at the sudden announcement of the war's end. Paper and other various forms of confetti started to float down from the sky as people threw random scraps of paper out the window in celebration.

Chief Dooley stepped out of his office and yelled so everyone could hear him, "Attention everyone!" The office settled down and they all faced the Chief who was standing at his door. He smiled, "As you know the war is over." His smiled faded and he nodded, "But our work doesn't stop," he said foreboding something bad and everyone nodded in understanding. Dooley smiled again and said excitedly, "But, today our work can take a break!" He pointed to the exits, "War is over! Go home early!" He said excitedly. The office erupted again in cheers. Everyone made their way to grab their things then quickly bolted out of the office to celebrate. Been a long time coming. Within moments the office was cleared out and only two people stayed behind. It was almost like a second New Year's Eve celebration.

Peggy stayed near the windows looking out at the ocean of people far below the office on street level. She smiled and thought to herself for another moment. Things are going to change, but Steve will be there with her, and she wouldn't have it any other way. She felt a hand on her right shoulder and she turned to see Chief Dooley looking out the window as well. Peggy nodded and smiled, "Chief." She greeted short and crisp.

Dooley smiled, "You work hard and tenacious, Peggy. I'll give you that much. But... go out and celebrate okay?" Peggy nodded. "Go out and at least try to have a good time alright?" He said sternly. Dooley turned around and went back to his office as Peggy watched him. Before he disappeared into his office, he turned around and faced her, "Oh yeah. I heard Captain America and Colonel Phillips would like you to join the deployment of the BRT." He smiled and shook his head, "Pretty prestigious job that no one else can get." He walked back to his office.

Peggy turned back to the window with a smile. No one else would have a field op. like that. Her mind quickly went back to Steve and everything good that has happened lately with them. She couldn't wait for what the future might bring since the war is now over. Peggy nodded with a smile and went to go grab her things and lock the file in her desk. Her new task was to find Steve and have that dance.

Time Square

Steve was now dressed in his Army dress uniform and was trying to push his way through the celebrating crowd. The news of the war being over was surreal to him and couldn't quite grip it just yet. Time Square was packed with people cheering and celebrating the end of the war. Every square inch and every paved surface was occupied by cheering and happy people. Steve regretted trying to cut through here just to get to the SSR New York City branch at the "Bell Company Office". He needed to find Peggy, but the crowd wouldn't move out of his way. The press didn't make it easier on him either. They unfortunately found him in the sea of people which was surprising in itself. The Press took pictures of him and tried to ask him questions relentlessly as he pushed his way through the crowd. His only concern was to find Peggy. It was turning out to be too difficult to just go from point A to point B. He passed couples making out on the street, then suddenly passed through a hallway of people patting him on the back, and he even passed by a bunch of service men jumping up and down on a car. All he wanted was Peggy. While he traveled through the thick crowds, some women who recognized him grabbed his uniform and tried to kiss him, but when he resisted they settled with kissing him on the cheek or the forehead. Steve didn't want to repeat history, so he did his best to rub the lipstick marks off his face while walking. He loved Peggy very much and definitely didn't want her to get jealous... again.
He barely got half way through Time Square and was now standing in the middle of an ocean of people. There was no way he could push through all these people and find Peggy in all this. He stood still and looked around at the celebrating crowd and soon the people around him recognized him, and started to pat him on the back and cheer into his ear. He smiled his characteristically unique smile at everyone. The city was already exploding with a huge citywide party and he needed to find his way, but the end of the war was still surreal to him. Suddenly he heard a familiar English voice calling his name over the roar of the crowd. Steve turned and looked around for the source but he couldn't see whom it was coming from. He heard his name again so he turned around but couldn't pinpoint where and who it was coming from again. The crowd and the cheers filled his ears again and he couldn't figure out who was calling him. He looked at his feet then looked up to the crowd, and gave a small smile. It turned out the atmosphere was contagious.

Steve felt a gentle hand go down his back, he quickly turned around and saw Peggy's beautiful smiling face looking at him. He smiled at her lovingly, "I was looking all over for you. How did you find me?" He said over the roar of the crowd. Of all the people in Time Square, Peggy found him almost like it was easy.

Peggy closed the distance between them and rested her arms on Steve's shoulder, "Kind of hard to miss you, darling. You're the tallest one here." She looked around the cheering crowd then grabbed Steve's tie and yanked him to her lips. She kissed him passionately in the middle of the whole crowd. To Peggy it was just them in the middle of Time Square, no crowd, and no loud cheers of victory, it was just them.

After what seemed to be forever they finally broke the kiss. Steve smiled and looked around him, "Peggy, what about all these people. Thought you didn't want the press…"

Peggy kissed his lips again, "Let them look. Frankly, I don't care about what other people think anymore." She kissed his cheek, "I only care what you think." Steve smiled and kissed her passionately again and held her in a tight embrace.

Steve broke the kiss then rested his forehead to hers, "I think I still owe you that dance."

Peggy caressed his cheek lovingly, "Stork club tonight at 8pm." She kissed his cheek, "Don't be late this time." Steve smiled and kissed her.

The country was now on a constant party from the news of the war's end. Except Hydra was still there in the shadows, but Steve and Peggy can have them wait for a bit. Besides, it's VJ day, it's time to celebrate.

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**Stork Club**

The Stork Club a symbol of high society, the wealthy elite, celebrities, and showgirls.

Steve stood awkwardly outside the entrance of the Stork Club just to the right of the red over hang in his dress uniform for what seemed like hours. It was awkward because people recognized him and approached him in masses. In fact, he was standing there for a while so he could be punctual for Peggy. He stood straight and crisp like always and watched couples and military men in their respective dress uniforms walk in and out of the club. People noticed him immediately and wanted to meet the legendary war hero, because Steve is a celebrity whether he liked it or not. The entrance got crowded and congested from the number of people wanting to meet the legendary Captain America. It got to the point that the club owner posted a club photographer to take pictures of guests with Captain America. Steve was probably the biggest name at the club right now. He smiled and waved in front of the camera while he waited for his date to arrive.
Steve screamed internally on how out of place he felt but he did his best to play it cool. All he wanted to be was a soldier, but now he's a celebrity and he has been since the day he rescued those prisoners from Hydra. He's a soldier and a fighter, not a celebrity. But for his country he will be whatever they want him to be as long as it's morally just.

It was about 7:50 and Steve was posing for another picture this time with a Navy man and his girlfriend next to a long line of people. Steve smiled awkwardly in the middle of the couple that was obviously excited to see him and celebrate. Why wouldn't they be? It's the end of a long bloody war and they are with a celebrity. The photographer took the picture with a bright flash. The couple smiled and laughed happily then said their regards to him before making their way into the club. Steve gave a courteous nod and a smile as they walked away. Now it was the next couple's turn. Steve dreadfully got ready for yet another picture but he saw something catch the corner of his eye. He turned to see Peggy in a brilliant V-necked strapped short fitted blue dress. The dress went down to just above the knees, her hair was down and partially curled to her shoulders so it looked wavy. She carried her wallet in one hand, and a red rose corsage in another. She looked absolutely drop dead amazing.

As the next couple settled in next for the picture, Steve abruptly left them for Peggy leaving the couple with a bemused expression. The crowd didn't miss the sudden change in Steve's posture as they stared at him wondering where he was going. Steve locked eyes with Peggy who was smiling happily at him, and not once did he take his eyes off her beautiful eyes as he walked past the line of people toward her. When he reached Peggy and stood in front of her smiling, "Hello Beautiful." Peggy looked absolutely incredible. The crowd gathering in front of the club looked at Steve and the woman he was meeting with curious gazes. The crowd all thought the same thing, who was this beautiful "doll" that distracted the legendary Captain America.

Peggy looked down blushing then looked back up smiling lovingly at Steve, "Hello darling." She closed the distance between them then rested her arms on his shoulders and kissed him tenderly. The crowd started to whisper among themselves. Peggy was drawing attention and she knew very well that people were watching. It was a fact that women were jealous of her and men were jealous of him. But neither of them minded. She broke the kiss, "Want to help me put this corsage on my dress?"

Steve smiled, "it'll be my pleasure." He took the rose corsage and gently pinned it on the left side of her dress parallel to her collarbone. He straightened it then kissed the top of her head.

Peggy smiled and said softly, "Thank you darling." She ran a hand down his uniform then gently kissed him again on the lips. She looked into his eyes happily, "Ready to go inside?" Steve smiled and held out his arm, which she happily linked hers with. They then happily made their way to the door. The photographer took a picture of them as they approached, and the crowd whispered amongst each other wondering who is the woman with Captain America.

The Maître d' led Peggy and Steve into the roaring club toward their table without asking any questions. The club was packed, full of life, music, and no one had a sad look on their face. People drank, cheered, partied, and danced. The music was lively and happy presenting a very energetic atmosphere in the club. The Maître d' showed the couple to the table then Peggy nodded and smiled at him. The Maître d' gave a courteous bow then left back to his podium at the entrance of the club. Steve took a step forward around Peggy and looked around the club as Peggy set her wallet on the table. A waiter came by the table with a bottle of champagne and asked nicely, "Champagne ma'am?"

Peggy nodded, "Yes, thank you." The waiter poured champagne into two glasses then bowed in front of her then left. Peggy smiled then saw Steve standing with his back to her. She could tell he's
tense just by looking how he stood. They've been together romantically for months but she known him for a lot longer than a few months so she knows when he's tense.

Steve looked around the club and he was zoning completely out. He heard bullets, explosions, Hydra weapons, screams, and the sound of planes. He turned right and saw an Army sergeant smiling with red wine spilled on his dress shirt, but Steve heard screams instead of laughter. The music was replaced with the sounds of war. His heart rate started to increase. He heard Bucky's scream then the sound of the Hydra Valkyrie jet rocketing to the ice. Steve could only see and hear war, not celebration. He was exhibiting textbook posttraumatic stress syndrome and was locked in place in his mind. Honestly, it's been plaguing him lately but it was effecting him greatly right here in the club for some reason. No matter where he turned, he only saw and heard elements of war.

But suddenly he felt a gentle hand run down his left arm bringing him back to reality. The pleasant music and joyous laughter filled his ears once again. Steve turned around and saw Peggy smiling caringly at him with her hand gripping his. She said softly, "Ready for our dance?" That sweet English voice of hers soothed him and brought him back to the real world. He quickly looked forward again then looked back at Peggy who was gripping his hand lovingly with concern in her voice but maintained the affectionate look in her eyes. She said gently, "The war is over Steve. We can go home," she said trying to calm him down and bring him back to reality with her. Peggy closed the distance between them then started to caress his stomach, "Imagine it?" Steve brought a small smile on his face. She continued softly, "You and I together." She continued to touch his stomach and noticed the shock in his eyes, "This isn't a dream Steve. We're here." She got closer and pressed her body to his, "And you're here, with me."

The feeling finally sank into Steve. He smiled a full smile at Peggy, "I found my right partner." Peggy smiled fully and noticed the return of the love in his eyes. Steve didn't lose his smile, "May I have this dance Ms. Margaret Carter."

Peggy smiled, "Of course."

Steve took her hand in his and led the way to the dance floor where dozens of couples were dancing happily to the lively music. The big band music continued to play a swingy tune with cheers from the guests of the club. A couple of photographers took photos of Steve and Peggy as they made their way through the maze of tables to the dance floor. When they finally got to the dance floor, they shared a loving look with each other for a moment before they did anything. Steve took Peggy's hand in his then placed a hand at the small of her back then brought her close, and felt the pleasant warmth and pressure of her body against his. He felt the beat of the song in his feet then smiled at Peggy as he started to lead in the fast dance. Peggy twisted, twirled, and held onto Steve as they danced happily as one. Their first official dance together and they couldn't stop looking at each other. Steve was quite the dancer, not once did he step on her toes, not even when he was practicing with her. They danced for what seemed like an eternity, and one could assume that Steve was a professional dancer at one point. When the song ended, Steve leaned her back and held Peggy tightly. She smiled at him not taking her eyes off his warm blue eyes. Steve leaned her forward again then kissed her passionately. When they finally broke they rested their foreheads together, Steve smiled, "How was that?"

Peggy smiled happily, "phenomenal." She kissed his lips then said happily, "I love you, Steve."

Steve smiled, "I love you too, Peggy." He caressed her back, "May I have another dance with my best girl?" The music began again. Club continued to erupt with life.

Peggy smiled, "Darling. You don't need to ask" She kissed him again and allowed Steve to lead again.
It was late in the night, and the club was still roaring with celebration. One could be made to believe that it was New Years, but it might as well be, with the war over, the world could finally know peace again. But everything will be different, and everything will change. A whole new world was on the horizon.

Peggy and Steve danced almost every song and only stopped so they could eat their dinner and deserts. The couple was now dancing to a slow song and they were holding each other very close with barely any space for air between them. Peggy was resting her head against Steve's chest breathing steadily with her eyes closed as Steve rested his chin on Peggy's head. They moved slowly and effortlessly around the dance floor and to them they felt like they were the only ones there. Peggy could feel Steve's strong heart beat through his dress uniform and she cherished every second of his grip and warmth. Steve was enjoying everything of her, her smell, her beauty, her warmth, he enjoyed it all. Sadly, time flies when having fun, the song ended and the band started its transition to another song.

Peggy lifted her head from his chest and looked into his loving eyes, "that was our last song."

Steve smiled, "One more?"

Peggy laughed, "We had about forty last songs, darling." She caressed his cheek, "you're quite the dancer."

Steve laughed, "What can I say? I had quite a teacher." He caressed her cheek as well, "A very beautiful teacher."

Peggy looked at him lovingly, "Steve." Steve listened to her intently. She gave a half smile, "You haven't been in my place yet." Even though she was in heels Steve was still taller than her, so she got up on her tippy toes and whispered into his ear, "You want to see it?" She went back down on her heels smiling while biting her tongue to the side. Steve smiled a full smile…

Peggy pushed Steve against the hallway wall outside of her apartment attacking his mouth with hers. They were tangled up in each-others grasps passionately kissing. Steve turned them around then pressed her back up against the wall, as their tongues dueled, he slipped his hands behind the small of her back and traced the way down to her butt. Peggy moaned with pleasure in the frenzy then started to caress his cheek as he kissed her. Peggy managed to take her keys out but failed to stick the key in the lock. She released herself from the lip lock reluctantly then unlocked the door and turned the doorknob. She removed the key from the lock then turned around and grabbed Steve's tie and brought his lips to hers at the same time kicking in the door with her heel. She kissed him ferociously as she rolled the two of them into the apartment then closing the door without looking. Steve pinned her to the wall in the dark apartment kissing her nonstop then kissing his way down her neck. Peggy started to unbutton his uniform quickly while she moaned to the sensation on her neck, not caring whether she ruined it or not and she knew Steve didn't care. Steve then met his lips with hers again and started to peel her dress off her shoulders. Peggy continued to kiss him passionately while she finished unbuttoning Steve's uniform.

Steve reluctantly released from the romantic frenzy and looked at Peggy in the dark. He was wondering if this was too fast. He needed to know. He shook his head, "Peggy. Are you…"

Peggy caressed his cheek, "I'm sure." She said like she could read his mind.

Steve shook his head, "Is this too fast?" He started to pull away.

Peggy grabbed his tie, "No. Stay." She kissed him, "This is perfect, Darling. Now shut it and kiss
me." She laced her fingers with his and kissed him before leading him deeper into the apartment and to her bedroom.

Steve jolted awake in an unfamiliar room. For a moment he thought the events of last night were just a dream and this whole time with Peggy was also just another. But he sure felt great. He regained his focus and felt a weight on his chest, he smiled and looked down at his chest to see Peggy sleeping on his chest soundly hugging his body, enjoying his warmth. A blanket covered both their lower naked bodies, but the close proximity made it very warm. Steve put his arm on her exposed shoulder and started to caress it softly while she slept.

During the war, Peggy became a light sleeper so the smallest thing would wake her up. She felt a warm hand moving up and down her exposed shoulder causing her to smile without opening her eyes, "good morning Darling." She opened her eyes and kissed his chest then looked at Steve while resting her chin on his chest.

Steve looked down at her, "Good morning, beautiful."

Peggy stretched and smiled, "Last night was marvelous." She said tiredly.

Steve smiled, "Yes it was." He started to feel a little self-conscious, "I hope I didn't…I hope it was…"

Peggy chuckled then got on an elbow and placed a single finger over his lips, "It was fantastic. You were incredible, Steve." She leaned forward and kissed his lips gently. She rested her hand and chin on his chest smiling warmly at him.

Steve smiled, "You… You were right. I had no idea. You were fantastic too. Wow…” He chuckled, "God, you're beautiful."

Peggy smiled and kissed him again, "Ready to go again?"

Steve eyes widened in response, but he couldn't say no.

Well… There is fluff

"96" Is a four-day liberty pass

Quote from Castle

EDITED: 06/14/2016

EDITED: 1 Aug 2018
Japan finally signed the official surrender document on board the United States Navy Battleship USS Missouri in Tokyo Bay on September 2, 1945, officially ending the bloody Second World War. With the official end of the war, the world now breathed a sigh of relief and can soon begin the rebuilding process of picking up the broken pieces. The world can now finally know peace after over five years of brutal conflict that impacted the world as a whole. But there is already trouble within the unity of this new world. The Communist Soviet Union seeking to establish itself in the absence of Nazi Germany emerged as a global superpower at the end of the war, keeping its recently acquired territories liberated and conquered from the Nazis. The United States posed to establish democracy and help reconstruction in the war-torn countries while also opposing the spread of communism after the fall of the Nazis. Traded one enemy for another. The foreboding feeling of tensions between the two powers cause concerns to many devastated countries.

For the Strategic Science Reserve and the new Army BRT (Battalion Raiding Team), the job is never done. Both seek to rid the world of Hydra and its influence, but at the same time gather any assets from Hydra to be used by the allied powers excluding the Soviet Union. The SSR and Army plan is two-fold, focus on destroying the remnants of Hydra in Europe then counter the Soviets in any capacity.

It's been a month since the unofficial celebration of VJ Day all over the United States, but the country didn't seem to let up out of party mode. Celebrations continued to erupt even past the official signing of the surrender of Japan. Steve's and Peggy's relationship considerably jumped forward since that night in the Stork Club, which ended in a hot, passionate night in Peggy's apartment. Since then, everything has been going great for them, they were cruising on cloud nine, and nothing seemed to bring them down. From everything they've been through as individuals and as a couple, nothing can sever the bond between them.

It's been a month since that passionate night, and now the couple is living together in Peggy's apartment. Though it wasn't socially common and frowned upon for romantic couples not married to live together, Peggy and Steve didn't mind it since the two of them weren't exactly the average couple. People would call romantic unmarried couples cohabitating "shacking up," but Peggy and Steve didn't care. As long as the law didn't harass them, then they happily lived together. Steve effectively moved in with Peggy but continued to maintain ownership of his own place in the case for future use. Though Steve is humble and lives comfortably with what he has, Peggy didn't want her boyfriend to live in such a small place in such conditions, so she happily asked Steve to move in with her. Peggy's apartment was spacious and was a huge step up from where he lived. When Peggy proposed the idea a few days after their intimate night, Steve, acting like a lost teen on his first dance, had no idea how to answer. Peggy simply just shook her head and stated that she would love the company every night. She then gave Steve a seductive smile which Steve couldn't resist, and after that, they're living together. On top of that, Steve and Peggy continued going on dates and dancing and sometimes did some other private special activity.

The press was all over the story of Captain America's girl after VJ Day in August. He made big
news alongside the news of the Japanese surrender. The press talked about two things, Captain America's love life and the end of the war although the topic of Steve's love life was entertaining in the middle of serious news, the people enjoyed hearing it. After the Stork Club released the photographs to the press, without the consent of either Steve and Peggy, they had no idea who Peggy was, so they gave the name "Captain America's girl" to every picture they had of the couple in the club. That name played hell with Peggy at work, many women were jealous of her and the majority of the men made fun of her, so she resulted to her ice queen status again to keep the annoying people off her back. Though this constant jabbing at her was annoying, she still wouldn't have done anything differently that night. She didn't care that the press caught her kissing and dancing with Captain America, it was their night and she happily gave all of her to him. The benefits out way the cost. She just wished the press and her coworkers would leave her alone.

Monday September 10, 1945. 1 Week after Official End of the War

Peggy woke up slowly on her side of the bed to a partially illuminated room from the morning sun. She groaned and checked the clock, which showed 6:00 AM, she groaned again and rubbed her eyes tiredly. She rolled in the covers to Steve's side of the bed and immediately noticed a lack of an extremely hot object next to her. She sat up on an elbow and held the bed sheet in place to cover her bare chest and scanned the room curiously for Steve. She laid back down onto her back and sighed. She loved waking up to Steve, loved seeing his warm smile, and feeling his strong embrace in the morning, it gave her a boost that tea nor coffee could provide. She dreaded the days when he was the first to leave, like today. Steve woke up at 3AM so he could get to Camp Lehigh to start training his unit. Peggy smiled and decided now was about time to get ready for work, she knew she couldn't lay in the bed all day and day dream. She removed the sheets and got up to put her robe on that was discarded on the only armchair in the room. She tied it tight around her body so nothing important was exposed, then made her way to the kitchen to make herself some breakfast and a hot cup of tea.

SSR New York City Branch

Peggy arrived at work fifteen minutes early, as usual, carrying only her small purse. She wore a light blue collared dress shirt, under a black women's blazer with white vertical stripes, matching business skirt, black heels, reserved makeup, and her go-to red lipstick. Peggy briskly walked to her desk past all her male coworkers who gave the occasional glances and whispers. She sat down on her chair and placed her purse under her desk and was about to get her tedious paperwork started when a very annoying individual sat on her desk. Jack Thompson. A new agent who came in recently and quickly made a name for himself.

Thompson greeted her humorously, "Good morning Agent Captain America's girl." Peggy slightly shook her head and rolled her eyes. She found this guy to be exceptionally annoying and bothersome, a waste of air in her God honest opinion. Thompson didn't believe she belonged in the SSR as an Agent since he believed being an Agent was a man's job. Peggy could easily prove him wrong, but she'd get fired if she put a major beating on him in the office. Jack laughed at her silence, "What? No good morning back? I thought you women are supposed to be…you know? Kind and soft." Peggy maintained her silence and gave him her characteristic ice stare. He smiled and scratched his chin, "I don't know why you're still here, Peggy. May I call you Peggy? Or do you prefer Captain America's girl instead."

Peggy shook her head, "You can't call me either."

He laughed then looked down at her, "What? Call you Agent? Women don't belong in this job, okay?" He looked around, "In case you haven't noticed…the war is over. Women aren't needed for these jobs anymore."
Peggy looked at him sternly, "You're working here aren't you?"

He chuckled, "You're funny." He pointed at her, "Thought I heard all the best jokes in the Pacific. Hope your boyfriend likes your sense of humor."

Peggy shrugged, "To think the Marine Corps would've figured out that they brought a school girl to a firefight." Some of those who heard their exchange laughed silently. Her response was pretty funny, both men and women.

Jack was about to respond when Chief Dooley cut him off calmly, "Alright, that's enough bickering as a married couple." Everyone, including Peggy and Jack turned to see Chief Dooley at the head of the office next to Captain Rogers. Jack nodded then got up and left for his desk. Peggy smiled warmly at Steve happy that he's here. Saved by him again, this time saved from an annoyance. Steve gave a subtle warm smile at her, acknowledging her smile. Everyone was silent, not because Dooley was speaking, but because everyone was in the presence of Captain America, a titan among men. Dooley looked at Steve, "Sorry you had to hear that sir."

Steve shook his head, "It's no problem. As you know I served with Agent Carter time and time again before our…relationship." He leaned forward with an eyebrow raised, "That should speak for itself." Dooley nodded in understanding, not one to question the war hero who can crush skulls with his bare hands. Steve looked around the office, "It's time. We need to do this now." Dooley nodded.

Dooley called out to everyone in the office, "Listen up! I need Agents Thompson, Carter, Sousa, Krzeminski, Powers, and Evans to the conference room now!" Dooley turned and left for the conference room with Steve close in tow. Everyone in the office looked at each other with questioning facial expressions on their faces. Peggy was the first agent to stand up and made her way to the conference room without saying anything while her male counterparts looked at each other confused. After a moment, the men groaned and got up wondering why Peggy is going to the conference room with them.

Thompson walked next to Krzeminski and said, "Agent Carter is probably going in there because she's sleeping with Captain America."

Krzeminski laughed, "Yeah you're probably right. Can't blame Captain Rogers though. Body like hers…woo…" He chuckled, "Sleeping her way to the top." Thompson nodded. Neither of them even remotely respected Peggy and the news of Peggy's and Captain Rogers' relationship didn't exactly fuel any good thoughts about her. They believed she was just sleeping with Captain Rogers in the hopes to make it to the top of the ladder.

There was light conversation among the male agents and they all avoided Peggy because there was a common theme that she didn't belong there as an agent. She stood in silence sharing glances with Steve who was waiting at the head of the conference room. Thank God Steve was here or else she might've lost her mind right about now. Once Dooley was sure that everyone he called in was present, he closed the door so everything can get started. Everyone got silent as Dooley made it to the head of the room to stand next to Steve. Dooley spoke up first, "Listen up!" he gestured his hand to Steve, "This is Captain Rogers of the 107th Infantry Regiment, US Army. He is Captain ROGERS to you and not Captain America. Show him the respect he deserves." He nodded at Steve then took a step back, "It's all your, sir."

Steve nodded then took a step forward, "As you know the war is officially over, but not for us. Hydra is still out there and they still pose a threat to innocent lives everywhere mostly centered in Europe." Everyone nodded in agreement. Steve spoke in his command voice, "For months you all have been tracking the movements of all Hydra remnants, and now is time for us to take the intel you have gathered and finally put an end to Hydra." Every single person in the room understood and felt
motivated to rid the world of Hydra. "Due to the increased activity of Hydra in Austria, the BRT are heading back there way ahead of schedule. Instead of deploying next week, we deploy tonight at 1900." He looked at Dooley then back at the agents in front of him, "Agent Carter will be accompany us throughout our movements as the SSR liaison for the deployment." Peggy smiled confidently to herself.

The men looked at each other, confused of what just happened and instantly started to whisper to themselves. They couldn't believe that Captain Rogers would choose a woman to go on a field op. like this. They all thought that the Army taskforce that needed an SSR liaison required a man with experience. Thompson spoke up defiantly, "Sir, if I may…” Peggy was actually the most experienced agent in the room in terms of fighting Hydra. She was the SSR agent attached to Steve during his combat tours against Hydra, and knows way more about them than anyone else in the room. She was the obvious choice.

Steve shook his head then stared sternly at Thompson, "The decision is been made." Thompson nodded and didn't say thing after. Steve spoke up again, "For the rest of you…” He looked at Dooley, "Chief, you got it."

Dooley nodded then stepped forward as Steve stepped back, "The rest of you will also depart with the 107th but will be permanently based in the main occupation zone to ensure Hydra doesn't spring up again anywhere else during and after Captain Rogers' raid in Austria." He looked at his agents, "We will maintain secrecy and if need be eliminate any Hydra threat with extreme prejudice and completely destroy them and ensure that they never come back again.” Everyone nodded confidently. Dooley started to walk to the door, "That is all gentlemen… and lady." Peggy nodded.

Everyone but Peggy and Steve walked out of the conference room. The male agents were obviously feeling a blow to their ego when Steve told them that Peggy was being deployed as the SSR liaison. The men all mumbled to themselves as they left. When Peggy and Steve were the only two in the room, Steve closed the distance between them and hugged her in a loving embrace. He kissed her on the cheek then let go, "Probably should get ready." They weren't trying to be too intimate because they are in the workplace right now.

Peggy smiled and caressed Steve's arm, "I will." She looked at the door, "I forgot you said you were going to leave early today."

Steve gave a small laugh, "Yeah. Sorry."

Peggy smiled at him lovingly, "I just like waking up to you."

Steve led the way out of the conference room maintaining a little distance from Peggy to keep up the professionalism in the office. "Once more into the breach." He said with a straight face.

Peggy nodded, "I can't wait till Hydra is finally gone." Steve nodded in agreement.

The taskforce landed in Germany on September and immediately the taskforce traveled across the border into Austria by truck following the trail of Hydra. The taskforce serves under the cover as an Army occupying force posed to maintain peace in former the Nazi territory. In early October the taskforce met a stronghold of Hydra forces in Northwestern Austria hidden away in a small village, Hydra retreated and put up strong resistance as guerillas in the mountainous countryside. For seventeen days the taskforce battled Hydra on the mountains, but then on the seventeenth day all Hydra resistance on the mountainside surrendered. Thanks to Captain Rogers, Agent Carter, and the Howling Commandos, the BRT casualties were minimal with only a handful of killed and wounded. It was still a terrible price because the war had ended and soldiers were still dying. The taskforce
continued to progress into Austria following the trail of Hydra with multiple towns and villages are happy to help the taskforce eliminate Hydra and point them in the right direction. For the rest of October, the taskforce destroyed multiple Hydra bases and outposts, experiencing little to no resistance. It seems the majority of Hydra resistance was in the region of Northwestern Austria. Now, reports show one last stronghold with a high value target with a kill/capture order on his head within it.

Eintracht, Austria, Base of the Alps, November 1945

Next to a small humble Austrian village, a long vehicle column sat idly on the side of the road in the cold Austrian mountain snow. The village had many small one to two story houses, a single church with a bell tower at the center, barns for farms in the out skirts, and even a market place near the center. It was normally a very calm and peaceful town, but the war changed the attitude of the people. Peggy had a Thompson submachine gun slung over her right shoulder and wore a thick leather jacket, utility belt around her waist that carried her ammunition and first aid kit, OD green cargo pants, and combat boots with a knife tied to her right boot. She leaned against the lead jeep with her arms crossed, trying to keep warm in the snowy countryside at the base of the Alps. The rest of the commandos were in front of her at the tree line circling a fire pit they made with matches and gasoline. They wore their standard gear but with winter clothing so they wouldn't freeze to death. She turned to her right and saw the other soldiers doing the same thing with fire pits to stay warm. Peggy turned around and looked at the village as she rubbed her hands together and blew warm air into them to keep herself warm. She wondered how long Colonel Phillips and Steve will be gone, since they left nearly two hours ago. She shivered and turned back around to watch the warm fire. Any other Austrian day that wasn't in the fall or winter she would probably think this place was beautiful and even quite romantic since Steve is here, but not right now.

Dugan turned around and looked at the freezing Agent Carter and called out, "Agent Carter! Quit freezing you're tail off out there and join the fire!" He laughed, "They've been in there for hours, I don't expect them to come out any time soon."

Peggy shook her head, "The radio is over here." That's why she's next to the command jeep in the first place because she's monitoring the radio for any incoming important calls.

Jim turned to face her too, "The radio isn't going anywhere Agent Carter." He shifted his shoulder to better position his own unit radio on his back.

Peggy smiled, "True enough." She slowly made her way to the commandos shivering her teeth off. She got to the fire and got close, fully enjoying the warmth. She smiled at the commandos, "Thank you, boys."

Jim smiled, "Anything for Captain America's girl." Everyone including Peggy gave him a death stare. Jim loves to crack jokes, but this is the first time he has ever mentioned that statement he saw from the American headlines. He didn't catch on, "What? I was kidding?"

Peggy shook her head, "Not him too."

Jim raised his shoulders, "What? I don't get it?"

Dugan laughed, "Don't worry, when she castrates you I'll tell you."

Gabe laughed, "I'd pay good bucks to see that." He spoke in French to Jacques Dernier but made it a little lengthy causing the group to stare at them. Jacques laughed loudly and slapped his knee. Gabe smiled, "I told him in detail." Everyone laughed except Jim who was fearing for his life.
James chuckled, "I'll watch it too as long as I'm not eating or drinking."

Dugan shook his head, "You English people man… I don't get you guys at all, no stomach for anything." He saw Peggy looking at him with a raised eyebrow. Dugan shut his mouth for a second then spoke up again, "I love the English…" Peggy nodded with a victorious smile.

"I'd pay to see Agent Carter castrate Dugan though," said Jim. Everyone laughed agreeing with him.

James changed the subject and asked curiously, "So, Peggy… you and Captain Rogers." Peggy raised a brow signaling him to go on, "if you don't mind me asking what brought you and him to…"

He was cut off when Steve called his team.

"Alright fellas, form a school circle!" Behind the Jeep stood Steve wearing his stars and stripe iconic uniform, with his iconic shield on his back, and his helmet in his hand. Next to Steve stood Colonel Phillips wearing his helmet and thick green trench coat. Peggy and the team quickly circled up around the jeep, all freezing their heads off in the cold. Steve nodded in understanding then took out his map and compass, "Let's keep this brief so we can get inside." Peggy smiled as she saw her picture still in his compass. That always brought good chills down her spine. Steve pointed at a point on the map, "Alright, the mayor of the village confirmed our reports of the last Hydra base that is located six miles East of here at the base of the Alps." He then pointed to the mountains, "The mayor also says the base is well defended, so we need to use the element of surprise on this one. So we'll attack the base first thing in the morning." He looked at his team, "The mayor is allowing us to sleep in the church and the barn as long as we promise to destroy that base." Everyone chuckled.

Jim raised an eyebrow and whistled, "Who doesn't hate Hydra?" He said jokingly.

Colonel Phillips spoke up, "Hydra has been raiding this village for supplies for years and even kidnapped people. They've put down a world of hurt on these poor souls." He nodded, "So we'll light a fire under their ass and kick them out of this world forever."

Peggy shook her head, "It'll be nice to finally get rid of them."

Phillips nodded, "I couldn't agree more." He looked to his's troops in the cold, "Agent Carter, get our boys into the barn and church. Tell them we settling down here for the night."

Peggy nodded, "Yes sir." She turned and walked off to bark orders at the freezing grunts.

**Church**

Majority of the BRT was able to squeeze into the barn while the rest and the commandos and Colonel Phillips got the church. It was now dark outside and the temperature was far below freezing, luckily the barn and church were super cozy. Steve already planned the attack for the next morning, only having the Howling Commandos including Peggy to attack the stronghold itself while the rest of the BRT staged at this village and await for Steve's orders. He didn't want to risk the lives of the other soldiers because the war already had an expensive price tag. He and the Colonel both agree that the small team can secure the stronghold alone as long as they have the element of surprise. The team has done crazier things, so this is a cakewalk to them.

In the dimly lit church, Peggy was asleep leaning her body against Steve's and resting her head on his shoulder, with an OD green army blanket wrapped around her in a long church pew. Steve was wide-awake with his arm wrapped around Peggy's sleeping form. He was quietly conversing with his fellow commandos who shared the same pew as him and the pew behind him. Steve laughed quietly to make sure he didn't wake up his girlfriend, "So yeah. That's the beginning of Captain
Dugan who sat next to Steve, shook his head. "I still don't believe you were ever below six feet. Skinnier I might believe but still can't believe you were that skinny." He laughed, "You told us the story before but it still confuses the hell out of me." Everyone laughed quietly.

Gabe who sat behind Steve asked curiously, "So you've been together for about…"

Steve shrugged, "About five or so months. I think." He chuckled, "Everything just blurred together."

Dugan laughed, "Do I hear wedding bells? We're in a church after all." Steve shook his head.

Gabe slapped Dugan in the back of the head, "Don't rush them."

Steve laughed, "It's alright. I actually…"

Jim woke up from under his jacket at the far end of Steve's pew, "I heard a wedding! Who's getting married!" He yelled. Steve looked at Peggy quickly, fully knowing she's a light sleeper. She shifted in his grip then rested her head on his chest instead of his shoulder. She looked like she was still asleep. Steve sighed in relief then scanned the church to see if Jim woke up anyone, especially the Colonel. So far no one looked like they were up. Only some of the commandos were.

James who was sleeping next to Jim got up and hit Jim in the face with his beret, "Jim will you shut up, people are trying to sleep?"

Steve smiled, "James is right. Get some sleep, we got a war to finish."

Gabe asked curiously, "Now I'm curious, are you thinking about it at least?"

Dugan tipped his Bollinger hat down over his eyes, "Now look who's rushing them."

Steve smiled, "It's okay, fellas." He looked back at Gabe, "I've thought about it and thought about it some more. And I want to…" He looked down at Peggy and smiled, "She's everything." Gabe smiled. Steve looked at Gabe, "Not a word to anyone, alright?"

Gabe smiled, "Not a word sir."

Dugan chuckled with his eyes closed, "Captain America is a big softie."

Steve shook his head as he leaned his head back he said, "Can you slap him for me Gabe?" He closed his eyes and heard a slap echo in the church, "Thank you Gabe."

Peggy opened her eyes slightly and smiled against Steve's chest. She was in fact up this whole time and heard every word. She is a light sleeper after all…

It's early morning in the serene mountains of the alps, thick fog rolled in and blanketed the base of the mountains. Everything was calm except the shadowy figuring running through the fog. Steve broke the serenity as he sprinted alone through the dense forest and snow with his shield on his back.

Peggy and the rest of the commandos were maintaining a small perimeter in a ditch next to a couple of thick trees in the snow. Their weapons pointed in every direction and their heads on a swivel looking for the enemy in the thick fog. Peggy breathed the cold air and adjusted her Thompson submachine gun against her shoulder while she was crouched in the ditch behind a tree. Jim lowered his M3 submachine gun then spoke softly to the group, "Where's the Captain? He's been gone for a while."
Peggy continued to scan the fog ahead of her, "He'll be here. He needed to scout the enemy base."

James trained his Sten mk2 submachine gun at a shadowy figure approaching them in the dense fog, "Someone is coming. It might be the Captain." Dugan trained his Winchester model 12-trench gun at the shadowy figure as well.

A familiar voice called out to the group yelling the password, "Victor, Victor!" A word that a thick German non-English speaking individual will have trouble saying.

The team rested at ease as they recognized the voice. Steve's iconic stars and stripe uniform emerged from the fog as he sprinted toward them. He rolled into the ditch quickly then crouched in the center, "Alright, I scouted the base from every angle I could." The team gathered around him. Steve pointed to Jacques and Gabe, "Gabe, Jacques, post security." Gabe nodded and repositioned his .30 caliber machine gun to the direction of the stronghold. Jacques moved extra .30 cal. Ammunition next to Gabe and took up a firing position next to him. Steve nodded, "Good news first, we can use the fog to mask our approach to the stronghold and surprise them." He drew a terrain model in the dirt patch at his feet that wasn't covered with snow. He drew a large square with smaller squares in the corners, "I couldn't get a good look into the base but I know that there are two Hydra guards in each tower." He pointed to the corners then looked at his team, "The stronghold is essentially a concrete complex with tall walls. Expect bunkers." He looked at Jim, "The iron gate looked like it can only be opened from the inside, so Jim we need an explosive."

Jim nodded, "You got it."

Steve looked at the rest of the team, "I'll take out the guards in the towers that overlook the gate. Once Jim blows the gate, go in and stay low. Remember we need General Reinhardt alive, so he's off limits." Everyone looked at Dugan.

Dugan raised an eyebrow, "Why is everyone looking at me?"

Steve smiled, "When we're done here, Jim will call the Colonel and the trucks with the BRT will do the rest." He nodded confidently, "Let's go." Everyone got up and walked out of the ditch.

Steve took Peggy's arm, "Peggy, you're in charge once we're in."

She nodded, "got it."

Steve grabbed his shield and drew his pistol then started running. His team following close behind.

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**Hydra stronghold**

Hydra troops were quickly clearing house in all the concrete buildings and subterranean bunkers trying to escape the American pursuit and not turn over any important technology and documents to them. It was a chaotic scene as Hydra soldiers quickly loaded their trucks with everything from weapons to priceless artifacts. It was a cacophony of yelling in German and the sound of truck engines sitting idle.

General Reinhardt wearing his all black Hydra dress uniform, cleaned his circular glasses while walking toward one of the trucks. He put his glasses back on as his executive officer spoke up to him nervously, "Herr Reinhardt…I-I fear Schmidt…"

Reinhardt shook his head, "Oh, there is no worry to fear the Red Skull. He's dead. However his vision is not. The work Hydra has done will move on." He nodded and looked at the progress of his soldiers packing up, "The Americans are soon approaching, we have to hurry. Where is the
"obelisk?" He said calmly.

The executive officer nodded, "They're bringing it out now."

Reinhardt immediately spoke with his eyebrows raised, "Carefully I hope." The executive officer nodded nervously as he saw a stoic Hydra soldier walk out with the silver obelisk on a small wooden plank. The soldier handed it to Reinhardt then left, the General smiled as he observed the obelisk.

The Executive officer crossed his hands behind his back, "I don't understand, Herr Reinhardt. I thought this stronghold stockpile only held artifacts."

Reinhardt didn't take his eyes off the obelisk, "Not everything we dug out of the ground were antiques, my friend." He smiled, "Some of these things are quite…advanced."

The officer looked at blackened rotting bodies, "Is this the reason these men…"

Reinhardt smiled, "Ja. The Red Skull said this may hold the answer to death…itself." He smiled evilly. Suddenly there was a series metallic bangs followed by four Hydra guards falling from the guard towers. Reinhardt saw a circular object tumbling to the outside of the compound. He said angrily, "Captain America…"

Before anyone could do anything or say anything else, there was a large explosion that blew apart the main gate, throwing multiple Hydra soldiers to the ground. As the smoke cleared, Reinhardt saw a woman with a submachine gun accompanied by five heavily armed soldiers walk into the compound.

Peggy walked in the front of the formation of commandos with her Thompson submachine gun trained at Reinhardt's head. She had a very cold and serious look on her face as she closed to the General. A Hydra soldier quickly tried to draw his weapon on Peggy but Dugan immediately blasted him in the chest with his trench gun. He said confidently, "I give them an 'A' for effort." The group stopped in the middle of the compound with their weapons trained at the General and surrounding Hydra soldiers, completely taking Hydra by surprise.

Jim nodded, "Guten Morgen fellas, no sudden moves or we'll tie a blasting cap to your…" He looked at Dugan while keeping his weapon pointed at Reinhardt, "Hey, Dugan what's the German word for nuts?"

Dugan smiled and cocked his trench gun, "I don't know Jim, but if you tie a blasting cap to them, I'm sure they'll tell you."

Peggy didn't break her cold stare at Reinhardt and commanded, "Put it down." Reinhardt didn't listen. Peggy put her finger on the trigger and said sternly, "Now."

Reinhardt shook his head then slowly put the Obelisk on the ground. Then defiantly said as he stood up, "A pleasant surprise, Captain America's girlfriend comes to play." Peggy looked at him angrily then stepped forward, but Dugan came out of nowhere and punched him across the jaw.

Dugan looked at Peggy, "He had a very punch-able face." Peggy shook her head and spotted a pair of brass knuckles in his free hand.

Peggy announced, "these assets are now under the protection of the Strategic Scientific Reserve, they'll be relocated and hidden out of sight indefinitely." Reinhardt got up with an angry look. Peggy turned to Jim, "Call it in." Jim nodded and proceeded to relay communication to Colonel Phillips who was standing by the village.
Reinhardt shook his head, "Cut off one head, two more…"

Steve appeared behind him with his shield on his right arm and dragging a unconscious Hydra soldier with his left, "I've been making a habit of cutting them off." Reinhardt turned around and saw Captain America. Steve dropped the unconscious soldier on the ground, "Day by day…" Peggy smiled confidently.

Dugan took out handcuffs then put Reinhardt's arms behind his back and handcuffed him, "Say another stupid thing. Give me an excuse to punch you in the face again."

Reinhardt turned around to face Steve, "Oh poor Captain America." He shook his head, "You're just another puppet for the American…" Steve was done, he shield checked him in the face so hard that Reinhardt landed on the back of his head unconscious and about twenty feet away.

Jim looked down at the broken pair of glasses that slid to his feet then crushed them with his boot. He looked at Peggy, "Colonel is on his way."

Steve nodded, "I'm going to patrol the forest for any escaped Hydra soldiers we might've missed." He looked at Peggy, "Peggy you're in charge." Peggy nodded. Steve kissed her on the cheek then ran out of the complex throwing his shield on his back.

Dugan looked at Reinhardt, "I think the Captain made the general shit himself." Peggy smiled and shook her head.

Jacques crouched over the unconscious body of Reinhardt then shook his head and yelled in French. Gabe laughed, "He said, it smells like it." The rest of the Hydra soldiers had their hands up and were obviously scared shitless.

Within forty-five minutes the command jeep with Colonel Phillips riding in the passenger seat pulled into the compound, while the rest of the trucks parked outside and deployed the rest of the BRT. The colonel smiled and got out of the jeep and approached Peggy, "Good work, Agent Carter."

Peggy smiled and saluted, "Thank you, sir."

The colonel looked around, "Where's Captain Rogers?"

Dugan gestured his head to the gate, "He took off to patrol the surrounding forest in search of any Hydra stragglers."

Colonel nodded, "That's good." He walked past the commandos and looked at all the boxes, crates, and the obelisk and said, "Lets pack it up, but make sure we account for everything." The commandos nodded and broke off to get things secured. The Colonel strolled over to Reinhardt and looked down at him. Reinhardt slowly woke up and saw the Colonel staring at him with an eyebrow raised. The Colonel said plainly, "Good morning, sunshine."

Everything was sealed into crates, locked, tagged, and photographed. Every available soldier and personnel had something to do, if you weren't handling the objects you were guarding the prisoners or questioning them. Peggy strolled through the compound supervising the requisition of the assets. Dugan walked up next to her, "What is all this stuff anyway?"

Peggy walked with Dugan to Jim who was handling the obelisk with care, "Dangerous things." She nodded to the obelisk where Jim was placing it in a crate with tongs, "And we must never touch that. Ever." She looked at Dugan, "Right now we have to secure everything and take it out of the area. Mr. Stark is planning to go through it tonight." Peggy looked at the gate and said plainly, "This is the last Hydra base we know of. That's it, they're finally beaten."
Dugan nodded at her, "You don't sound very excited. The Captain is back and Hydra is done for, what's not to like?"

Peggy shook her head, "I'm happy with Steve, but we can't just get rid of these things. They need to be boxed up and supervised constantly. We need a permanent unit during peace time."

Jim sealed the obelisk in a metal crate, "Keep funky technology contained."

Peggy nodded, "And watch over people like Stark toying with it."

Everything was finally being loaded into the trucks signaling the end of this prolonged operation. Jim and a couple BRT combat engineers are finishing the wiring of explosives to destroy the compound. Peggy was leaning on the command jeep that was now outside the compound, she felt a friendly pat on the back and she saw the Colonel looking at her with a small smile. The Colonel nodded, "We're almost done here."

Peggy gave a small smile, "You're newest best friend say anything?"

Colonel shook his head, "Other than the typical Hydra catch phrase. He didn't say much." He nodded at her, "Captain Rogers return yet?"

Peggy shook her head, "Not yet." She wasn't worried, she just wanted to know where he was.

The Colonel shrugged, "Hope he get here soon, we're almost done."

Peggy looked to her right and saw Steve running through the trees toward them. She smiled, "Found him." The Colonel turned around and saw him approaching.

Steve stopped by the jeep and checked in, "No stragglers for miles. Couldn't find anyone, so we're good to go."

The Colonel nodded, "That's good. We're just about done here. Pack it up," he said then walked off to check in with the others.

Steve nodded, "Yes sir." He then looked to Peggy and gave her a warm smile.

Peggy smiled back and caressed his arm then quickly withdrew, "Darling, why are you freezing?"

Steve chuckled, "Thought I saw something going up the mountains, so I followed." He shrugged, "turned out to be nothing. But, couldn't beat the view." He looked at Peggy lovingly, "Wish you were up there."

Peggy put her hand on his arm again not minding the cold, "Wish I could've joined you then."

The taskforce finally left the compound a little afternoon, the base was destroyed, and the artifacts and prisoners were transported to Harris Army Air Force Base located in a valley near the border adjacent to Route 45. After hours of driving the taskforce finally arrived at Harris, and immediately secured the artifacts for transport back to the states and secured all the prisoners inside a ring of barbwire. After business was finished the Colonel allowed the taskforce to have the evening off since the force is slated to make the long trip back to the states the next morning.

Luckily the November weather in the valley isn't as cruel as it was near the Alps, it's cold, but there wasn't snow like the mountains. The trees and plants still maintained color in a variety of spectrums, presenting a beautiful mosaic of colors around the valley. The valley was the ideal place to spend their last day in Austria, the scenery and the little bit of warmth and beautiful countryside made a
significant difference.

Hill Tops, Austrian Valley

Steve walked arm in arm with Peggy up a small hill that gave quite a good view of the valley and the US military airfield quite a ways away. He wore his Captain America uniform with his shield on his back, but his helmet was back at the base. Peggy still wore her brown leather jacket, OD green cargo pants, and black combat boots. They strolled to the top of the hill in medium height grass, to a stunning view of the village below, and the surrounding mountains of the valley. It's a gorgeous and serene scene that neither of them could describe with words. As the couple walked, the fresh wind blew calmly through the grass giving a pleasant sound as the ocean of grass waved back and forth. It almost gave Steve the impression that the war didn't even exist here.

Steve was happy that this beautiful country was spared the heavy destruction the rest of Europe suffered. He was also happy that he got some time off here in this beautiful countryside with the one and only Agent Carter. He felt Peggy tighten her grip on his hand and arm as the couple gazed at the picturesque view, he looked down at her and smiled. Peggy kissed him tenderly, "It's a beautiful country isn't it, Darling? Where else are we going to get a view like this?"

Steve nodded, "It's very beautiful." He wrapped his arm around Peggy and held her close, she placed a hand on his chest and smiled against him. He continued, "I'm glad this country was spared the massive bombing campaigns."

Peggy nodded and rested her head on his shoulder as they walked, "Yeah."

They made it to the top, Steve stopped and turned to face the valley, Peggy smiled at him affectionately, also enjoying the view of the snow covered mountains in the distance. Steve smiled happily at the scenery, happy to have this time off in this country with Peggy. Everything was perfect, but there was one thing wrong to Peggy… she felt Steve trembling. Something wasn't right to her. Peggy felt Steve trembling in her grasp. She looked up at Steve who was still staring out at the mountains. She asked, "you okay, Darling?" She rubbed his chest lovingly.

Steve nodded, "Yeah."

Peggy sensed his hesitation, she gripped his frame lovingly, "Darling… I know when something is bothering you."

Steve shook his head, "Nothing is bothering me." He looked down at her, "I'm just nervous." He wasn't lying.

Peggy looked at him curiously, "about what?"

Steve nodded to the Alps, "Peggy…I wasn't patrolling the forest earlier..." Peggy looked at him with confusion. He looked at Peggy then extracted himself from her grip making Peggy even more confused. He breathed steadily and looked down at his feet.

Peggy looked at him confused, "Darling?" She knew something is wrong, but couldn't understand what.

Steve smiled and nodded to the valley changing the subject, "See this beautiful country Peggy?" He paused, "This view…is perfect."

Peggy smiled warmly agreeing, "Yes it is." She still was concerned about Steve, but she couldn't help but enjoy the view.
Steve stared out to the serene landscape, "Can you see the future?"

Peggy smiled at the scenery, "With no war, it'll be a whole new world..." She enjoyed the breeze and the view for a moment then heard Steve move. She turned her head and saw Steve kneeling on one knee holding up a diamond ring. Her jaw dropped, she took a step back and covered her mouth.

Steve was down on one knee with the ring presented to Peggy, he smiled warmly, "would you like to see the future with me?" He paused then said softly, "Margaret 'Peggy' Carter, will you marry me?"

Peggy was literally speechless with the biggest smile on Earth. She finally spoke up happily, "Yes. Yes! Steve Rogers, I'll marry you."

Steve stood up and gently placed the diamond right on her left ring finger. He looked at her lovingly, "I love you. When I'm with you, I become more, so be with me for today, tomorrow..." He laughed, "Forever."

Peggy rushed in and kissed him passionately. After a brief passionate frenzy on the hill, Peggy broke off the kiss and smiled, "You won't be alone. Not ever." She kissed him again, "I love you." They held each other in an embrace.

Steve smiled then reached into his pocket and took out a small white flower. He held it up to Peggy, "This is Edelweiss." He smiled warmly at her, "I was getting this small little flower in the mountains when I said I was patrolling." Peggy smiled at the small white flower and the sweet gesture. Steve took Peggy's hand then placed the flower in her palm, "People of Austria say that giving this flower as a gift to a loved one is a promise of dedication."

Peggy smiled, "It's beautiful, Darling."

Steve caressed her cheek, "I love you, Margaret Carter."

Peggy kissed him tenderly, "I love you too, Captain Steven Rogers."

"This isn't too fast for you?"

Peggy shook her head, "Steve, you almost died and we almost never got this chance. This is obviously not too fast considering that we might have never gotten here." She smiled, "Besides darling, we've been together for months already. This is perfect." Steve smiled then kissed her tenderly with the gorgeous view of the valley and mountains keeping them company.

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OD=Olive Drab

Eintracht is a fictional village I made up. ' Used scenes from Marvel Agents of SHIELD Guten Morgen replaced Guten Tag There you have it. Proposal! It's the 1940s, people didn't waste time then.
Chapter 5 Now is Not the End part 1

Edited Dec 31, 2018

I don't own Captain America or Agent Carter or anything Marvel.

Chapter involves most of Peggy from the Agent Carter Episode: Now is Not the End

1946

It's been roughly five months since the official end of the war, and the world is slowly but surely rebuilding with each passing month. Many of the veterans of the war returned home and got back into ordinary life fairly quickly, taking jobs once occupied by women during the war. They replaced the more experienced women from their roles leaving them to return back to the social norms of the past. But overall the country and the world is back in peace. But the new found peace is covering the quickly developing conflict between democracy and communism. Blanketed by the rejuvenated peace, the United States stands ready to oppose any communist influence from the Soviet Union in all corners of the globe. The two countries formed as the world's dominant super powers and are readying themselves to square off for any future conflict. The shadow war of spy versus spy makes the rest of the world its battlefield. Old enemies become new friends and old friends become new enemies.

For the still newly engaged couple of little over two months, things are overall perfect to them in terms of their love and private life. Steve and Peggy are virtually inseparable during the evenings and nights, and on weekends when neither of them are working. The large diamond engagement ring rarely leaves Peggy's finger, and if she's not wearing it, then it will be very close by. Peggy has yet to ask Steve where he got the money to buy such a beautiful ring, she always forgets to ask because Steve always manages to impress her, and when she doesn't think she can fall any more deeper in love with him Steve proves her wrong. For example, every time Steve makes it home before Peggy he makes dinner for her, and cleans up everything after she eats, which speaks volumes to her. The couple even spent their first Thanksgiving and Christmas together without being disturbed by work. Overall they are living the life.

Another upside is that the happily engaged couple was able to keep their engagement a secret for the most part. The only one who knows so far is Colonel Phillips because he is the closest thing they have to a father figure. The calm, stoic Colonel would probably murder them if they didn't tell him regardless of Steve being a super soldier. Not even the Howling Commandos knew because more than half of them will blow it up and yell it to the world. Neither Peggy nor Steve was willing to disclose their engagement to the world. Steve is already a public figure, but if Peggy became a public figure that might jeopardize her work and chances of proving herself to the men of the SSR. Plus, the press would go ballistic if they found out about the engagement. The country would talk about it, and there wouldn't be any form of privacy for them, although Peggy's boss and coworkers already connected the dots and know of her and Steve's romantic relationship. The SSR just doesn't know about the engagement. After a few meetings with Dooley, he reluctantly decided to let their relationship slide, even to the point of having plausible deniability and ensuring to keep it off SSR records. This knowledge just gives the men of the New York City SSR branch including Dooley more things to annoy Peggy. They may know about their relationship, but they don't know about their engagement, and that knowledge would change everything for her. Captain America and Peggy quickly became America's couple directly after the war even though the country has no idea who
Peggy is. The press simply just label her, "The mystery brunette" and they write articles such as, "Captain Rogers with his beautiful mystery brunette." The press tried getting her name but was faced with no responses and dozens of fake names, so they resorted to calling her "The mystery brunette."

Luckily for Peggy, her engagement to Steve isn't public knowledge. There were rumors and whispering when she showed up to work with an engagement ring, but not many people actually confronted her about it. She relies on the story of the ring belonging to her mother, and she wears it for good luck. The story is quick to diffuse speculation. Agent Thompson and Krzeminski often talked to her and made fun of her about her relationship, but Peggy was ready to shoot their testosterone levels down with a smooth response. Both of those male agents, no doubt, dislike her presence in the SSR greatly. Both Thompson and Krzeminiski believed, as a woman, Peggy belonged elsewhere than as a field agent. But, even with the stunning endorsement from decorated Army officers such as Colonel Phillips and Captain Rogers, Peggy's administrative desk role hasn't changed. This didn't faze her as she planned to continue her push for more field ops.

With the war entirely over, the military has cut back in personnel including the recently formed and limited combat tested Battalion Raiding Team. The BRT went from full strength of 350 soldiers to 150. Postwar, military life isn't as appealing as it was during the fighting ironically. Luckily, the Army still has all the Howling Commandos. The foreigners of the group such as Jacques Dernier and James Montgomery Falsworth both agreed to stay in the country and even set up permanent residence thanks to Colonel Phillips and Steve. But, now the SSR is an independent government agency outside of the United States Army, sanctioned by President Truman. Instead, the Army will assist the SSR in any operation needed through Camp Lehigh. Colonel Phillips is now given the responsibility of running the base, maintaining combat effectiveness of all troops, and close communication and rapid deployment with the SSR. The first thing the Colonel did was making Steve the official Army adjutant to the SSR in New York City. Steve still maintained responsibility of his commandos, and his team became the heavy muscle and the quick response force for the SSR.

For Howard Stark, his life was crumbling underneath his feet recently. First, someone stole his inventions and secret weapon designs, and secondly, the United States Congress has him in federal trials to see if he is a traitor for selling weapons and dangerous technology to the enemy. Stark is being framed and would never sell weapons to the enemy, but so far it can go either way for him, and he's handling it in his usual style. With humor. Captain Steven Rogers was brought to the hearing with Colonel Philip on the second day of trials, and, surprisingly, their testimony did little to help Stark. The politicians didn't care if he had the war hero as a friend, they only cared about the stolen weapons and technology. He has to show up for another day of testimony since Congress refuses to be convinced by the truth.

**Mid-January 1946, Rogers/Carter Apartment**

It's a bright and early morning in the city that never sleeps and the streets were already packed with people going to work. Back at the Rogers and Carter apartment, the newly engaged couple were just starting their day. An exposed Peggy slowly woke up on Steve's bare chest then yawned as she struggled to get awake. She looked affectionately at her fiancé then kissed his chest. She knew he was already up, "Good morning, darling."

Steve turned his head to look at Peggy's beautiful face, "Good morning, beautiful."

Peggy smiled then got on her elbows and kissed his lips, "I thought you would've gone already. Starting late today are you?"

Steve laughed, "Yeah kind of." He caressed her cheek, "You make it so hard for me."
Peggy laughed then rested her cheek against his chest again, "I try."

Steve caressed her bare shoulder and said softly, "I love you, Peggy."

Peggy got up on her elbow again and stared at Steve lovingly, "I love you too." She leaned forward and kissed his lips again. She smiled lovingly, "Right partner."

Steve smiled and repeated, "Right partner." He caressed her cheek lovingly again.

He then looked over his shoulder to the clock, which showed 6AM. He sighed reluctantly then looked back at Peggy's, "Got to get ready."

Peggy kissed his cheek, "me too."

Steve smiled, "I'll make breakfast." He kissed her lips again then removed the covers from his bare body and got up to retrieve his discarded clothes. He put on his grey sweatpants then walked out, Peggy watching him seductively as he left. She laid back down, holding the covers to her chest and smiled.

An hour later Peggy exited the bedroom wearing reserved make up, red lipstick, a light blue business blouse, dark blue business skirt, and had her matching business suit coat over her arm. She smiled as the pleasant smell of breakfast filled her nose. Peggy strolled into the kitchen table and hung her coat on the chair, "Mmm. Smells good, Steve."

Steve wore his old SSR white training shirt and grey sweatpants in the kitchen as he finished cooking their meals. He placed the last sausage links onto the plates then grabbed the two plates, and brought it to the table. Peggy sat down smiling at the pleasant breakfast as Steve went back to get the last couple of things to bring back to the table. An assortment of scrambled eggs with cheese, whole-wheat toast, bacon, sausage, fruits, orange juice, and tea for Peggy. Steve sat down next to his lovely fiancé and smiled, "bon appétit"

Peggy smiled and took a sip of her tea, "You know, darling?" She put her cup down and started on her food.

Steve was already chowing down on his food and had his mouth full, so the only thing that he could muster was, "Mmm?"

Peggy swallowed her bite, "I was thinking."

"Thinking about what?" He took a sip of his juice then smiled warmly.

Peggy smiled, "You."

Steve chuckled, "Hope it's good things."

"Oh always, darling." She paused and smiled, "Thinking about you and our perfect day."

Steve chuckled, "Me too. I think about it all the time." He reached out and caressed her hand on the table, "We'll find the perfect day and perfect place. It'll be absolutely the best day of our lives."

Peggy smiled, "Everything's perfect. The rest is a bonus." She chuckled. Steve smiled then continued eating.

In no time they were done with breakfast, and it was time for both of them to go to work. Steve quickly washed the dishes so he can get his gear together and get to Camp Lehigh. Peggy put her
dark blue business coat on then grabbed her purse off the table. She strolled into the kitchen and kissed Steve on the cheek, "I'm going, darling."

Steve finished up, "Me too." He turned around then quickly held her close and planted a long kiss on her lips.

Peggy chuckled, "careful darling. I might miss work."

Steve laughed then kissed her lips gently, "Mind if I take you out dancing this Friday night?"

Peggy smiled lovingly, "I'd love to go dancing, Steve." She kissed his cheeks.

Steve chuckled, "Well… hate to kill the mood, but I got to stay at the base a little later than usual tonight."

Peggy nodded, "It's okay. I'll eat dinner at the L&L Automat and talk with my friend to catch up." She kissed his lips again then took a step back, "See you tonight. I love you." She turned for the door.

Steve walked to the bedroom as she was leaving, "Say hi for me, I love you." He called out as she left. She waved as she closed the door. Steve went into their room and got his blue uniform utility cargo pants and dark brown combat boots on. He packed his Stars and Stripes uniform jacket and helmet into a US Army haversack canvas bag then strapped his shield to the back of it, then slung the bag onto his back and left the room. He grabbed his motorcycle keys from the table and made his way out of their home to go to work.

Steve walked out of their apartment building with his gear on his back to his motorcycle that was parked next to the curb. Suddenly a little boy holding a silver trash can cover ran into him then fell on his butt. The kid's friends that were following him stopped behind him in shock as they suddenly realized who they ran into. Steve smiled and looked down at the kid then looked over at the trashcan lid that had his shield pattern painted on it. He laughed then picked the kid up off the ground then handed him his trashcan lid shield, "Here you go, soldier," he said with a warm smile.

The boy was a little brown haired kid with a little bit of freckles. He stuttered and didn't know what to say. After a moment, he smiled and saluted him, "Th-thank you, sir."

Steve smiled then returned the salute. He took a moment and scanned the kids in front of him. In addition to the kid with the trashcan shield, six other little boys were holding wooden cutouts of guns, he figured that these kids were the Howling Commandos to the little Captain America in front of him. He chuckled, "Who's the bad guy?"

The little Captain America smiled, "We're tracking down Nazi's! We have to destroy the bad guys!"

Another kid who had blonde hair and was slightly bigger than the others spoke up, "We're the perfect soldiers!"

Steve kneeled down in front of them and signaled the kids to circle around him, which they excitedly did without hesitation. Steve smiled, "A brilliant and wise old man once told me."

He pointed to the chest of the little kid with the shield, "Don't be the perfect soldier, but be a good man." He looked at the kids and smiled, "Do you know what that means?" All the kids were silent. Steve smiled, "It means, always do the right thing." He chuckled, "And you'll be a better soldier and a better person for doing that. Understand?" All the kids nodded excitedly. Steve stood up and saluted the kid with the shield again, "Carry on." The kids all saluted then ran off excitedly, while whispering how awesome it was to surprisingly meet Captain America in person. All the kids didn't realize their hero
lived in the same city as them.

Steve smiled warmly and got onto his motorcycle. He looked around and realized there were people staring at him with warm smiles on their faces. He looked down and smiled then started up his motorcycle.

SSR New York City Branch

Peggy walked into the switchboard room with her purse over her right shoulder and the day's newspaper tucked under her right armpit. She greeted Rose who let her into the hidden elevator to take her up to the SSR office. Peggy stepped out of the elevator and the colleagues that liked her greeted her, which she returned with a warm smile and a nod as she strolled to her desk. Once Peggy got to her desk, she put her purse down then placed the newspaper on her desk so she can prepare for the daily tedious administrative work she's been assigned to recently. She shook her head, even with the endorsement of high ranking Army officers, the SSR refuses to accept her as a field operative. Unfortunately, her relationship with Steve isn't helping her at all. Peggy absentmindedly fiddled with her diamond engagement ring that was on her finger as she thought to herself. The SSR may not know of their engagement, but they know of her relationship with him, and that's reason enough to believe she's only sleeping with the legendary war hero to try and climb the ladder. Which was obviously not true. She's still frustrated by the lack of fairness the men in the agency are treating her and the other women here, but she refuses to quit in the face of something so trivial.

Peggy was too busy in thought as she continued to fiddle with her ring that she didn't hear her friend and colleague lean against her desk. A thin brunette woman with few freckles, wearing neutral make up, white woman's business blouse, and black business skirt. Her name is Alana Jones. She smiled at her friend, "Peggy?"

Peggy shook her head then looked at her friend, "Oh. Sorry, Alana. How are you?"

Alana chuckled, "you're always so busy fiddling with your mom's old ring."

Peggy shrugged, "Yeah. I was just thinking." She spotted Agent Krzeminski looking at her with judgement in his eyes from across the room. When he saw Peggy looking back at him, the big man broke eye contact and went back to what he was doing.

Alana shook her head, "Upset about the fact that we are leaving the saving the world to the men?"

Peggy smiled at her, "That's one of the things I'm thinking about."

"Thinking of Captain Rogers huh? I don't blame you." She chuckled, "Oh. By the way, Peg, how are you and Rogers doing?" Alana said happily. She sighed in adoration of Steve, "He's so dreamy." She looked at her friend, "You're so lucky you got him!"

Peggy laughed, "I feel lucky. This almost didn't happen." She laughed again, "But, to answer your question, we're doing great. I wouldn't change a single thing about us."

Alana smiled, "That's so sweet." She spotted the newspaper on the desk then changed the subject, "Hey, that's rough going for Stark don't you think? I know you and him are close because of the war and Captain Rogers but..."

Peggy nodded then grabbed the newspaper and started to skim the article about another federal trial of Stark with the United States Congress, "Yeah it is. But there is no way Stark is a traitor. He may be a business man but he's still a patriot. I know him, he would never betray this country."
Alana nodded, "Yeah. Still pretty rough. These trials are taking away everything from him." She smiled at Peggy, "Well, I'll talk to you later Peg, it's time for me to get to work."

Peggy smiled, "See you later Alana." Alana left for her desk and Peggy started to get going on her daily reports and administrative tasks. She sighed. She couldn't complain too much because she has Steve, which he could've easily been taken away from her. She briefly thought about the moment before Steve plunged the plane into the Artic Ocean after the fight with Hydra in 1945. She shook her head, she hasn't thought of those painful times in so long. Steve is with her now, so she has no reason to remember those memories. She was brought back to reality when the alarm sounded around the office.

The alarm sounded loudly and repeatedly throughout the entire office causing everyone to stand up and walk to the briefing room or to their respective areas. Peggy stood up and grabbed a note pad from her desk and was about to walk to the briefing room when Chief Dooley called her. He stepped out of his office, buttoning his suit jacket, "Agent Carter, we just caught a red ball out of DC, all hands on deck." Peggy nodded and was about to continue her path to the briefing room but Dooley stepped in front of her. He looked and said plainly, "Meaning, go to the phones."

Peggy quickly picked up her phone and talked to Rose in the telephone switchboard room on the first floor, "Rose, forward all calls to the briefing room." She hung up the phone once Rose confirmed her request, "Shall we?" Peggy walked off confidently into the briefing room. Dooley sighed and shook his head then followed her in.

After everyone in the briefing room finished watching a newsreel on the situation with Howard Stark, Dooley turned on the lights and raised the projector screen. Most of the agents were sitting at the briefing table and some including Peggy were standing in the back. Dooley leaned on his knuckles on the table, "So far six pieces turned up either on the black market or in the arsenals of enemy states. Including the Soviet Union." He banged a hand on the table, "He's been waffling on the hill, and he's treating this like a joke. Yesterday was the final day of hearings, Stark didn't show. We checked all his offices and all his houses, found nothing." Peggy shook her head and looked down. Dooley continued, "As of now Stark is not just in the Contempt of Congress, he's a fugitive of justice." He said plainly, "Find him, squeeze him till he loses his sense of humor." He looked at Thompson who was sitting in front of him on the left, "Thompson, you lead." Thompson was a rising star in the agency even though he was passed over for the deployment to Europe with the Commandos and the BRT.

Thompson closed the file in front of him, "Ground his planes and freeze his bank accounts." He shook his head, "This girl owes me a favor, I can…"

Peggy spoke up, "Sir may I object."

Dooley shot back quickly, "Why am I not surprised?" He motioned her to speak.

Peggy said plainly, "Sir, I knew Stark during the war, his help was invaluable." She looked around the room, "He may be many things but he's not a traitor."

Dooley shook his head, "We are all aware of your record…Agent." He leaned forward, "I'm sure being Captain America's…..uh. Partner. Brought you in contact with all sorts of interesting people." He gave a slick smile. He knew all about Peggy and Captain Rogers relationship and frankly didn't support it. He turned the other way for plausible deniability, but that didn't necessarily mean he respects her. In fact, like most of the men in the agency, they believe she's trying to sleep her way to the top by being with Captain America. Dooley shook his head, "The war is over, let the professionals decide who is worth going after." He put his hands in his pockets but before he left he looked at Peggy, "Find Stark alive. Or else the men on the hill will be forced to deploy Captain
America to grab him for us." He smiled then left.

Krzeminski leaned to the agent next to him, "Sounds like Carter knew a lot of guys during the war." He chuckled and got his stuff together, "Can't blame Captain America though, flexibility and body like hers...wow." He stood up and chuckled as the rest of the agents started to get up. Peggy just looked at him with disdain. Krzeminski continued, "He just needs to teach Carter to learn how to shut her mouth."

Another SSR agent, Daniel Sousa, looked at Agent Krzeminski with a hateful look, "What did you say Krzeminski?"

Krzeminski got his things together and said plainly at him, "Oh you're standing up for her now, Sousa? Captain America might get jealous." He smirked at him, "If you're going to do something about it then you better hurry. I don't have all day." Sousa just stared at him coldly. Krzeminski chuckled, "No? Okay." He turned and left laughing.

Sousa scooted his chair back and got his crutches then slowly stood up. He sighed then slowly wobbled around the table to the door. Peggy sighed and looked down then walked to the door. She looked at Sousa and said, "Agent Sousa. About what you just did..."

Sousa smiled and wobbled to her, "Don't worry about it. I just..."

"I wish you hadn't," Peggy said plainly.

Sousa looked in the office, "You're an agent and they treat you like a secretary. I just wanted..." He shook his head.

Peggy continued, "And I'm grateful. I'm also more than capable handling whatever these adolescents throw at me." Sousa was about to speak, but Peggy continued, "Don't mention Steve. I mean Captain Rogers. He believes in me and that's enough. I don't need the approval these boys behind a desk here."

Sousa nodded with a slight smile, "Yes Ma'am." He looked down at his feet, "Doesn't mean I have to like it."

Peggy smiled warmly, "That's another thing we have in common."

Thompson walked up to them, "Agent Carter... I know you're a little busy with your friend here, but these surveillance reports needs to be filed and you're really so much better at that kind of thing." He handed her a brown folder.

Peggy looked at him straight and said plainly, "And what kind of thing is that? The alphabet? I can teach you, let's start with words beginning with 'A'". She took the folder without breaking eye contact. Thompson just chuckled. Peggy continued, "Don't worry, I'm sure you'll get a hang of it eventually. You don't look that dumb."

Thompson laughed and stuck his hands in his pocket then turned around and left, "Thanks, kid." He chuckled, "I don't know how Captain America puts up with you. Jesus."

Sousa just looked at him, "poor guy. I heard his personality got shot off in Iwo Jima." He began to wobble off.

Peggy chuckled, "Yet Steve fought through an army and cheated death, and he's still go-lucky and a gentleman."
Sousa turned to her, "He's a super soldier Agent Carter."

Peggy smiled, "He's still a man. Good as any and better than most." Sousa and her shared a friendly smile.

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**Noon, Camp Lehigh**

Steve wearing his stars and stripe uniform entered Colonel Phillips' office after he finished some training routines with the commandos. Colonel Phillips was staring out of a window looking out to the drill field that had an American flag flapping on a poll, waving high above the ground on the flagpole. Steve centered himself six inches in front of the Colonel's desk in the position of attention and reported, "You wanted to see me, Colonel?"

Colonel Phillips turned around, "Yes, thank you for coming in, Rogers. Take a seat." He picked up a newspaper that was on a shelf next to him. Steve took a seat at one of the two chairs in front of the Colonel's desk. The Colonel walked over then gave Steve the newspaper while he leaned against his desk, "What do you think of this?"

Steve shook his head, "That it's crazy and the politicians are picking on him." He sighed, "Politicians trying to make a name for themselves. Stark is not a traitor."

Phillips nodded, "I agree with you there, but the government doesn't." He sighed then walked around the desk to his chair, "I got word from the President himself." Steve rose an eyebrow. Phillips sat down on his chair and leaned back, "He didn't show up for his latest hearing." Steve looked at him with both shock and surprise. The Colonel shook his head, "The men on the hill are ordering the SSR to bring in Stark…naturally you're name came up."

"What am I supposed to do?" Steve asked.

Phillips shook his head, "Nothing for now, but if the SSR fails to bring him in, in the time they are allowed…" He shrugged, "they're sending you to find him and get him."

Steve sighed and rubbed the back of his neck. Then looked up at the Colonel, "You know…we couldn't have beaten Hydra let alone the Nazi's without Stark right?" He chuckled, "And I'm not an investigator, I'm a soldier."

Phillips nodded, "I know…" He shrugged, "You know…it wouldn't be a bad idea to go hunt for Stark yourself right now, but the government would frown upon it." He nodded with a confident smile. "If you're…understanding my meaning."

Steve smiled slyly, "Yes sir." He understood the meaning of what the Colonel said.

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**Late Evening, Apartment**

Steve unlocked the door to their home and stepped into the dark apartment. He put his bag and shield down against the wall then tossed his motorcycle keys on the table. He decided not to turn on the lights to save power and money. His eyes can see a lot clearer in the dark than the average human so he didn't really mind. Steve smiled and called for Peggy as he rubbed his neck, "Peggy, I'm home." There was no response. He nodded understanding that Peggy was probably still out at dinner. He rolled his neck then went into their bedroom while he took off his jacket.

Removing his jacket and shirt, he placed them down on the bed before turning to his side of the bed.
and flip on the lamp on the nightstand. Steve stretched his arms for a moment then approached the dresser to look at a photograph that was recently taken. In the dim light, Steve could still see the details of the picture. The photo was taken in Austria after the final days of Hydra and right after they got engaged. Steve, in his stars and stripes uniform without the helmet, was holding Peggy in his arms while she wore her leather jacket and Army pants. They both were smiling widely. The photographer who took the photo promised not to send it up to the press and keep it private. Steve picked up the picture and rubbed his thumb over it as he happily remembered that moment.

L&L Automat

Peggy sat alone in a booth reading another newspaper while drinking a nice hot cup of tea. Yet another story of Stark, but this time it was about his manhunt in three separate states. There was a picture of Steve in his dress uniform on the front page of the newspaper with the caption, "CAPTAIN AMERICA ALLY IN HOT WATER". Peggy sighed, she wants to help out Stark and prove his innocence and she is also hoping this doesn't explode and turn into a smear job on Steve. Her friend and waitress, Angie Martinelli interrupted her thoughts with her usual pleasant tone of voice.

Angie smiled as she looked over Peggy's shoulder, "I saw him in a USO once in Passaic," she said referring to the picture of Steve as she put her hand on her hip. "He's so perfect. You can eat him with a spoon." Peggy smiled slightly as she put the paper down.

"Yes, I understand he's quite something."

Angie playfully slapped her on the shoulder, "Well I certainly hope so! You're his girl for Pete's sake!" She laughed, "There are millions of women in this country who would love to be with him right now."

Peggy smiled and looked up at her, "Including you?"

Angie put her hands up, "Hey there, English, I'm just saying it. I don't want to say anything more about this subject and risk your sharp reprisal." Peggy gave a small smile and sighed. Angie walked around to face her friend, "Everything okay, English?" Angie's little nickname for Peggy.

Peggy nodded slightly, "Everything is fine." She fiddled with her ring, "Minus work."

Angie leaned on one hip, "Phone company giving you a hard time."

Peggy nodded as she continued to fiddle with her ring, "Just a little more than usual. It's just…" She paused then looked at Angie, "During the war I had a sense of purpose and responsibility. But, now I connect calls but never get a chance to make them. Do you know what I mean?"

Angie smiled, "Can your boyfriend help?"

Peggy smiled, "He always does, but this right now is just…"

Angie turned around and checked if anyone needed help in the restaurant. Once she was sure everyone was set, she took a seat in front of Peggy, "I had an audition today uptown." She leaned forward closer to Peggy, "Took three trains, got two bars into 'is you is or is you ain't' they gave me the hook…" She shrugged, "I guess I ain't. But we all got to pay our deals, even if it takes a while." She nodded at Peggy, "You got talent, its just a matter of time before Broadway calls."

Peggy raised an eyebrow, "Unfortunately I can't carry a tune."
Angie chuckled, "Doesn't matter if you got legs like yours." She laughed, "Just take it up with your boyfriend. I'm sure he'll agree."

Peggy smiled, "He would." There was a disruption from one of the people in the restaurant.

A clearly overweight man in a suit with an ever expanding waist line sat at a table with a scowl on his face. He called angrily, "Call this BLT? Where's the girl?" Peggy and Angie looked at him with disdain. Angie tapped her pen on her pad and shook her head. The man continued, "Oh I'm sorry, you don't work here anymore?"

Angie sighed, "Looks like I gotta go."

Peggy fiddled with her ring some more and asked plainly, "Is he a regular?"

Angie shook her head and said it straight, "A regular what I'm not allowed to say while I'm on the clock." She stood up, "I'll see you later. Say hi to Captain America for me." She chuckled, "And give him a kiss for me." She turned and left.

Peggy smiled then got up from her table to go grab a piece of dessert from the shelves on the wall. She sat back down at her table and placed her dessert next to her cup of tea and noticed something written on her napkin. The napkin read, "Meet in the alley in 5 minutes." Peggy's eyes quickly scanned her surroundings and saw nothing out of the ordinary. She got up and grabbed her things then headed to the door that lead to the alley. She opened up her purse and put her hand on the .45 pistol inside.

She pushed open the door to the alley and stepped out into the dimly lit alley way. A male English voice got her attention, "Ms. Carter!"

Peggy looked over to the direction of the voice and gripped her pistol in her purse, "I'm sorry do I know you?"

A mysterious tall white man walked from out of the shadows deep in the alley, "No, I don't believe we had the pleasure." He stopped right in front of her and looked at her, "You're coming with me." He said plainly.

Peggy quickly drew her pistol from her purse and pistol whipped him across the jaw then punched him in the nose. Suddenly she heard a car engine start and head lights shined into her eyes, almost blinding her. The car took off toward her. She drew her weapon and aimed steadily. The car got in range quickly thus causing Peggy to fire off two rounds into the front left tire of the car which made it veer to the right into a pile of boxes and crates. Peggy cautiously approached the car with her pistol trained on the driver's side window. Her hand was steady as she approached the car but was surprised when the door swung open and exposed a very familiar face. Howard Stark.

Stark nodded apologetically, "I know. I should've called first." Peggy lowered her pistol in shock. Stark smiled, "Did you miss me?" Peggy was about to speak but Stark continued, "Don't worry about the car…it's a rental."

The car took off down the dimly lighted streets of New York City. Stark and Peggy were in the back seat talking while the man Peggy pistol whipped and punched in the face drove. Peggy looked at Stark who looked like he was in a mess, "They are calling you a traitor."

Stark shook his head, "And I'm calling it a setup." He sighed, "I have a vault...had. I mean. A basement in my office, super thick, lead lined, you name it. State of the art." He shook his head, "That's where I keep my bad babies."
Peggy raised a brow, "Bad babies?"

"Inventions too dangerous for anyone. Including the government and my friends," He said plainly

Peggy leaned over to Stark, "Then why make them?"

Stark looked at her, "I can't help what I think of, but I can damn well control what I sell. At least I could until last month." The car turned a slight right down a dark path onto a bridge, farther from the tall skyline of New York City.

Peggy asked curiously, "What happened last month."

Stark looked at Peggy with a fond look in his eyes, "I was in Monaco…loved that place…and my advisor there…." Peggy raised a brow catching his hidden meaning of who he was with. He grew serious again, "When I got back, there was a hole in my vault that went all the way down to the sewer. Someone cleared me out, couple weeks later my bad babies start turning up on the black market."

Peggy asked, "But, why run and not tell the senate the truth and ask for their help?"

Stark shook his head, "Apparently, me finding a giant hole in my vault wasn't clear enough to them." Peggy nodded slightly and said nothing. Stark looked at her seriously, "Really?" he asked, troubled by her silence.

Peggy leaned toward him, "I'm just considering all the angles, and it seems you have a lot of them."

"Now that's the Peggy Carter I need."

"For what?" She asked curiously.

He smiled, "To clear my name."

Peggy shot back in shock, "You can't be serious?"

"I try not to be, but sometimes it just slips out anyway." Peggy didn't break her expression. Stark shook his head, "Oh come on, Peg, you know damn well I didn't do this, which means the SSR is looking for the wrong guy and I need to find the right guy." He sighed, "I need someone in the inside someone I can trust…." He looked at her, "And, Peg, there's no one I trust more than you."

Peggy shook her head, "Howard…helping you prove you're not a traitor will make me a traitor. You do see the irony don't you?"

Stark shook his head, "Come on Peg, I know they aren't using you right over there. You want a mission that matters?" Peggy shook her head. He continued, "This is it. My technology, my inventions in the hands of some nut who wants to be the next Red Skull… you have no idea how bad that could be." Peggy shook her head again and looked down. Stark looked at her seriously, "Peggy…" She slowly looked up at him as he spoke, "If the SSR fails to take me in the time they are allocated…the federal government will send Steve Rogers after me." Peggy looked at him with complete surprise. He kept going, "If you can't help me then I need him to help me. Rogers knows I'm innocent, he needs to know." He shook his head, "I'd prefer if you and him could work this out though…you take the SSR and he does…whatever the hell he does."

The car slowly came to a stop at the dimly lit secluded docks of New York City. As Peggy and Howard got out of the car, the unknown driver went around the car to open the trunk then pulled out a rectangular suitcase by the handle and handed it to Stark. Peggy asked curiously, "And where are
you going?"

Stark started down a path toward a small brown boat tied to a wooden dock, Peggy following close behind. Stark sighed, "Some of my babies are overseas right now. I'm going to pay them a visit." He put his bag in the boat then looked at Peggy, "And some are here in the city. That's where you and Captain Rogers come in." He began to get the boat ready for sea, "Word is...one of the nasty ones is hitting the market in the next day or two."

Peggy asked curiously, "What is it?"

Stark stood up, "Just a piece of paper." Peggy looked confused. He sighed, "my formula for molecular Nitramene. Technically we're not even sure it works." He put his hands in his pockets and nodded, "But, lets face it. I invented it, so it works." He got out of the boat, "If that stuff ever got fabricated..."

Peggy said plainly, "Boom..."

Stark took her hand in his and felt a big ring on her finger, "Did you get engaged and I didn't know about it?" Peggy looked at him sternly. He nodded, "Right sorry. That much the size of your hand can level a city block...and I'm not talking about the short ones," he said referring to the amount of Nitramene the size of Peggy's hand.

Peggy said plainly, "I'm going to regret this aren't I?"

Stark smiled, "Absolutely." He looked up the path to the gentleman standing guard, "When you're not beating him up, that fellow up there is my butler, Edwin Jarvis." He patted her on the shoulder, "I assume Rogers is your fiancé?" Peggy nodded with a slight smile. Stark hugged her, "I owe you and your fiancé one." He then jumped into the boat and untied it from the dock. The engine started and Stark took off to the dark waters.

Peggy shook her head with a smile, "Nice to see you too, Howard." She turned around and went up the path to Stark's butler. She walked past Jarvis and said plainly, "Next time you approach a woman in a dark alley, you might want to introduce yourself first."

Jarvis rubbed his sore jaw and followed her and said in an English accent, "I shall remember that, providing that my concussion isn't too severe. Hopefully I don't need reconstructive surgery." They both stopped next to the car. Jarvis nodded courteously then handed her his card, "Should you ever need me, call anytime before nine."

Peggy asked all the right questions, "What happens at nine?"

Jarvis said plainly, "My wife and I go to bed." He nodded, "Eight o'clock Benny Goodman, nine o'clock bed."

Peggy smiled, "You're new to the espionage world aren't you?"

Jarvis leaned forward, "Far from it. Last summer I caught the cook taking the good spoons." He opened the back seat door for Peggy, "What now Ms. Carter?" Peggy looked at him with confusion, not understanding this man at all.

Peggy opened the passenger door, "Now I go home and get ready for work." She stepped into the car and closed the door. Jarvis didn't know what to do for a moment.
about to unlock it when she heard a very familiar tune playing in the apartment, "It's Been a Long, Long Time." She smiled knowing that Steve was waiting for her. Peggy opened the door and stepped into the bright apartment with the pleasant music filling her ears. She smiled then kicked off her heels and walked deeper into the apartment toward the kitchen. After yet another stressful day at work, coming home to Steve was the highlight of her day. Didn't take long for Peggy to spot Steve in his tight white t-shirt and grey sweatpants drawing on a piece of paper at the table. She smiled lovingly at him and leaned against the wall, "Hello Darling."

Steve recognized that beautiful and sweet English voice and turned around to see Peggy smiling at him. He smiled, "Hey, worked later than me. How was work for you today?"

Peggy smiled and walked toward him, "Got tied up for a bit but overall same old same old." She leaned down to him and kissed him on the lips, "How was yours?" She took a seat to his left.

Steve shrugged, "Got some interesting news today after P.T."

Peggy chuckled, "I got some news too." She nodded, "You first."

Steve put down his pencil, "fair enough." He looked at the newspaper on the table, "You obviously know about Stark not showing up to his hearings."

She nodded, "Yeah, the SSR is being tasked to find him." The couple has no problem sharing things about work, for the most part in accordance to government regulations. But, they trust each other enough that anything secret won't ever make it out between them.

Steve shrugged, "Colonel Phillips unofficially gave me an order to find him and clear his name before the SSR tracks him down." He chuckled, "Since I know you got the briefing, I want to know what the SSR is going to do."

Peggy shook her head, "They want to bring him back and face 'justice'" She sighed, "By any means necessary. They believe he's a traitor. I said my concerns and they obviously didn't listen."

Steve put a hand on her lap, "He's innocent."

Peggy smiled and caressed his hand with hers, "I know darling." She sighed, "I actually met Howard earlier actually."

"Wait really?" he responded shocked.

Peggy nodded, "He's fine, minus the fact I almost killed him and his butler when they surprised me outside the diner."

Steve chuckled, "That's my girl."

She laughed then continued, "He's being framed because a lot of his deadly inventions have been stolen and are being sold on the black market and ending up in enemy hands." She shook her head, "He's leaving the country to track down some of his inventions overseas."

"What can we do?" Steve said seriously.

Peggy smiled at Steve, "He wants us to help clear his name." She chuckled, "…and invite him to our wedding whenever it takes place."

Steve chuckled, "We don't even have a venue." He and Peggy shared an affectionate look. He sighed, "so you're on board with this? Even though the SSR wants to take him in chains. If we're
caught trying to aid him, our life is over before it begins."

Peggy gripped his hand, "You know." Steve raised a brow. She smiled, "I know this amazing man
who started as a nobody, but managed to become everything people only wished they could be. He
may have changed physically, but he never lost his spark to do the right thing." She caressed his
hand, "I think I'll follow what he does."

Steve smiled, "He sounds amazing."

Peggy giggled, "He's also very clueless with women." She leaned forward, "But I love him too
much to care." She leaned all the way forward and planted a long kiss on his lips.

They broke off the kiss for air, Steve smiled at her, "You're so beautiful." She smiled. He laced his
fingers with hers, "You know, those male agent that annoy you, they are just afraid." She held her
warm smile as he continued, "They'll tell you, you're not strong enough, smart enough, or talented
enough to do what you want to do." He gripped her hand, "Here's the thing. You can't ever give in
to their fear, it's always there waiting for you. But, if you give in, it'll stop you from doing anything."
He smiled, "You can do anything, no matter what race, sex, or creed. Just remember that when
someone says you're not capable of something, or don't deserve something, or don't belong
somewhere." He smiled, "Everyone is capable of greatness, including you, and the skinny me from
way back when."

Peggy leaned forward again and kissed him, "you sure got a way with words, darling." Steve smiled.
She smiled, "It would be hundred times harder to live without you, Steve."

"I'm sure, you'd figure it out without me."

Peggy kissed him again, "Wouldn't want to." They shared a look for a moment, letting a comfortable
silence fall between them. She chuckled, "By the way, Stark leant us the use of his butler."

Steve looked at her funny, "His butler?"

Peggy nodded, "A loyal and naïve man who'll help us prove Stark's innocence." She let go of his
hand and stood up slowly.

Steve asked curiously, "How does he..." then looked at Peggy.

Peggy started to unbutton her light blue business blouse slowly and smiled, "It's late, darling. Let's go
to bed."

Steve smiled, "right after you." Peggy swayed her hips to the bedroom as she finished unbuttoning
her blouse. She thentook it off, exposing her back and the back of her bra.

She held the blouse in her hand then turned back at Steve with a happy smile, "You coming?"

Steve smiled then slowly got up and walked to the bedroom, leaving his drawing of the Howling
Commandos and Peggy on the table.

Morning, SSR New York City

Peggy stepped into the office slowly and cautiously as she fiddled with her engagement ring with her
thumb nervously. She wished she could've talked to Steve in the morning but he left before she was
fully awake, only planting a kiss on her cheek and saying "I love you" before she had a chance to
wake up. She walked to her desk and saw Agent Sousa sitting at his desk looking over papers with
three photos next to him of Stark and a woman on a boat. Peggy stopped and looked over Sousa's shoulder, "You know you are expected to go home at night." She realized that he didn't go home by just looking at him.

Sousa didn't turn around and continued to look through his papers, "Most fugitive cases are solved in the first 72 hours." He looked at her briefly then grabbed a cup of coffee that was in front of him, "If Stark is sailing off into the sunset." He slammed his desk, "And this is where it starts." He smiled and took a sip of his coffee then asked curiously, "How are you and Captain Rogers doing?"

Peggy looked at the pictures in front of her, "He must've really liked that girl…"

Sousa choked on his coffee, "What? Captain Rogers left you for another woman?" He managed to express in shock.

Peggy laughed and shook her head, "No. I mean Stark. There's no other reason why he'd get in a boat." Sousa relaxed and nodded as he understood who he was talking about. She put a finger on one of the pictures, "Sorry, Daniel, but Stark hates water, he can't even swim."

Sousa leaned forward and placed his coffee on the table, "Really? How, how do you…"

Peggy said quickly, "He tried kissing me on VE day when I was still mourning Steve. I had to push him into the Thames to give myself space." She looked at him, "We had to get frogmen to fish him out." Sousa sat back on his chair and started to think deeper into the case. A handful of agents walked behind them quickly toward the briefing room. Peggy looked over at the briefing room, "Hm. Something's up."

Sousa leaned back on his chair and looked at briefing room and saw Thompson and other agents discussing something in the briefing room. He sighed, "Thompson is working on his next medal. Trying to be a superstar or something." He looked at Peggy, "Got word of a fence trying to sell one of Stark's inventions." He brought the cup of coffee to his mouth, "Club owner named Spider Raymond."

Peggy asked curiously, "Where's it happening."

Sousa immediately said plainly, "Need to know only." He nodded, "Give you a warm feeling doesn't it."

Peggy grabbed the cup from his hand, "Hey looks like you need a refill." She took off down the office.

Sousa sat there with his hand still formed like he was holding a cup, "I was…actually still drinking that." He sighed, "…Yeah. How does Captain America live with her. Guess that's why he's Captain America and I'm a lowly field agent."

Peggy walked into the briefing room with a tray of coffee cups and a coffee kettle while Thompson was giving a briefing on his raid to two agents and Dooley. She carefully placed the tray on the table and was able to hear the important details of the raid and got a good look of the face of the man they are looking for. She essentially was spying in her own spy agency. Dooley looked at her sternly, "Agent Carter, it's field agents only."

Thompson stuck his hands in his pockets and chuckled, "It's fine sir she might even learn something."

Peggy said plainly, "I already have."
Dooley sighed, "What are you really doing here Carter."

"I was wondering if I may take a sick day."

Dooley chuckled, "Oh. Feeling a headache? Need Captain America to carry you home." The agents chuckled.

Peggy nodded, "Amongst other things." She shrugged, "lady things."

Dooley smiled a half smile, "Oh geez." The other agents in the room rolled their eyes. Dooley continued, "Yes go out go shopping or something, do whatever makes you feel better. Go do the do with Captain America or something."

Peggy fiddled with her engagement ring, "Thank you for your understanding, sir." She turned and left the room and said, "Enjoy your coffee." The agents just looked at each other and shook their heads.

Peggy strolled to her desk and sat down. Sousa turned around from his desk and asked, "What did you find out? I saw you in there with them."

Peggy picked up the phone, "Heard enough." She got a hold of Rose the telephone operator in the building, "Hi, Rose. Can you get me a line to Camp Lehigh, I need to talk to Captain Rogers."

Peggy nodded, "Yes, I'll hold Rose." Sousa just looked at her curiously. After a few moments Steve got to the phone on base. Peggy greeted, "Hi, darling," she said in a sweet tone to her fiancé. Sousa tilted his head as he tried to hear what she was saying. She smiled, "No everything's fine. In fact I got a lead, I'm going to follow it up tonight, but it requires me going under cover as a blonde." She laughed at his response, "Don't get used to it, darling I like being a brunette." She nodded with a smile again, "I'll be careful. I'll see you tonight, I love you. Okay bye-bye" She hung up the phone, then turned her chair around to face Sousa, "You know it's not polite to eavesdrop on a conversation."

Sousa genuinely didn't hear anything other than Peggy's sweet greeting to her fiancé. He shrugged, "Couldn't help it. What were you calling your fiancé for?"

Peggy stood up, "I'm taking the day off." She grabbed her things and started to leave, "See you tomorrow, Daniel." She walked off toward the elevator. Sousa shook his head not knowing what happened.

END OF PART 1

Update Dec 31,2018

Edited wording and spelling
Previously on "You Won't Be Alone", Stark has been undergoing a series of trials for his alleged weapon sales to enemies of the United States. But he quickly disappeared during Congress' investigation causing the government to task the newly independent SSR to go after him. Additionally, if the SSR fails to deliver Stark, Congress will be forced to send Captain America after him. While the rest of the SSR hunts for Stark, Peggy and Captain Rogers together are aided by Stark's butler, Edwin Jarvis, to try and secretly clear the Howard Stark name, and stop the sale of a particularly bad weapon. The trio all the while risk being labeled as potential traitors and accomplices of a false criminal. At the same time Peggy and Captain Rogers hide their secret engagement from the world and the SSR.

So far Peggy has found out that the cocky and arrogant Agent Jack Thompson is following a lead on a club called La Martinique, operated and owned by Spider Raymond…

La Martinique, 9:00 PM New York City, New York

Another busy night in the city that never sleeps and a quite busy night for one Agent Margaret "Peggy" Carter as she approached the high-end club called La Martinique. She was going into the club disguised as a blonde with an excessive amount of makeup and fancy earrings. Her disguise is complete with a stunning gold double strap off-the-shoulder form-fitting dress and a large white purse that held her pistol. Her undercover task was to follow the lead on the club owner named Spider Raymond and to extract any information he knows about Stark and his weapon called Nitramene.

As she neared the club, she joined hundreds of fancily dressed guests and patrons on their way inside. Peggy always did look her best, but she didn't look like this for personal reasons but rather to hide her identity and set up a honey trap for Raymond. As she entered through the doors, Peggy disappeared into the crowd and made her way deeper into the club with a confident gait, accenting the sway in her hips.

The central room of the club had a stage for the "big band" to play, large dance floor in front of the stage, circular dining tables with small individual lamps on each table, and a large stairway at the left end of the stage guarded by a man in a suit that lead to a private floor. The central room held hundreds of people eating, drinking, dancing, and smoking in the club as the band played its swingy tunes. All the noise and dancing will make good natural distractions for Peggy to get a clear path to Spider Raymond.

Peggy stepped further into the club walking confidently and yet carefully through the crowds of people who were laughing and dancing around the club floor. As she walked slowly through the
busy club she spotted two shady individuals in striped suits walk down the stairs and cut through the club toward the exit. Peggy observed them while blending into the crowd, and noticed the two men were tall and had foreboding looks on their faces as they left the club. Peggy continued to watch them until she heard a man behind her trying to be charming.

"You look like a lady looking to dance," the man said trying to be suave. Peggy turned around and saw a middle aged man with a thinning hair line, dark suit, neutral tie, and a drink in hand. He took a sip and smiled slyly at her.

Peggy quickly reacted, "I'm afraid I will only step on your toes," she said, giving a fake apologetic smile at him. She turned back around and rolled her eyes under her blonde wig and sighed. But, she did chuckle within herself for sounding like Steve when he said he couldn't dance.

The man scanned her body up and down, liking what he sees, and decided to press his luck, "I can teach you. It will be fun." He smiled at her.

Peggy sighed and looked back at him, "No. I'm okay." She quickly became impatient and frustrated. Last thing she needs right now is a drunk mid aged male ogling over her when she's on a time crunch.

The man grabbed her arm, more firmly than she would've liked, "Come on…"

Peggy quickly moved away from him and looked at him coldly, "I said no," she said in a chilling voice.

The man conceded defeat and nodded, "Fine. I guess some other time." He walked away, but not without checking her out for the last time. Peggy sighed and rolled her eyes again.

She quickly got back to work trying to find the club owner Spider Raymond, who could be anywhere in the club including the private second floor. Peggy figured the two shady individuals who came down the stairs earlier have met with him just by judging on the way they were acting. She stepped lightly through the crowd toward the stairs when she suddenly spotted Spider Raymond appear at the balcony on the second floor. He was a tall skinny African American man wearing a white tuxedo coat, black bow tie, black dress pants, and a fancy watch. He had the look of seriousness on his face as he scanned his club and his patrons. Peggy stopped in her tracks and watched Spider Raymond at the balcony, quickly thinking how to get a face-to-face with him.

Glancing over to the stairs, Peggy saw a large burly bodyguard in a nice suit at the foot of the stairs. She watched how the guard turned away a handful of guests who were also probably looking for Raymond. Peggy smiled slightly to herself and made her way to the stairs, fully knowing how to handle this situation.

Peggy accented the sway in her hips as she weaved in and out of couples toward the stairs, the bodyguard already had his eyes locked on her even before she stopped in front of him. Peggy leaned on one hip as she toyed with a necklace on her collar bone, attracting the guard's eyes to her chest, she smiled, "Hi, I'm looking for Mr. Raymond, I have something I like to sell."

The guard scanned her body up and down for a moment and gave a small smile, "First door on the right."

Peggy gave a big smile, "Thanks, sugar." She lifted her dress a little to walk up the stairs and walked passed him as he watched and ogled at her. She stepped lightly up the stairs, continuing to sway her hips, and made her way to the second floor. The guard smiled at the image of Peggy's rear and continued with his duties.
As Peggy got to the second floor, she stopped by a mirror and took out a gold lipstick case from her white purse that had "102 sweet dreams" engraved on it. She looked in the mirror and applied more lipstick then fixed her blonde wig, fully knowing that the way she looks will be the first thing Spider Raymond will see and judge first. She put her lipstick away then quietly checked her sidearm in her purse before turning around and walking to the double white doors that lead to Raymond's private room.

Peggy opened the door and slowly revealed herself to Spider Raymond who was sitting at his large desk. She acted shy and said with a hint of sweetness in her voice, "Mr. Raymond, is this a bad time?"

Spider Raymond scanned her body up and down and liked what he saw. "We'll only know when it's over," he said confidently and with a large grin. He waved her in, "Bring the rest of you in here."

Peggy smiled sweetly and stepped all the way into the room; her form-fitting dress caught his attention quickly.

Peggy smiled mock nervously, "Hope you don't find me forward. I haven't met anyone…as high caliber as you," she said with sweetness in her voice.

Raymond put a few papers away in his desk and smiled at her happily, "Well, I'm not the judgmental type." He signaled her to take a seat.

She smiled sweetly and swayed her hips as she walked to her right, passing by the assistant desk near the door and placed her purse on the couch nearest the wall. After putting her bag down, she closed the shutter doors that lead to the balcony so that they could have complete privacy. She smiled sweetly, "I know you have a…certain chemical formula in your possession."

Raymond didn't like where this going and turned sour. He stood up and pointed to the door, "Miss, I got a lot of things to do. You need to…"

Peggy walked forward to his desk with a sweet smile, "It's okay, let's make this a game." She put her hands on his desk and leaned forward, "I think you might like games, and you don't have to tell me anything." Raymond eased as he looked all over her. Peggy took a step around his desk causing him to sit back down on his chair. She leaned on his desk and said with a seductive tone, "You just have to look right here."

Peggy's beauty and sweet voice officially entranced Raymond. She smiled and said softly, "I don't care where you got it. The card is on the table, and you are a proud owner of a certain chemical formula, which is just a little piece of paper right?" He didn't say a word. She stood up with a big smile then took a seat on his lap, and said with a very seductive tone, "I have a few friends who will be very interested in buying that formula." She then put her hands on his shoulders and started to toy with his hair, "Now I heard Spider Raymond doesn't hold onto anything for long, so that means he already has a buyer." She then got closer to him, "I think…I can offer you more. Way more," Peggy said seductively. She continued to toy with him with her seductive voice, "Is it here? Do you want me to search you?"

Raymond looked at her chest then her eyes, "Sweetheart I don't have it on me." He laughed and started to rock his chair. She went with it, but then suddenly he grabbed her and kissed her.

There was a knock on the door then one of Raymond's men came in, "Hey boss there's a guy down..." He paused when he suddenly saw his boss making out with a blonde woman. The man nodded, "Okay. I will come by later," he said, closing the door.

Peggy released Raymond's unconscious form and pushed him back onto the seat. She sighed
knowing that her lipstick was the cause for him to be asleep. Her lipstick, laced with a chemical agent I temporarily puts to sleep the target when kissed on the lips. Everyone is different, so the unconscious period is dependent on the target.

Peggy sighed and shook her head, "That was premature." That didn't go as she planned. Regardless, she now has the freedom to go about as she pleases in his office. She looked around the office and spotted Raymond's safe. She quickly ran over to it and kneeled, taking off her watch and removing the timepiece from the wrist band. She placed the magnetic piece next to the combination lock and pressed the crown of the watch, which mechanically cracked the safe. As Peggy quickly cracked open the safe, she was surprised by a bright gold glow coming from within it. As she fully opened the safe, she saw where the light was coming originating. The glowing came from a modified clear shell Mk II pineapple hand grenade that had a glowing gold core within it.

Peggy was shocked as she picked one up, "Crikey O'Reilly," she said in surprise in what she was holding. She got up and quickly got to the phone to call Jarvis.

Jarvis was cooking in his small home when he heard the phone ring. He calmly put his things down then left the kitchen and quickly walked over to the living room where the phone located next to a radio that was playing old music.

"Jarvis residence," Jarvis said into the phone.

Peggy spoke urgently, "They weaponized it."

"Ms. Carter?" Jarvis responded in surprise.

Peggy shook her head, "Do you know anyone else who is handling high explosives at this time of night."

Jarvis nodded, "Well, your fiancé I presume. He is in the army and quite…"

Peggy sighed and spoke sternly, "Mr. Jarvis." She shook her head, Steve would probably be home right now.

Jarvis nodded, "Sorry." He then checked his watch, "It's also that I promised my wife a soufflé, and if I don't get it in the oven by…"

Peggy shook her head and thought how he got into this mess and how she got into that same mess. She became frustrated, "Mr. Jarvis, what was once a theory is now a bomb. But, apologies to your wife, but dinner has to wait."

Jarvis nodded, "No, you're quite right. Mr. Stark left a note, hold the line." He put the phone down next to the radio.

Peggy stood and had a confused look on her face as she listened to some really bad old timey music. She shook her head in disbelief.

Jarvis returned with glasses on and picked up the phone again and read from a file he obtained from Stark, "Is the Nitramene by any chance glowing?"

Peggy nodded, "Yes." As she picked up the modified Mk II Nitramene hand grenade.

Jarvis sighed, "Well that's not ideal. That gold orange glow will indicate that the Nitramene has reached its peak and should be handled with caution. Cracking its shell will result in an implosion
with a blast radius of... Oh... 500 yards." He nodded, "I think we might need to call Captain America and his fellows don't you think?"

Peggy sighed as she handled the dangerous hand grenade, "We will."

Jarvis began reading again, "Render it inert with a solution of sodium hydrogen carbonate and acetate." He sighed, "Where you'll find that at this time of night I have no idea."

"Leave that to me." She said confidently.

Jarvis continued, "There is one last note, avoid touching the core to the containment ring. Touching the core will result in..."

"Death?" As she figured it to be.

Jarvis put down the file, "I was going to say core overload, but yes... that's more precise."

Peggy heard in the background of the phone call a woman opening the door and calling out to Jarvis, "Edwin! I'm home!"

Jarvis whispered into the phone sternly, "Now if that would be all."

Peggy replied with the same amount of force, "Mr. Jarvis, I hope you know that this job takes a little out of your off hours."

Jarvis replied, "So does my wife, Ms. Carter. Good night." He hung up the phone.

Peggy heard the click of the line and she shook her head and put the phone down. She quickly put the grenade in her purse and made a break for the door when suddenly the door opened revealing a tall and buff bodyguard looking sternly and coldly at her.

The man instantly saw his boss unconscious on his seat, "Boss?" When his boss didn't reply, the bodyguard instinctively reached for his weapon. Peggy reacted quickly and grabbed a stapler off the assistant desk next to the door and clocked the guard in the jaw then struck him again the other way. She broke open the stapler then slammed it against his forehead, leaving a staple in between his eyes. Then in a second, the guard fell back unconscious. Without pause, Peggy quickly dragged the man into the office then left closing the doors behind her. She carefully walked down the stairs passing a man with a mustache and smooth hair that wore a green suit, and green tie.

As she got to the club level, she spotted Agent Thompson roaming around the dance floor. Peggy needed to avoid being seen by him, but as she made her way to the dance floor, she spotted Agent Krzeminski mingling in the crowd. Peggy instantly blended within the crowd and recognized in the sea of people the poor excuse of a gentleman who asked her for a dance earlier.

Peggy quickly walked toward him and grabbed his hand and brought him to the dance floor, "Fancy for a dance?"

The man happily said, "So glad you changed your mind!" He said with a goofy grin.

Peggy shrugged, "What can I say, it's every woman's right."

She saw Agent Thompson looking her direction, she looked at her dancing partner, "Dip me."

The man looked at her confused, "What?"

Peggy put her arm around him and rolled back, narrowly avoiding Thompson's prying eyes. When
she spotted Thompson leaving, she stood back up and looked at her dance partner and smiled, "Thanks doll, we should do this again sometime." Peggy then quickly left for the kitchen doors as the man she was with looked shocked and amused.

He smiled at her as she left, "I think I'm in love…"

Peggy quickly exited the club and hopped into an awaiting taxi outside to go home. As the cab quickly took off down the busy streets of New York City, Peggy sighed after such an annoying and busy day. She couldn't wait to be back home.

Carter/Rogers Apartment

It was around 11 PM, when Peggy entered their dark apartment and figured that Steve was probably asleep. She tiredly smiled and carried her purse to their bedroom, passing Steve's shield leaning against the wall on the way. As she quietly opened the bedroom door, she saw Steve sleeping soundly on his side of the bed with no shirt on. Peggy smiled and tried to silently walk into the room without waking her fiancé up.

Steve heard faint footsteps in the bedroom which woke him up. He opened his eyes and gazed over at the a blonde woman at the door, "Peggy? Is that you?" He sat up and rubbed his eyes not believing what he was seeing.

Peggy chuckled, "Hi darling." She nodded, "Yes it's me, and yes I'm a blonde right now."

He was fully awake now, "Wow…you look…"

Peggy looked down at her dress, "Ridiculous?" She smiled.

Steve shook his head, "No. Incredible. Though I prefer you as a brunette."

Peggy blushed for a moment. Only Captain America could make her act like that, and she wasn't complaining. She quickly removed the wig and ruffled her brown hair, "Don't get used to it, Steve." She laughed.

Steve asked curiously, "Find anything good?"

Peggy nodded, "yes I did in fact. I'll show you in a second. After I get changed."

Steve flipped the covers off of him revealing his grey sweats, "You hungry? I can cook up something quick for you."

Peggy nodded, "That'll be lovely." She started to make her way to their bathroom when Steve was about to head out to the kitchen. Peggy then suddenly rushed back to Steve, "Wait, wait," she quickly said. Steve looked at her confused. She grabbed him and brought his lips to hers for a nice passionate kiss. She released him and smiled, "Wanted to do that all day."

Steve laughed, "Alright, pretty lady, I'm going to cook up some dinner for you." Peggy smiled. Boy, was she lucky to have him, and boy was he lucky to have her.

Peggy disappeared into the bathroom to quickly get changed over. She opened her purse and stared at the glowing hand grenade. Peggy knew she should show Steve, but something this dangerous was making her nervous. Taking the initiative to disarm the glowing hand grenade, she decided to tell Steve about it later instead of showing him. Hopefully she wouldn't blow up their dream while doing this. She quickly left the bathroom for the kitchen to grab a bowl and a handful of items to make the
Nitramene grenade inert.

She still was still wearing her gold dress when she entered the kitchen where Steve was busy getting started to cook her food. He turned and looked at her, "Peggy? Thought you were trying to get changed."

Peggy smiled nervously, "I am. Just playing with something dangerous." She walked past him and grabbed a bowl and a bunch of items from the cupboards.

Steve looked at her curiously, "Uh."

Peggy put all the items in the bowl and smiled, "I'll tell you in a second, darling. Kind of dangerous." She walked up and kissed his cheek gently then left for their bedroom again.

Steve shrugged, "Alright." Then laughed to himself.

In the bathroom, Peggy quickly mixed the everyday items into a bowl together in the sink. The pan started to fizz as the chemicals in each of the products began to mix. She got down onto her knees and grabbed a white towel that was hanging on the side of the bathtub and folded it multiple times to form a sort of pillow. She then took her purse and gently removed the glowing hand grenade, and gently placed it on the folded towel. Looking back at the mixture bowl, she dumped out her perfume and then carefully poured the solution into the perfume vial in its place. Now was the particularly risky part, taking apart the grenade and making the weapon inert, but she didn't exactly know how to, if possible, to take apart a grenade. She might need Steve's help after all but then decided to give it a try anyway. She carefully tried twisting the fuse off, but that was with no luck. She then used a little more force the next time and popped the fuse out. The grenade was modified after all, so it didn't surprise her as much that she could do it with her fingers.

Peggy held onto the body of the grenade as she carefully removed the fuse and the core. The thin glowing core was giving the gold-orange hue through the body. As she removed the center, it started to produce smoke and some sort of gas in the air. She put down the body and quickly picked up her chemical solution perfume bottle and started to spray the glowing core causing it to spark. Peggy flinched as more sparks continued to fly from the brightening center while she continued to spray with her perfume bottle. She continued to spray, trying to remain calm as more smoke and gas billowed into the air. Suddenly there was a loud pop causing her to flinch but saw the core started to darken then went utterly black which symbolized that the weapon is now inert.

She leaned back onto the back of her heels and let out a sigh of relief. Peggy shook her head and got up to open the bathroom window to let out, what she assumed, is toxic gas. She let out another sigh of relief as she ruffled her hair again. As Peggy took a step forward to the mess she made, she suddenly heard something smash and break in the kitchen.

Peggy called out concerned, "Darling?" She heard another loud noise, "Steve?" She called.

Then suddenly she heard Steve through the walls yell followed by a loud thud against the wall. Peggy went into her purse and grabbed her pistol and ran out of the bathroom. When she got through the bedroom door she saw part of their apartment destroyed, furniture was broken, the kitchen was a mess, and everything looked like it was tossed through a blender. Peggy couldn't see Steve from where Peggy was standing but suddenly saw a man in a green suit and a strange Y-shaped incision on his throat, sail through the air upside down, and hit the top of the counter then hit the fridge. She stepped forward with her weapon drawn at the kitchen then looked over her shoulder and saw Steve holding onto his shield and was bleeding from his right arm and forehead.
Peggy asked concerned, "Darling are you alright?"

Steve was about to answer when he saw the assailant stand up with his weapon trained on Peggy. Steve lunged forward and yelled, "Peggy!" He wrapped Peggy in his arms, using his body and shield to protect them as the assailant fired a shot.

The silenced shot bounced off the shield, Steve pushed Peggy behind him then flung his shield with such ferocity that it impaled their refrigerator. It was luck that the man dodged that throw. The man grabbed a knife from their kitchen and charged the couple. Peggy quickly drew her weapon, but Steve lunged forward, dodging the knife thrust from the assailant, grabbing the man's collar and belt buckle, and threw him clear through the living room window.

The couple looked at each other for a moment then rushed to the broken window to see the body. They peered over the side and saw no body, just broken glass, and a broken window frame. Peggy looked at Steve and gasped, "You scared me" Steve hugged her tightly as he looked at the broken glass three floors down. "What happened?"

Steve kissed the top of her head. "I don't know. I'm sorry about the mess."

Peggy leaned back and looked at him, "Don't worry about it. That's not important now." Steve smiled. She started to focus on the blood on his head then saw the blood on his right arm, "Darling, you're bleeding all over."

Steve nodded, "Yeah. That guy got the drop on me, but I'll be fine."

Peggy shook her head, "Let me get dressed and I'll patch you up okay?" Steve nodded. She kissed his lips for a moment before quickly heading back to their room to change.

Steve turned and walked to the flipped kitchen table and put it back up right then stood the chairs back up around it. He sat down at the head of the table and rested his bloodied arm on it. It looked a lot worse than he felt, granted he's a super soldier, probably wasn't as bad as Peggy thought, but he didn't argue. With his non-bloodied hand, he wiped his forehead and discovered more blood on his head. Steve sighed and nodded, that wound was probably bad, still didn't feel it as much. After a moment of quiet, Steve looked over his shoulder and saw Peggy walking out in a light blue robe, he smiled warmly at her, but before she could say anything, there was a loud knock at the front door.

Steve smiled at Peggy, "I'll get it." Peggy nodded and smiled a little nervously, then crossed her arms over her chest.

Steve opened the door and saw a pair of police officers, and the other apartment residents looking curiously at him in the hallway. The lead officer, a little older gentlemen in his late thirties spoke curiously, "Captain America? I mean Captain Rogers…you live here?"

Steve smiled and nodded, "Yes I do, officer."

The lead officer looked at him with concern and curiosity as he looked at the blood all over Captain America, "Uh, you okay there, sir?" He cleared his throat, "There was a noise complaint here."

Steve chuckled, "Yeah, just had an unwanted visitor."

The officer nodded, "what happened?"

"A man wearing a green suit, green tie, had a thin mustache, looked a little aged, and slick back hair broke into our apartment and tried killing me and my fiancé." Steve closed his eyes, he couldn't believe he just dropped their biggest secret just like that. The lead cop signaled his younger partner to
write everything down. The other residents of varying ages, all looked at each other shocked when they heard Captain America tell the police the report.

The lead police officer nodded, "Is your fiancé here? May I speak with her too?"

Steve sighed to himself regretting what he said on accident. He turned around and looked at Peggy with more fear in his eyes than the time he zip lined onto that speeding train with the commandos. "Peggy, the police want to speak with you."

Peggy nodded and looked at Steve's nervous grin as she walked to the door with her arms still crossed. Quite honestly, last time she saw him this nervous is when he said "I love you" to her. She reached the door and spoke in calmly, "Yes?"

The lead cop nodded, "We need both of your statements for the report. Need your name, contact information, and work so we can find you if we discover anything about this case and the… person who attempted to murder you."

Peggy nodded and didn't hesitate, "Margaret Carter, I work for the New York Bell phone company." She gave their telephone number then nodded again, "Same thing my fiancé told you. A man in a green suit and tie tried killing us…He also had a strange Y-shaped scar on his throat."

The second police officer nodded at Steve after he wrote everything down, "Must've been someone who hated your guts from the war."

Steve gave a half smile, "No doubt."

The lead officer tipped his cover to the couple and smiled, "Thank you for the information sir, ma'am. Need anything from us? Ambulance or…"

Steve shook his head, "we got it, thanks." The officers nodded then turned and walked away. When they were clear Steve looked at Peggy with a frightened grin and silently apologized to her. He turned and went back into their apartment to sit down at the table. Peggy simply smiled and shook her head. She wasn't mad at him.

A young neighbor and friend of Peggy's named Colleen O'Brien came up to her and gasped, "Oh my god, Peggy!"

Peggy looked at her curiously with a small smile, "What?"

Colleen just shook her head, "I don't know whether or not to be shocked that someone tried to kill you and Captain America or shocked that you're ENGAGED to Captain America." All the neighbors, the women in particular young and old, nodded in agreement.

Peggy turned to her other neighbors, "Thank you for your concern everyone. May I have some privacy with my friend for a moment?" Everyone nodded politely then disappeared in their apartments.

Colleen smiled happily, "I knew you and him will make it happen!" She hugged Peggy, "You're quite the catch. He's lucky to have you." She released her and chuckled, "I love how they call you the 'Mystery Brunette' in the papers." She said excitedly. She laughed again, "For reporters they aren't real good at reporting."

Peggy nodded, "It's because they asked Steve who I was, but he never answers and pushes them away." She leaned forward and whispered, "He hates the press and hates being in front of photographers." Colleen laughed loudly. Peggy smiled, "Sorry I didn't tell you earlier, we were
trying to keep it a secret from the press and such. We knew it wouldn't last long, but we enjoyed our privacy."

Colleen waved dismissively, "No worries. I would've done the same thing. Captain Rogers is a celebrity."

Peggy nodded, "Well I have to take care of his arm. I'll see you later."

Colleen waved, "Say hi for me."

Peggy locked their door and smiled as she walked into the kitchen as she fixed her robe. She stopped and again when she saw Steve trying to patch up his bloodied arm by himself. He was trying to wrap a bandage around his arm with his teeth and free hand. Peggy rushed by his side and said softly, "Darling, let me help you."

Steve nodded, "Thanks." He looked down.

Peggy smiled lovingly at him, "Darling what's wrong."

He shook his head, "I'm sorry."

"For what?" She said as she was about to finish wrapping his arm. She stopped then started to unravel the bandage, "need to clean the blood off you."

Steve sighed, "Accidentally telling everyone out there that we're engaged."

Peggy laughed as she stood up to get a wet towel. Once she got the wet towel from the sink she started to gently clean his arm, "Darling, they would find out eventually. You're a huge public figure, it's almost impossible to keep something like this a secret." She kissed his cheek.

Steve rubbed his temple, "I just don't want the press to blow it up, and ruin your job because you're marrying me…"

Peggy smiled, "Darling, let me handle the SSR." She finished cleaning the blood on his arm then brought him to look at her as she cleaned the wound on his forehead, "Darling, I'm marrying you because I love you, and I don't need the SSR's permission to marry you or to love you." She smiled warmly, "If the SSR doesn't like it, they can go to hell. I need you." They both chuckled. Steve gently touched her cheek. Peggy smiled and put the towel down then touched his hand on her cheek, "Plus I'm sure I can balance being married to you and being an agent."

Steve smiled, "I know you could." He let go of her cheek, "I love you."

Peggy leaned forward and kissed Steve gently then said, "I love you too" She started to finish her work on his arm.

Steve chuckled, "It was a graze, didn't actually go through."

Peggy smiled, "I'm glad."

Steve spoke confidently, "So…what was so important that you found to bring this guy to kill you. Because there's no other explanation." She leaned back and thought for a moment. He smiled, "He wasn't looking for me. He was looking for you, he was actually surprised to see me when he came through that door." He looked out the window, "Because that guy had skills. He knew how to fight, he was trained killer…"
Peggy nodded and started to list off what she found out.

Peggy woke up feeling guilty for the chaos that ensued last night and was beating herself up for what could've happened. She believed she was careless during her little escapade to La Martinique which resulted in the situation last night. Peggy walked out of the bedroom around 8 AM wearing a pink button-up blouse, dark blue business skirt, and dark blue high heels. The apartment was in shambles still, but there was nothing they could do about it. She was fully aware that Steve already left for work as she approached the kitchen. On the kitchen table, Peggy saw a cup with a tea bag in place and a kettle of still hot water on the stove waiting for her. A small smile crept on her face from the simple gesture Steve left behind but looked a little sad from last night.

After enjoying her tea, she checked her watch and decided now was the best time to meet Jarvis at the L&L Automat.

**L&L Automat**

Peggy sat at a booth drinking another cup of tea, and sitting directly behind her, back-to-back, was Jarvis also drinking tea at his booth. Peggy spoke softly in a sad tone, "A man came into the apartment looking for me, but instead encountered Steve..."

Jarvis nodded, "I heard the news. Also heard that you're engagement has been made public." He took a sip of his tea, "Though the news of the attempted murder and your engagement isn't wide spread quite yet."

Peggy smiled briefly, "That's good."

Jarvis said with a cheeky tone, "I imagine that man who broke in is probably breathing through a straw after his brush with Captain Rogers."

Peggy shook her head and spoke softly, "We don't know where he is. Steve through him out the window."

Jarvis almost choked on his tea, "Oh my goodness. What floor were you on?"

"Third." She shook her head, "He just took off, we don't know where he is, who he is, or who's he with."

Jarvis raised an eyebrow, "I must say, Captain Rogers is quite defensive over you."

Peggy made a slight smile and took a sip of her tea. She sighed and spoke in a sad tone, "You know when I saw Howard, I was damn happy to see him. But, I've been wallowing since the war wondering why no one will give me a shot. Steve believed in me even before he was even a super soldier, and I have nothing to show for it." She sighed, "So I grabbed the chance when Howard asked me to help him... and if Steve was just a tiny bit slower...I would've lost him again. I could've mocked this whole thing up... this was too close" She looked down disappointed in herself.

Jarvis nodded, "But you didn't. You got the Nitramene and you rendered it inert. You. Not Captain Rogers or any other agent in the SSR." He looked over his shoulder slightly, "Ms. Carter...I read your war record...and I may not know Captain Rogers as well as I'd like, but one thing I can say is that his faith in you is well placed. You are a credit to your profession, and if the men in your office can't see that then they're fools. Captain Rogers sees it...I see it." He nodded again, "You were doing something good and both of us agree that you accomplished it."

Peggy nodded, "Okay..." She took a deep breath, "where does your wife think you are right now?"
Before Jarvis sipped his tea he answered, "One of Stark's...admirers refused to vacate his penthouse. I am presently supervising her extraction." He took a sip of his tea.

Peggy smiled, "I imagine that's quite believable."

Jarvis coughed, "You have no idea."

Peggy looked down into her purse and saw the inert modified Mk II pineapple Nitramene grenade sitting next to her make up kit. She shook her head, "We need to know where this came from, and I can't exactly walk this into SSR headquarters and neither can Steve."

Jarvis looked over his shoulder and whispered, "I may know a gentlemen."

The duo decided to leave the diner in intervals after they paid their bills. Jarvis calmly went first so he could fetch the car that he parked around the corner. After waiting for a few minutes to put distance between her and Jarvis, Peggy stepped out of her booth and walked out of the restaurant, and immediately spotted Jarvis pulling up at the curb just in front of the restaurant. She quickly got to his car and jumped into the front seat. Jarvis was still getting used to the idea of someone sitting up front with him when he's working since he's usually a chauffeur for Howard's guests.

**Stark Industries Building**

The duo hastily made it into the Stark Industries building just outside the main industrial area of New York City. Jarvis was able to get Peggy in through the "secret" way so they could enter the facility without drawing too much-unwanted attention. After walking through the building, the duo met up with the man they needed to see, Doctor Anton Vanko, in one of the labs.

Doctor Ivan Vanko, a tall brown haired Russian with a pencil mustache, dressed in an all-white lab coat, took samples from the core of the grenade that Peggy rendered inert and studied it for a moment under a microscope. Jarvis was looking over the doctor's shoulder as Peggy stood behind him, waiting patiently. Jarvis spoke up curiously, "Doctor, what do we have here?"

The doctor stood up and looked at both of them, "A rather clever and highly unstable carbon alloy." He jotted down a few notes in his notebook.

Peggy nodded then walked around the lab table, opening up her purse, and took out a large folded map, "So it couldn't have come from very far then." She unfolded the map on another lab table in front of them.

The doctor nodded and walked around his lab table to join Peggy with the map. Jarvis too followed intently. The doctor spoke again, "Before the war there were only three refineries capable of something like this." Peggy listened as she searched through the map. The doctor started to list off the possibilities, "The Navy tore down Franklin Chemical, and Eaglestar converted to diesel, so that only leaves—"

"Roxxon," Peggy said, tapping her finger on the Roxxon Refinery symbol on the map.

Doctor Vanko nodded, "Right."

Peggy continued to tap her finger, "That refinery has to be at least 200 acres. That will take weeks to search."

Jarvis eyed the Nitramene cautiously. "Um, Doctor please tell me that isn't still...um...volatile?"
Doctor shook his head, "No. No. Volatile no, active… oh yes." He nodded, "The Nitramene still emits low levels of vita radiation."

"Vita rays!" Peggy expressed in surprise.

The doctor nodded, "Well yes. We occasionally use them on our experiments to stabilize certain things. Captain Rogers was induced with…"

"I know what they do." Peggy quickly folded up her map and put it in her purse. Jarvis just nodded intently with his hands in his pockets. She turned to Jarvis, "Let's go Mister Jarvis, I need to get back to the office."

Jarvis nodded, "Yes of course."

Peggy smiled at the doctor, "Thank you doctor." Doctor Vanko nodded with a smile as she left.

SSR New York City Branch "New York Bell Co."

Peggy quickly greeted Rose on the main level and checked in with her superiors before she secretly peeled off and got to work on her lead. Of course, while Peggy quietly worked, Agent Thompson and his team of agents were working on their lead to find Stark. Unfortunately, it was a race against time for Peggy. She had to clear Stark's name before Thompson, and the rest of the SSR could find him and arrest him.

Peggy walked into the cramped and cluttered file room and searched for a particular box that contained all the documentation of "Project Rebirth." After a brief moment of searching, she spotted what she was looking for, and took it off one of the many shelves and placed it down on the table behind her. She opened the top of the box and gently put it to the side then slowly picked up the folder that was on the top. The folder was a brown in color with a string tie seal, and on the top of the folder it had a log of individuals who had viewed the file, a red stamp that read "INACTIVE" and two black lines crossing over it in an "X", and another large clean red stamp above it that read "ACTIVE". Peggy took a deep breath as she undid the tie seal, this would be the first time since the end of the war she seen this file. She gently opened the folder, and the first thing she saw was the picture of Steve before his operation. A far skinnier and shorter Steve, squinting in the sun with nothing on but his PT gear.

She took out the picture and smiled happily at it, remembering the time when they had their first conversation on their way to his operation. He was cute then…now, he's handsome and then some. She was thankful for him being back in her life after his near death experience. Peggy quickly shook her head to rid the memory of Steve's sacrifice and the feeling that accompanied it. She hasn't thought of that time in a while, and she doesn't want to relive it again. He's here with her, and they're getting married, and that's all she should be thinking about.

Sousa limped into the room with his crutch and was surprised to see Peggy looking at a picture with one of the file boxes open. He quietly tried to back himself up but accidentally hit one of the shelves with his cane, startling Peggy. She looked at him and he looked down sheepishly, "I'm sorry…I haven't quite gotten used to—"

"It's fine," Peggy responded calmly. Sousa limped forward and smiled at her. She shook her head, "I assure you I don't do this often."

Sousa nodded, "I hope not. You see him every day and he's you know…super." Peggy smiled in response. Sousa stepped forward, "You know I got hit in Europe. Specifically during the last days of
the Battle of the Bulge." Peggy only stared as he limped forward. He pointed to the file, "At first they didn't tell me how I got back to the field hospital." He smiled, "It turned out, Captain America and his Howling commandos saved my life and my unit's lives." Sousa chuckled, "I almost died, and lost all my stuff...that's a long story in its own... and I still don't have my leg. But, at least I got to meet Captain America during the war."

Peggy chuckled, "He wasn't supposed to be in that battle but he decided to join General Patton on relieving the airborne troops."

Sousa laughed, "Glad he did."

Peggy nodded, "Me too." Sousa smiled and then started to limp away. Peggy called out to him causing him to turn around. She smiled warmly, "Remember you're one of the lucky ones. Don't waste this shot." Sousa smiled at her again then continued on his way out of the room, leaving her in private.

She put the file off to the side and searched the box and spotted what she was looking for, a Vita ray detector that belonged to Doctor Erskine. She looked at the file again then shook her head. She took out the picture of skinny Steve and put it in her purse along with the vita-ray detector then closed up the box and put it away.

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**Carter/ Rogers Apartment**

It was around seven in the evening when Peggy opened the door to their home. She ran her hand through her hair as she kicked off her heels near the door then walked deeper into the apartment, and saw that the mess was all cleaned up. The apartment was clean and relatively fixed; only things missing were the broken and smashed furniture. The window were fixed, and the drapes were replaced with matching new ones. Peggy made a confused expression as she walked into the apartment, passing by Steve's shield leaning on its usual spot against the wall. She turned around to look at the kitchen and spotted a brand new refrigerator.

Peggy raised a brow, "Darling?"

Steve walked out of their bedroom pretty wet with nothing on but his typical grey sweats, rubbing his damp hair with a towel. He was fresh out of the shower when he heard Peggy enter. He smiled at her, "Hey, how was your day?"

Peggy blushed and smiled as she looked at him, "Enlightening. Got a few new leads on the case that I need to discuss with you."

Steve started to dry his neck, "I got new leads from the commandos and the SSR about Stark, but I think we need to focus on yours first. It's the more important one." Peggy nodded.

Peggy tried really hard to look away from his muscular form, but barely managed it. She glanced over at the new fridge, "How did you replace all this?"

Steve smiled, "I went home early so I can work on the leads we obtained. I couldn't quite figure anything out so I decided to clean up the place and go out and buy stuff."

Peggy furrowed her brows, "But, how did you afford all this. It must've been expensive."

"It was, but I had the money to work with and... and there were a handful of discounts I exploited." He chuckled, "Still a lot of freebees."
She laughed and changed the subject, "Anything interesting after our burst of news last night."

He laughed, "I'm sorry. No not a lot of it, but people did hear rumors of our engagement. So be aware, it's coming."

She shrugged, "I'm ready."

Steve tossed the towel on his shoulder and closed the gap between him and Peggy. He stopped in front of her and rested his hands on her hips and kissed her gently. She happily reciprocated the kiss, resting her arms on his shoulders.

He broke the kiss, "Welcome home."

Peggy smiled, "Thank you darling." She looked at the kitchen, "You ready for dinner? I'll cook."

Steve smiled, "I'm all for it."

After dinner, Peggy explained her leads and findings to Steve. He didn't have much to help with hers, because the SSR was primarily focusing on locating Stark rather than focusing heavily on stopping these loose weapons that went missing from his vault.

Steve leaned back in his chair, "That Nitramene bomb is bad news, and we can't let it get to the wrong hands." He tapped his fingers on the table, "We need to act fast."

Peggy nodded, "My thoughts exactly."

He looked at her, "What's your plan?"

She smiled, "I need you to help me investigate that Roxxon refinery, and destroy any trace of that weapon. Can you do that?"

Steve nodded confidently, "You don't need to ask."

Peggy smiled warmly, "One should always have the freedom to choose."

"How do we get there?" He stood up and looked at his shield.

Peggy smiled, "I got that taken care of."

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**Roxxon Refinery 12 AM**

At the dead of night, Steve, Peggy, and Jarvis sat quietly in the car as they scanned the surrounding area of the refinery. Steve wore his typical Captain America combat uniform including his helmet, and Peggy wore her brown leather field jacket, green utilities, over a white dress blouse, but unlike them, Jarvis only wore a suit, hardly dressed for the occasion.

Peggy sat in the front passenger seat and scanned the front entrance while Steve scanned the far side of the refinery from the back seat. They noted a handful of guards guarding the main gate, at least two guards walking the perimeter with dogs and a tall fence with barbed wire surrounding the refinery. To the untrained eye, the refinery didn't look out of the ordinary. The guards looked like part of the nighttime security for the facility, and everything looked normal. But Steve and Peggy knew better and had to get inside.

Peggy and Steve were both looking through binoculars as Jarvis sat quietly in the driver's seat. Peggy
put down here pair, "An awfully large amount of security for a mothballed facility wouldn't you say?"

Steve also put down his binoculars and nodded, "And well-armed." He drew his pistol out and cocked it, chambering a round. He nodded at her then quietly exited the vehicle from the door facing away from the facility.

Peggy took out her pistol and also chambered a round then turned to Jarvis, "Stay here and keep a look out."

Jarvis looked at her dumbfounded, "Well I'm coming with you."

Peggy shook her head, "Mr. Jarvis that cook with the spoons was she a large woman? Violent?"

Jarvis shook his head, "Well no...she had a vicious tongue and an extremely..." Peggy handed him a radio then left the car to join Steve. She silently closed the door and squatted behind the car next to Steve who had his pistol in one hand and his shield on the other.

Peggy nodded, "Ready?"

Steve nodded, "Ready."

Peggy looked through the windows of the car at the two guards and whispered, "What do you think?"

Steve shrugged, "I'm thinking just going up and knocking." Peggy chuckled.

Steve got up and sprinted across the street getting a running start to the main gate. Peggy followed. The guards didn't see Steve coming as he leaped over the main gate and landed right in front of them. He hit one with the rim of his shield and pistol whipped the other in rapid succession.

Peggy caught up to the gate and smirked, "Nice."

Steve smashed open the lock of the gate with his shield and opened it, "After you, my lady." Peggy quietly walked through the now open gate. She took out the Vita Detector from her cargo pocket and turned it on as Steve took the unconscious bodies and hid them in the shadows.

She nodded at Steve and whispered, "Follow me." He nodded as he followed close.

They entered the central building quietly through an unlocked door and swiftly moved through the refinery, using the Vita detector to lead them to the Nitramene. Peggy was in the lead walking up the stairs when she heard a guard walking on the platform. She quietly put the Vita detector away and quietly took the remaining steps up the stairs. Steve caught the guard too and silently followed her up. Peggy saw the man stop with his back turned toward her which opened up a window for her to strike. She lunged forward, grabbing the side of the man's head and slamming it against a large metal pipe. There was a loud thud accompanied by a loud a metallic bang as his Thompson submachine fell alongside his body. Peggy turned around and found out she was alone, and Steve was nowhere to be seen.

Suddenly, there was rapid clanging on the platform representing someone sprinting her way, she took out her pistol and pointed it down the platform in anticipation. The guard appeared on the path in the distance, and right when she was about to pull the trigger a circular object hit the man in the head causing him to stumble off the railing and plummet down to the ground floor.

Peggy lowered her weapon as she recognized the figure catching the flying disk. She smiled and
shook her head and ran toward Steve.

She chuckled, "I was wondering where you went."

Steve smirked, "Heard another one coming. You were busy, so I took that one out for you." He strapped his shield to his back. He nodded, "let's get going."

"Right."

They made it past another maze of pipes and catwalks to a large clean room where they found rows of room-sized green pieces of machinery spread out evenly among the floor. In between the machines was a half circle lab table with chemicals and science experiments spread out on its surface. Peggy in the lead and Steve in the rear, silently inched their way across the floor while using the large machines for cover. Both of them had their weapons out as they quietly closed into their objective. So they hoped it at least.

Peggy signaled Steve to halt as she heard one of the scientists speaking. There were two male scientists in the room, a tall older and foreboding man and one short stern looking man. The shorter one looked like the lead scientist and spoke rather nervously. "It will take a moment to cool… I'm taking a big risk here, the least you can do is smile," he said with a shaky voice. Peggy turned and looked at Steve.

Back at the car Jarvis spotted a pickup truck driving quickly to the front gate of the refinery. He quickly ducked to make sure he wasn't seen, and got on the radio to Peggy.

In the refinery Peggy's radio came to life loudly with Jarvis' voice calling, "Ms. Carter there seems..." Peggy quickly turned down the radio and moved to her right, letting Steve take lead. Steve took off his shield from his back and proceeded to move forward cautiously.

The lead scientist heard the radio outburst and quickly drew his weapon and proceeded to move cautiously in the direction of the noise. The taller older looking man slowly opened up a canister on the lab table and removed another modified Mk II pineapple Nitramene grenade. The lead scientist walked deeper into the room of machinery, further and further away from the lab table, as the older man stood in place with the grenade. The lead scientist checked every corner as he walked through the rows of machinery until he heard a noise behind him. He quickly snapped around and briefly saw Captain America's shield before it hit him square in the face, sending him forcibly into a machine behind him.

Peggy jumped off the top of one of the machines and landed next to Steve as they saw the older gentlemen run off with the Nitramene grenade. Peggy pointed, "We have to stop him!"

Steve nodded, "On it!"

They both took off running through the facility to catch the other scientist. As Peggy stormed after the scientist, Steve broke off to the left in an attempt to cut him off. They continued to cut through the plant toward the facility garage in a fast-paced chase. The scientist ran down the stairs to the garage floor where a random, out of place, milk truck was parked. Peggy only a few feet behind him feared she might not catch him. She stopped while still on the stairs and quickly trained her pistol at his legs and pulled the trigger, firing one well-aimed shot. The round ripped right through the back of his knee and out the knee cap, causing the man to stumble forward to the milk truck parked at the end.

"Stop right there!" Peggy called out to the man as she closed the distance with him. The scientist didn't stop and quickly crawled to the truck.
The man managed to make it to the milk truck and was about to open the back doors when he felt a gun pressed to the left side of his temple. Steve held his shield tightly as he kept his pistol against the scientist's head and spoke sternly. "Hold it."

The man didn't listen and opened the doors of the truck revealing racks upon racks of the modified Nitramene grenades, drawing Steve's. Peggy caught up to them and looked shocked at what she saw. She looked at Steve and the pair shared a worried look.

The scientist smiled evilly at the both of them then undid his tie and collar to reveal a "Y" shaped incision on his throat. The man then reached into his lab coat pockets with both hands causing Steve to press the gun forcefully against his head.

"Hold it, let me see your hands," he urged sternly.

The scientist complied and slowly revealed a small cylindrical object that he then placed against his throat and spoke in a deep metallic synthesized voice. "You don't want to fire again."

Peggy pointed her weapon at the man and asked coldly, "Who are you?"

The scientist shook his head, "I'm an independent business man." He suddenly revealed his other hand from his other pocket, holding up a Nitramene grenade, "Just trying to make his mark."

Steve looked at Peggy. She continued sternly, "By murdering innocent people."

"So, you're not a scientist…" Steve coldly said.

The man shook his head, "No. I'm a business man who sells goods to people who do murder people. The man you left unconscious, was a scientist."

"You're just as bad as those who do murder innocent people. Their weapons will kill thousands," he said sternly.

Peggy spoke up, "The man who tried to kill us. The man in the green suit, your friend. He had a scar like yours."

The man shook his head, "he's not my friend."

Steve spoke up, "Give me his name and I'll promise you that we'll all walk out of here."

The man just stared at Peggy, "He doesn't have a name. Not anymore. It doesn't matter if I told you or not. We're both dead anyway." He paused then spoke in his mechanical synthesized voice, "Leviathan is coming."

"What?" Steve asked in confusion.

The man looked at him, "You hold onto the future like a dream that can come true. When they arrive they'll tell you…you'll see it's useless to protect it. You won't like the future." He threw down the grenade on the ground, smashing the clear shell.

The Nitramene core began to react, and gasses started to billow into the air. Steve covered his mouth and took a step back trying not to inhale the gasses. The man smiled, "Thirty seconds." The man quickly clocked Steve in the jaw, sending him stumbling back in surprise. The man then jumped into the driver seat of the milk truck and drove away.

Peggy called out to her fiancé, "Darling!"
Steve looked up at her, "Peggy go! I'll take care of the truck." He then took off after it in a full on sprint.

Peggy nodded and turned around and sprinted out of the refinery. She called Jarvis on the radio, "Mr. Jarvis, do you think you can bring the car around," she said in a rushed tone.

Jarvis responded calmly, "Yes, when would you like it."

While on the run Peggy responded, "In about twenty seconds." Jarvis turned on the car and quickly drove toward the main gate. The guards patrolling the fence perimeter spotted Jarvis' car and started to shoot at him with Thompson submachine guns. Bullets started to rip through the car and ricochet off the body as he drove toward the main gate. Peggy called back, "Meet me at the access road."

Jarvis replied as he ducked his head trying not to get hit by bullets, "You know I'm being shot at!"

"Now!" Peggy yelled back as she sprinted through the outside of the refinery.

Jarvis put the radio down and put his foot on the gas as the guards pumped rounds at the fancy car. He shook his head, "Terribly sorry Mr. Stark," he said as he drove through the gate then drifted onto the access road as more bullets ripped into the once sleek body. Jarvis picked up the radio, "Where are you two?"

"Just keep driving!" she yelled as she ran.

Jarvis dipped his head as he heard a bullet snap past him and out of the windshield. He picked up the radio again, and yelled, "Can you be slightly more specific?"

"NO!" As she continued to sprint down the path. Peggy continued to sprint and saw Jarvis' car driving down the road at fast speed. She timed it correctly and ran up a small ramp and jumped onto the roof of the car.

Jarvis asked worriedly, "Ms. Carter? Captain Rogers?"

Peggy peaked into the car, "Don't stop! Keep driving!"

Jarvis asked, "Do you want to come in?" Peggy didn't answer as she slid to open the passenger door and skillfully slipped her way inside. He looked at her for a moment, "What happened back there? And where's Captain Rogers?"

Peggy nodded, "I promise to tell you if we live long enough."

At the same time, Steve was sprinting after the truck, he had a late start, and the truck was quickly getting away from him. He peeled off to the right, putting his shield on his back and his pistol in its holster, and promptly jumped up and climbed a few pipes to get to a higher elevation to cut off the truck. He kept his eyes on his target as he navigated through the refinery. Steve got his bearings and sprinted across a large pipe to cut off the truck. Like Peggy, he timed his landing perfectly when he jumped off the pipe and landed forcefully onto the roof of the milk truck, but unlike his fiancé, he was unable to stick the landing. The driver yanked the wheel a hard right flinging Steve clear off the roof at high speeds before he was able to grab hold of the truck.

As Steve flew through the air toward the refinery perimeter fence, he instinctively curled himself into a ball using his shield on his back to protect him. He blew through the chain link fence and hit the ground hard on his back, sliding across the concrete with his shield taking all the impact. Without losing momentum, Steve quickly got up and sprinted as hard as possible down an unknown road
away from the refinery. Right now, the milk truck is a lost cause as he ran for his life.

Peggy yelled, "Drive faster!"

Jarvis yelled back, "I am driving faster." All of a sudden there was a bright flash followed by the loud explosion. As the shockwave tore through the air, the Nitramene sucked everything toward the detonation point.

"Faster!" Peggy again yelled.

Jarvis was about to yell back when he saw, heard, and felt a large blue object make thud as if he hit something heavy. The object in question rolled over the hood, cracking the windshield, and made a huge dent on the roof of the car. Jarvis yelled, "What was that!" He pressed down on the gas as the implosion radius was catching up to them.

Peggy looked up at the area where the windshield meets the roof and saw dents in that area. Dents the size of someone's fingers. She called out, "Steve?"

Steve was holding onto Jarvis' car for dear life as he felt the Nitramene shockwave trying to suck him back to the detonation area. "Just drive!" He yelled

Jarvis continued to floor the pedal but the car was slowing down as the shockwave caught up to it. Jarvis couldn't really do anything but floor the gas pedal, but suddenly there was a bang as they suddenly jolted forward sending Captain Rogers rocketing in front of the car. Jarvis slammed on his break as he saw Steve fly ahead of him. The blast reached its peak and sucked everything back into the detonation area, the car and Steve barely made it.

Jarvis and Peggy quickly got out of the car and witnessed the final steps of the Nitramene blast. Steve groaned as he slowly got up and watched the last few seconds of the implosion. The refinery was completely destroyed with a large portion of it crushed into a large ball of debris at the center of where the Nitramene detonated. There was nothing else other than fires, metal, and steal twisted towards the blast ground zero.

Jarvis spoke up calmly, "Well…it seems it works." Peggy looked at him then turned to go get Steve.

1 AM SSR New York City Branch "New York Bell Co."

Chief Dooley was talking with Sousa about possible leads of finding Stark when Thompson appeared with a file box interrupting their conversation by putting it on Dooley's desk. Sousa looked at him sternly, "I'm in the middle of something here Jack."

Thompson put his hand up to shut him up. He leaned forward, "the bouncer at the club who just came to, caught a blonde with Raymond's body around 9:30, 10 o'clock time frame."

Dooley leaned back and asked, "Why didn't they stop her."

Thompson smiled, "Because they were still pulling staples out of his face."

The phone started to ring. Dooley pointed at it, "Get that." Sousa picked it up and answered it. Dooley leaned forward, "So we got an angry blonde huh? You talk to my wife yet?"

Thompson chuckled, "And that's where my promotion comes in chief." He reached into the box and pulled out a camera and handed it to him, "Talked to a club photographer. He thinks he might've
gotten a picture of her."

Dooley handled the camera and paused for a moment. He looked up at Thompson, "I'm thinking real
hard about kissing you right now." He handed it back to Thompson as they both chuckled. He
pointed at the camera, "Double time that to the lab, see if we can get those pictures…"

Sousa hung up the phone, "Uh, sir. Authorities just reported that Roxxon refinery just blew up."

Dooley leaned back, "What the whole thing?"

Thompson stuck his hands in his pockets, "Any casualties?"

Sousa shook his head unsurely, "Unsure. The authorities said they can't find the building."

"What?" Thompson responded in confusion.

Dooley stood up, "Hm. You two with me."

9 AM SSR New York City Branch "New York Bell Co."

After a few hours of sleep after their unscheduled raid on the refinery, Peggy was back in the office,
dressed in her usual business attire for the day. She leaned back against her chair as she listened
intently as Agent Thompson and Agent Krzeminski were poking fun at her again. She kept her
bearing as she took the typical remarks, though this time it was a little harder since they were making
fun of her and Steve.

Thompson chuckled, "Oh, what was that one thing I forgot." He tapped his chin, "Oh yeah. The US
Army wanted the Captain Rogers file back. I went to go get it, and a certain picture was missing."

Agent Krzeminski laughed, "Yeah, a certain picture of Captain Rogers when he was weak and
pitiful." Sousa sat at his desk staring angrily at the two agents for picking on the only active woman
agent in the office.

Thompson chuckled, "Let's face it. If Captain Rogers didn't get super-sized he could've never scored
a doll like you. Hell or any doll. Why would you like a guy as pathetic as the old Captain Rogers?
What don't like manliness or something?" He smiled, "At least he's the way he is now for you, huh."

Krzeminski laughed, "Maybe she's…"

Peggy spotted Steve in his US Army dress uniform walk out of Dooley's office and approach them,
she smiled and interrupted the male agent's. "Hi darling," she said with a hint of fun in her accent.

The agent's all went dead silent. The room also went quiet since everyone wanted to see and hear
what was going to happen next with Steve present.

Steve asked curiously, "What's going on?" As he walked around the pair of agents so he could stand
next to Peggy.

Peggy chuckled, "Oh you know. Agent Thompson and Krzeminski were talking about you before your operation and my attraction to you before that."

Steve raised an eyebrow, "Oh?" Both the agent's looked down sheepishly.

She nodded again, "And why you deal with me," she said cheekily.

He nodded again, "Ah."

Agent Krzeminski spoke up apologetically, "Sir, we were…"

Peggy took a hold of Steve's hand, "Oh Agent Krzeminski, you wouldn't call me a liar in front of my fiancé would you?" She said in a fake serious tone. Everyone in the room, especially the women gasped on the news.

Krezminski whispered under his breath, "Oh shit…"

Steve actually has been in the SSR office since 4 AM talking to Dooley about the situation with Stark. He hasn't gotten any sleep after the midnight "raid" on the Roxxon refinery. Dooley didn't get any sleep either, and rather worked all night instead of going back to his wife.

Steve nodded, "I need to talk to you fellas for a second."

Krzeminski nodded and said nervously, "Sir, I am so sorry…"

Steve waved his hand, "You can apologize about being school yard boys to my fiancé at a later time. And I can teach you a few manners later too if you can't handle that." Krzeminski nodded quietly in response. Steve nodded, "Now to why I wanted to talk to you. While I was at the refinery last night chasing down leads before it exploded, I took a note on a few things that you might find helpful or useful. Whatever destroyed the refinery was man-portable, and I don't know if whoever did this has more weapons like that, but exercise caution in your investigation."

Thompson and Krzeminski nodded quietly.

Steve nodded over to the chief's office, "Chief Dooley will brief you on what I've gotten so far. He also wants to see you two." The two agents nodded again then left to go meet with the chief.

Sousa limped over to Peggy, "When were you going to mention the engagement?"

Peggy chuckled, "In time. We wanted to keep it a secret for as long as possible." She smiled, "We wanted to try keep it private for a little while so we can enjoy our engagement before the press blows it out of proportion. Steve is still a public figure even though the war ended a while ago."

"Do any planning?"

She laughed, "Not really. Again we were just enjoying our engagement."

"Wait didn't you once say that ring belonged to your mother?" He asked.

Peggy laughed and nodded, "Yes I did. I said that so no one would assume I'm engaged to Steve, and at the same time I'm able to wear my engagement ring."

Sousa was about to ask another question when Steve returned to them, "It's going to be on the paper tomorrow. You can read about it." Steve stuck out his arm.
Peggy stood up linking her arm with his and looked up at him confused, "Darling?"

Steve chuckled, "I assume it will be." Then he nodded to the elevator, "Come on, I need to show you something before I drop you off at the diner."

Peggy stood outside on the curb waiting patiently for Steve who said he was going to fetch a surprise for her. Suddenly, Peggy saw a very nice dark blue four door Chevrolet Style master pull up in front of her. She cocked her head in confusion, but then saw Steve step out of the car with a big grin. He smiled, "Consider this an engagement gift."

Peggy's jaw dropped as she took a step forward, "Darling…" She smiled, "This car is wonderful." She then looked up at him confused, "How did you get this and or afford it."

Steve walked around the car, "I actually bought the car yesterday, but hid it from you so I can surprise you." He chuckled, "The how. I was with Colonel Phillips…"

Peggy nodded, "Ah." She smiled widely then wrapped her arms around his shoulders and kissed him.

Steve broke the kiss, "I'll get you over to the diner so you can meet with Jarvis. While you do that I got to pick up a few things." She smiled and nodded as she got into the passenger side.

L&L Automat

Peggy sat at her usual booth while again sitting back-to-back with Jarvis. Peggy smiled, "You did well last night." She turned her head to look slightly over her shoulder, "You're wife would be proud of what you did."

Jarvis looked up in shock, "She must never know…" His eyes lit up in fear of what his wife could think. He shook his head, "She would absolutely lose it if I even told her I was helping you and Captain America." He then turned serious and slightly glanced over his shoulder and whispered, "What word did he use?" he asked changing the subject.

Peggy nodded and looked straight ahead, "Leviathan."

Jarvis nodded then grabbed his suit jacket and stood up, "I'll check Mr. Stark's files." He put his coat on and said under his breath, "Provided the SSR hasn't taken them all."

Peggy looked up at him, "Get some rest."

Jarvis nodded, "To be perfectly honest Ms. Carter, I don't think I'll sleep for days." He then walked off, "I don't know how you and him do it," he said to himself.

Peggy smiled and shook her head as she started to write down notes for what she needed to do. Suddenly, her focus was interrupted when the poor excuse of a gentlemen from earlier made another inappropriate outburst. That same large gentlemen who irked her friend Angie so much, called out, "Hey sweetheart! You in there or are you just getting your beauty sleep?"

Angie walked out of the kitchen and responded negatively, "You're up bright and early today." She took out her pad, "What can I get for you."

The man picked up his plate and shoved it toward her, "Do you know the difference between real eggs and powdered eggs?"
Angie nodded, "Believe it or not. I'm pretty good at eggs."

The man spoke in disgust, "I spent three weeks in a POW camp, the Nazi's fed us better than this." Angie took the plate and took a step back. The man pointed at her, "Next time don't get smart with me." She turned around and the man continued to berate her, "Your brains aren't the best feature." He slapped her behind. He laughed and picked up his newspaper as Angie walked away disgusted.

Peggy gathered her things and stood up, grabbing her dark blue coat and approached the man. She stopped by the man and hunched over by him and smiled cheekily, "I understand you're not happy with your meal."

The man put the paper down and looked at Peggy, "You work here?" He liked what he saw and admired Peggy's beautiful features and form.

Peggy picked up his fork and jammed it under his ribs causing a great deal of pain to the man. The man jolted forward in pain. Peggy didn't lose her smile, "Unfortunately, no. Just so we're clear this is pressed into your artery, and if I feel good enough I'll tear it open." The man leaned forward in pain, she put her hands on his shoulder and forced him to stay upright. She smiled, "Keep smiling." The man grinned in pain. Peggy continued, "IF I rupture your artery, you'll start to bleed, you'll lose consciousness in fifteen seconds and die in nineteen, lest someone comes to your aid." She twisted the fork harder into him resulting in a large groan from him. She smiled wide, "Now given your poor excuse of being a gentlemen, how likely do you think that is going to happen?" She twisted the fork once more, "To avoid this…event…from happening, I suggest you find a new place to eat. Do we understand each other?"

The man groaned in pain and said through his teeth, "Yeah…"

Peggy kept the fork in his ribs, "Now look at my face." He slowly turned to look at her. Her face was cold and unforgiving. She said coldly, "Do you ever want to see me again." She twisted the fork one last time. The man shook his head in pain and couldn't say anything. She smiled again, "Oh I almost forgot. Tip generously." Peggy released the fork from his ribs and placed it on the table then disappeared.

The man gasped in pain then took out his wallet and started to throw down large amounts of cash on the table. Angie saw him and he looked up and smiled nervously as he put money on the table.

Peggy walked out onto the sidewalk and put on her sunglasses and smiled proudly at herself. She then saw Steve in uniform leaning against their car in front of her. She smiled, "Got everything you needed Darling?"

Steve chuckled, "Just waiting on you." The both smiled at each other for a moment. He took Peggy's hand in his then placed the car keys in her hand, "You drive. Give this car something to chase."

Peggy smiled slyly.

CHAPTER UPDATED 7 May 2019

WELL THAT'S IT FOR THAT CHAPTER

Yeah it's long. So I apologize in advance for grammatical or spelling errors.

But I thank you for your loyalty and patience, I meant to write this ages ago but as I said before…Computer got stolen.
Added dialogue and changed dialogue from the episode to fit the story with Captain America.

Update Notes: Fixed LOADS of grammar and contextual things. Added some details to streamline the story better.
Ch7 Bridge and Tunnel

Well I dug myself into a hole here. Got caught in the Agent Carter show...Now i got to finish this...with my own twist. Peggy, Captain America, and Uncle Sam deserve that much

Ch7 Bridge and Tunnel

Carter/Rogers Apartment

It's bright and early in the city that never sleeps, the hustle and bustle of the city never losing its step as it faces another day in the roaring 40s. At the Agent Peggy Carter and Captain Steve Rogers home, the day is just beginning. It's been a few days since their little raid on the Roxxon refinery that resulted in knowledge of a mystery group called Leviathan and a catastrophic implosion of the refinery. For the past few days Peggy hasn't been getting as much sleep as she'd like. Thanks to Steve, she's been getting just enough. She didn't quite know how she'd be able to do this without him. If trying to Clear Stark's name goes south, its best to be called a traitor with the love of your life right?

Peggy was wide awake as she rested her head on Steve's bare chest as they lay under their covers of their bed. Steve was sound asleep with his head tilted to the right and his arm wrapped around Peggy's body. Peggy lifted her head to check the clock that was located on the night stand closest to Steve, and it read 6AM. She sighed, she's been up for two hours now. She rested her head back down on Steve then sighed again. She felt Steve stir underneath her and saw him turn his head and stretch tiredly.

Steve turned his head to the left and his eyes opened. His gaze was full of love and adoration like it was the first time he saw her. He smiled, "good morning"

Peggy lifted her head and smiled back and kissed his lips, "Good morning darling. I'm sorry, I didn't mean to wake you."

Steve shook his head, "Hey, it's no problem. I rather have you wake me up than something else."

She giggled.

She kissed his chest, "you're so adorable Steve."

"What?" he asked curiously.

She giggled again, "You. Every time you wake up, you look at me like it's the first time you saw me. Every time."

Steve laughed, "What can I say? Well i was asleep for a hot minute after Hydra."

Peggy laughed again, "its cute Steve."

Steve sat up, "what's up?" He said automatically detecting that Peggy woken up super early.

Peggy was resting on her elbow and said calmly, "thinking about a few days ago."

Steve asked curiously, "about Leviathan?" Peggy nodded calmly. He smiled reassuringly then kissed her lips. "Here, let's get dressed, I'll cook you breakfast and make some tea, and we'll discuss it. Okay?"
Peggy smiled, "Sounds lovely darling."

Steve kissed her again then rolled out of bed to go hit their shower. Peggy smiled as she watched him leave then plopped on her back, keeping the covers over her chest, and sighed as she thought things through.

She laid on the bed quietly thinking. Steve has been great with this Stark situation, but she feels even she is risking his life too much. He was ambushed by an assassin when he was making her dinner. He was almost caught in the implosion of the refinery. If Jarvis didn't almost run him over Steve would've been sucked into the refinery in no time. She was blaming herself for being the one to almost get the hero killed. His fiancé almost gets him killed...what kind of fiancé is that. She knows Steve would never blame her, but she's blaming herself for this. Steve could obviously take care of himself in a fight, but he isn't invincible. She doesn't want to be the reason for his demise. It's the "what if's" that are slowly destroying her from the inside. Right then and there, she became her own worst enemy.

Steve was dressed with a white t-shirt, and his America blue combat utility trousers. He just finished making Peggy hot tea and a simple full hearty breakfast when she finally left their room fully dressed for the day. She wore natural make up with red lipstick, white business blouse, blue business skirt, and carried the matching jacket on her arm. She smiled as she took in the scent, "smells good darling." She hung her jacket on a chair.

Steve smiled, "I know that's a type business outfit you always wear, but...wow." He gazed at her taking in her curves and looks. "Damn you're gorgeous."

Peggy giggled and blushed, "didn't you once call me a dame?"

Steve rubbed his neck nervously then turned around to turn off the stove, "No. I called you a BEAUTIFUL dame."

Peggy laughed, "I remember." She sat down at the table and started to eat and drink her tea as Steve cleaned up.

As Steve cleaned he asked, "So what's going on?"

Peggy put down her tea, "Just wondering about Leviathan." she started to list off what was bothering her, "How to clear Starks name, how we could be labeled traitors if we get caught helping him, and on top of that a bunch of dangerous weapons that can kill thousands of innocent people."

Steve turned around and looked at Peggy then said calmly, "Peggy we'll figure it out." He walked out of the kitchen then squatted down in front of her, grabbing one of her hands, and smiled, "we always do." He said reassuringly. He rubbed his thumbs over her hand, "Stark doesn't deserve this mistreatment, we're doing the right thing." He smiled warmly at her, "that's part of being a Patriot. Challenge the government when it's wrong to protect individual rights." Peggy smiled. Steve continued, "Hate injustice in your own land than anywhere else." He sensed that she wasn't telling him everything that was bothering her, and decided not to pry. She will tell him when she's ready.

Peggy extracted her hand from his grasp then cupped his face then kissed him for a long second. After releasing the kiss she smiled, "that's why I want to marry you."

Steve smiled, "feel better?"

Peggy nodded, "much darling." He stood up to go finish cleaning up. After a moment she stated plainly, "we need to move out."
Steve turned around and asked surprised, "Really? Why?"

Peggy shook her head, "Leviathan or whoever knows where we live."

Steve nodded in understanding, "We can't move everything. Moment we start moving they'll know where we're going. We need to relocate temporarily until our job is done."

Peggy nodded, "I can search for places on the paper." She went back to eating as he went back to cleaning.

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**L&L Automat**

After breakfast Peggy got her things, said goodbye to Steve, and took the car for the automat to talk to her friend Angie before work. Before she got in the restaurant she bought a newspaper to find places to move from the want ads. She's now sitting at the counter drinking yet another cup of tea while she got settled to go through the newspaper.

As she was about to read, she heard a horrendous radio show broadcast. The male announcer speaking in heavy bravado sounded off, "AND now its time for the Captain America Adventure program! Brought to you by Roxxon Motor oil!" There was a break as the theme music came on. The announcer came on, "today's thrilling tale takes us deep into the Ardennes forest where Hitler's guard have ambushed the 107th infantry and have taken Betty Carber, the Battalions Beautiful triage nurse..." There was a toot and a whistle. The announcer lowered his voice, "As their hostage."

A woman came on with over the top acting, "You lousy krauts are in big trouble once Captain America gets here."

Another man came in trying to impersonate Steve, "When I'm through with you Hitler you'll be seeing Stars...and STRIPES!" There was a sound of multiple hits. Then came on a person horribly impersonating Hitler with a bad accent.

Peggy sighed and shook her head, "Angie, do you mind changing that?"

Angie quickly walked to the radio behind her, "oh you bet. It's really bad." she turned it to music. The Andrew Sisters started to come on. Angie approached Peggy from behind the counter and impersonated the captain America show, "You lousy krauts are in big trouble once Captain America gets here." She laughed, "Bad right?"

Peggy smiled, "Not even remotely like the real thing."

Angie asked, "Wait English, does your fiancé endorse this?"

Peggy laughed, "Oh heavens no." she shook her head, "The old theater company Steve worked in when he was doing shows as Captain America still owns the rights to the name."

Angie nodded, "Oh gotcha." She turned around to grab a plate from the kitchen. She quickly turned back around, "Oh English, your names are on the front page again."

Peggy sighed as she flipped the newspaper to the front and saw an article on the right that read, "Captain America engaged with beautiful brunette from New York Bell Phone Company". She continued to read it briefly. It was the same article from before which had both their names on it and a brief story. A short story about Captain America and his fiancé who works at a phone company, and how they first met during the war. "The long time mystery brunette seen with Captain Steve Rogers is none other than Margaret Carter from the New York Bell Telephone Company. They
happily announced their engagement. The two first met during the war, no further details were
given.” She was happy that they didn't give details of the situation in their apartment i.e. their actual
announcement of engagement after a fight with an assassin. But the press did put two small
individual pictures of them in the article; One of Steve in his dress uniform and one of Peggy in her
uniform during the war. She wasn't quite happy that her face was on the paper, but she was at least
happy that they weren't on the headlines. She had a feeling that the press tried to interview Steve, and
Steve gave them the most minimal of information hence "no further details were given.” She also
figured the press contacted the "New York Bell Telephone Company” and the SSR giving her cover
story as a phone operator. Peggy was also happy that not many people recognize her as Steve's
fiancé, those who do are mostly the women. It was just the news of engagement and who Steve is
with that interested the people.

Peggy was extremely happy Chief Dooley let her stay in the SSR after their announcement a few
days ago. She did her best to convince him to let her stay, but she was sure he wanted to let her go
because of her involvement with Captain America, but he would've had Captain America and
Colonel Phillips barking up his tree if he did. At the same time she was a little bit angry that her
involvement with Steve was a reason to try get her fired...

Angie interrupted her thoughts, "Margaret Carter. Engaged with the legendary Captain America." she laughed, "So many girls would love to be you right now."

Peggy laughed, "Including you?" She turned her newspaper to the page that had places to live for
rent.

Angie nodded, "Hell yeah!" She put weight on one hip and stared outside, "What I'd to him." Peggy laughed. Angie looked down at Peggy's newspaper, "you two moving?"

Peggy nodded, "Oh yeah." She lied, "Me and him want something a little more new. Our old place
had some problems."

Angie looked at the paper, "Cozy studio apartment...that means its a broom closet." She tilted her
head, "Convenient to public transportation, which means you'll be living under the third avenue 'L'

Peggy asked curiously, "what do you suggest?"

Angie lit up, "Girl down the hall from me just left." She made a funny facial expression, "She
couldn't hack it I guess. She was always crying to her mother on the hall phone."

Peggy looked sympathetic, "Aw poor thing."

Angie nodded she said plainly, "Maybe for the first couple of times." Her face lit up again,
"Anyway, it's over on 63rd, great people, and it's nice. Plus, I'll be your neighbor, so that's not
nothing."

Peggy nodded and paused. She then spoke up, "that's a lovely idea, but I'd hate for you to grow tired
of us."

Angie nodded with a smile, "I doubt both of you are the cry on the phone type." She laughed, "And
I'm sure I can't get sick of Captain America."

Peggy nodded, "Actually I'm heading to place after work." She said not wanting to drag Angie into
her secret life.

Angie chuckled, "Really? You sure you're not trying to hide away Captain America?" she laughed,
"Are you the jealous type English?" She asked jokingly.
Peggy laughed, "I am actually"

"Oh. Really?" Angie laughed. Peggy nodded plainly. Angie saw her expression then went silent. After a moment they both blew out into fits of laughter causing the other guests in the restaurant to look at them awkwardly. Angie controlled herself, "I doubt you can stop me from eating him up with a spoon English." She laughed.

Peggy chuckled, "Just try and get past me."

Angie leaned on her hip, "is that a challenge?"

Peggy laughed, "Consider it a warning." the two friends smiled at the banter.

During the day at work, the SSR's main standing mission to finding Howard Stark was put on temporary hold, after their attention was split to deal with what happened to the sudden "disappearance" of the Roxxon facility. The whole day agents have been at the refinery to gather any clues to what happened, and they were surprised to see the results of the destroyed refinery. Earlier during the week, Steve gave chief Dooley worthless leads about the refinery to try and slow down the SSR so far the SSR were wasting time. This attention split bought Peggy time to hunt down the real enemy and to clear Stark's name.

One of many Stark penthouses 6PM

Peggy met up with Jarvis at a corner near a very fancy and old styled building deep in the city of New York to discuss a place where she and Steve can lay low. After the assassins raid a few days ago, their home wasn't safe. Probably never again.

Peggy originally thought that the corner was a meeting point so they can take off and find somewhere to move, but she didn't actually expect Jarvis to take her up to a fancy penthouse owned by Stark.

Peggy walked with astonishment next to a calm Jarvis in the lavish hallways of the high-end penthouse, her coat was hanging on her arm and her purse was across her body. The hallways and the rooms she has seen were decorated with expensive decor, fancy furniture, art, and antiques. She was astonished on how nice it looked and how expensive it could be. Jarvis walked with one hand behind his back as he told her about the penthouse, "There's a little bit of Northern German but the layout is decidedly French." They passed a small table with a tray of assortment of goodies on it. Jarvis pointed out with his free hand, "Fresh fruit and chocolate served every morning. The chef likes a challenge so you may order whatever you like." Peggy took a small chocolate and plopped it in her mouth then proceeded to grab a handful.

She paused then shook her head at Jarvis, "I don't think Steve and I could stay here."

Jarvis just bowed at her, "Mr. Stark insists." He started walking again.

Peggy walked with him, "He also wants us to clear his name on multiple counts for treason and if we get caught, I'll be fitted for the noose while Steve gets a nice look down the barrel of a rifle."

Jarvis paused then stated plainly, "This may put you at ease." He looked around the hallway they were in, "this isn't one of Stark's primary residences." He paused, "...it's more for...private entertainment."

Peggy plopped a few more chocolates in her mouth and said after swallowing, "It's too risky." She shook her head.
Jarvis raised an eyebrow, "Shall we consult with Captain Rogers? See what he thinks?"

Peggy smiled slightly as she ate another chocolate, "He trusts my judgement."

Jarvis simply nodded, "if you're certain you wouldn't like to see the master bedroom" He walked off. Peggy sighed and rolled her head back and followed.

They entered the bedroom and Peggy was again astonished at how nice it looked. Though dim because only the lamps on the night stands were on, she was still able to see all the fancy furniture, expensive rugs, beautiful decor, and antiques. Even the bed was elegant in design and fit for a king. She let out a tired sigh as she walked to the bed and sprawled out on her back, "Perhaps for one night."

Jarvis smiled and nodded, "splendid." He put his hands behind his back, "Regarding our other matter, i went through Mr. Starks files and it failed to mention anything about Leviathan."

Peggy rolled over and propped herself on her elbows, "So far I couldn't find anything at the SSR"

Jarvis motioned to his throat, "even the gentlemen with the unusual..." He raised his brows

Peggy stated plainly, "New York hospitals have no record of patients fitting those descriptions for the last three years...but there are quite a number from out of town." Jarvis just nodded. She continued stating plainly, "So we got two foreign agents both with no voice boxes and a missing milk truck loaded with implosives. And it seems the two agents aren't on the same side, but that's yet to be proven..." She sighed as she slammed her forehead against the soft bed.

Jarvis put his hands in his pockets and smiled, "Just another day at the office."

Peggy sighed then rolled off the bed and swung herself around one of the bed posts toward a tall dresser. She sighed and said plainly to herself, "The daisy clover dairy opens at five." She walked to the other bedpost and twirled around it, "Need to find that milk truck."

Jarvis nodded, "I'll be standing by with the car ten to..."

Peggy stated plainly, "The assailant already killed once already, and Gave Steve a bit of trouble. I think its best if we carry on alone." She walked to the dresser and opened it as Jarvis was about to say something. She saw all the...large varieties of outfits in the dresser. She paused for a moment, "oh..." She said plainly. She looked through the outfits curiously then pulled out a skimpy red lingerie top and held it against her chest, and looked straight at Jarvis.

Jarvis nodded and Said calmly, "on occasion Mr. Stark likes to add a... Theatrical element to his romantic endeavors."

Peggy shook her head and turned around to put back the outfit, "is that what he calls it..." She began to dig through more of the outfits Stark had. She spotted a doctors outfit and immediately grabbed it, "Oh! This could be useful." She held it against her chest.

Jarvis just stared at her then said plainly, "What would Captain Rogers think if you wore that toni..."

Peggy tossed the doctors outfit at him, "Oh don't be absurd. This is for the task at hand." Jarvis just shrugged. She rolled her eyes, "I don't need these to get him romantically interested."

Jarvis just nodded and looked away while holding the outfit, "whatever you say Ms. Carter." Peggy walked passed him as she thought about her first course of action, inevitably going to the dairy and finding that missing truck. Jarvis stopped her by speaking up, "With Mr. Stark's compliments." He
held out a single key. The key to get into the penthouse. Peggy sighed and took it reluctantly.

They left the bedroom and back into a series of hallways that lead to a large fancy double door with glass windows which is inevitably the entrance to the penthouse. Jarvis hand one hand behind his back as he spoke with the other as he then explained the routine of the penthouse, "The maid arrives at ten and the florist usually by noon." He opened one of the doors and stepped out of the penthouse.

"Cancel them both." Peggy ordered

Jarvis turned around and nodded, "Then I shall cancel them both."

Peggy reached and grabbed the door knob, "Goodnight Mr. Jarvis."

As she tried closing the door Jarvis stopped it with his foot. He leaned forward, "I do wish you will change your mind and let me accompany you." He said earnestly. "I could be your second pair of eyes."

Peggy sighed, "I got Steve for that Mr. Jarvis." She rolled her eyes, "Plus I don't imagine there to be much danger at the dairy, and I'm only hunting a truck. AND who ever drove it is a man who requires questioning." She nodded, "Good night." She tried closing it yet again but again Jarvis stopped it with his foot.

He leaned forward, "And how do you plan on finding it?" He raised a brow.

Peggy sighed and spoke quickly, "I held onto the vita ray detector from Project rebirth, it should still be able to get a reading from whatever truck was carrying the Nitramene." She paused as she noticed Jarvis staring, "What?"

Jarvis just nodded, "Just seems a tad conspicuous walking into Daisy Clove halting business to inspect for vita radiation."

Peggy rolled her eyes, "I assure you I have far more tact than you give me credit for...oh" She looked down at Jarvis' pants and said plainly, "Your fly is down."

Jarvis looked down and stepped back, "No." He said shocked. Peggy quickly closed the door as soon as he stepped away. Jarvis raised his hand to speak.

Peggy looked at him through the glass, "Good night Mr. Jarvis" She turned and walked away to a phone."

Jarvis lowered his hand and turned around then walked down the hallway. "How does Captain Rogers live with her, I have no idea." He said plainly.

Peggy picked up the phone and called their home. After a moment she heard Steve answer, "Rogers."

Peggy smiled as she heard his voice, "Hey darling."

Back at their apartment Steve was wearing his white t-shirt, blue Combat trousers, a US Army canvas pack that carried the rest of his uniform, with his shield was strapped to his pack. Steve just got home when the phone rang, he asked curiously, "Hey. Uh everything okay?"

Peggy chuckled, "everything is fine Steve. Jarvis just helped me find a place for us to lay low for a night."
Steve smiled, "that's great! Where do I meet you?"

Peggy gave him the address and directions. "I'll see you in a bit darling."

Steve asked, "Do you want me to bring you an extra change of clothes?"

"Yes please darling, best if we got it though we are only staying the night. But thank you." She said in a gentle voice."

"Alright, I'll be on my way."

8pm

Steve walked through a very fancy hallway still in a white t-shirt, blue combat trousers, and US Army canvas bag with the shield strapped to it. He felt kind of out of sorts as he walked through this expensive place, a little too rich for his blood. He approached a double door with windows and proceeded to ring the bell. After a moment he saw Peggy appear in the window, she automatically smiled when she saw him. She opened the door for him, "there you are Steve, I thought you got lost."

Steve stepped in with a half-smile, "I thought I did." Peggy closed the door.

Peggy brought him close then kissed his lips. She smiled, "let's go." She didn't really need to give a tour of the place and proceeded to just head straight to the bedroom.

When they entered Steve whistled, "This place is fancy. Expensive for my blood." He laughed as he put down his pack and shield.

Peggy chuckled and sat down on the bed and rested her hands on her lap, "I thought the same thing."

Steve chuckled, "so this is how the other side lives. Not bad." Peggy smiled. Steve sat down next to Peggy and wrapped an arm around her body, "Find anything new?"

Peggy shook her head, "Just know the dairy name that was on the truck. Daisy Clover Dairy." she nodded, "And that the SSR has no knowledge of Leviathan and we still have no idea who the men are with the scars on their necks. We just know that they may not be on the same side. But that is up to debate."

Steve nodded, "Daisy clover huh. You going to investigate?"

Peggy nodded, "I found a way to do investigate under cover." She nodded to the doctor outfit behind her, "I'll be impersonating a health inspector. I'll secretly look for vita rays with the detector from last time."

Steve smiled, "Slick." He tilted his head, "How did... you snag a doctors outfit."

Peggy laughed then pointed to the tall dresser, "Stark has some theatrical costumes for his romantic escapades."

Steve turned around, "Huh..." He chuckled, "Wonder if he still does fondue with the ladies."

Peggy looked at him with surprise, "you still don't know what fondue is Steve?"

He laughed, "I do now."
Peggy leaned into him and smiled. Steve hugged her tightly. She closed her eyes and hummed. After a moment she asked, "What do you guys have?"

Steve continued to hold onto her, "Nothing new. The SSR has given Col Phillips and I what they know, but there's not much for me to handle. They are busy digging through the debris of the refinery and dealing with the murder in La Martinique, still. They are divided and moving slow."

Peggy said with her eyes closed, "Bought some time then." She hummed in contentment as she felt and listened to Steve's strong heart.

Steve smiled, "Plugged the commandos in on this too... I told them the truth, and they are up for clearing Stark's name." Peggy just smiled as she rested against him. Steve continued to speak, "The SSR want to use me as their right arm to counter any interference and physically track down Stark."

Peggy caressed his torso, "Glad you're with me then."

Steve smiled, "Of course. Wouldn't be any other way." They were quiet for a moment. He started to look around the room, astonished at the decor and fancy furniture. Then he saw a record player sitting on a short dresser, he suddenly came to realization... He loosened his grip on her, "Peggy."

Peggy sat up straight, "hm?"

"I forgot it was Friday. I was supposed to take you out dancing."

Peggy smiled, "Darling, considering what has been happening its okay..."

Steve looked at the record player then back at Peggy, "How about a dance right now?"

Peggy raised a brow while smiling, "Steve..."

Steve stood up and made his way to the record player to search the dresser for records. After a brief search he found the records and found a very good particular one. He placed the record on the player and the sweet and gentle tune of "I don't want to walk without you" by Harry James and Helen Forrest on vocals, came through the speakers. He happily turned around and smiled. Peggy giggled then stood up and made her way to Steve. They met half way and held each other in an embrace before dancing slowly to the song. Steve took in her scent, every curve, every sensual movement, and anything and everything he found attractive about her. As they danced, Peggy cherished the strength of his embrace, his loving gaze, and that handsome face that drove her crazy. They didn't need a club to dance, they just needed and wanted each other.

As the song played the couple danced up and down the penthouse as if nothing in the world mattered but them. After a long dance the couple stopped but remained entangled. Steve smiled and said softly, "Will you marry me?"

Peggy blushed and gave the widest smile, "Darling I already said yes."

Steve simply smiled and said lovingly, "Let's not waste time." He held her tightly, "let's plan it."

Peggy smiled and blush then shook her head, feeling overly happy and excited to be Mrs. Rogers

Steve leaned back with a smile, "What?"

Peggy leaned closer to him, "Nothing. I love you." She said softly. She kissed him, which they held the kiss for a while. She broke the kiss and smiled widely, "let's make it perfect." she laughed, "I'm sure we can plan and clear Starks name at the same time." Peggy giggled suddenly.
Steve left Peggy a little earlier than usual to make it to Camp Lehigh so he could brief The Colonel on what Peggy knows. So far his official mission is twofold, track and obtain all weapons made by Stark that ended up in the wrong hands, and capture Stark and take him back to the United States to face trials. Steve, the Colonel, and the commandos were all part of a different mission of their own. To instead prove Starks innocence AND track the lost technology. Like Peggy, the team including the Colonel are taking a big risk...

**Camp LeHigh**

Steve parked his motorcycle in the base parking lot closest to the Camp Head Quarters building, then took off his pack and undid the straps to reach his uniform inside. He tossed on the "stars and stripes" combat jacket (his name for his Captain America combat uniform), brown leather shield shoulder holster, leather brown war belt, and brown leather gloves. After getting dressed he secured his shield to his back and strapped the helmet to the left side of his war belt, then walked directly to the Head Quarters building while carrying his canvas bag.

As he walked down the sidewalk he passed a few soldiers on the path who saluted him proudly. Steve proudly returned the salutes as he stepped. He heard quick steps behind him and the familiar voice of Dugan, "morning Sir!" Steve turned and saw Dugan snap a salute.

Steve returned the salute on the move and when he cut it he said, "How's everything going? How are the new guys fitting in with the commandos?" Recently The Colonel saw fit to expand the ranks of the Howling Commandos. Meaning adding new guys.

Dugan chuckled, "Green sir. Very green."

Steve laughed, "Not surprised still."

"Be careful sir." Dugan warned, "Jim and Montgomery spotted Chief Dooley enter the Head Quarters building earlier. Probably speaking with the Colonel." Dugan shook his head, "Bad news, I think the SSR are back on track. They figured the little destruction of the Roxxon refinery is linked to Stark. They think he's responsible Cap, they linked the refinery to him, and I won't be surprised if they link that dead guy at the club to him either."

Steve stopped then looked at the building, "Hits just keep on coming. So much for buying time." He nodded at Dugan, "That didn't take long for them to link it to Stark."

Dugan shook his head, "They are going to eat him alive when they catch him." He sighed, "They need someone to blame for the weapons ending up in the wrong hands...and now they need someone to blame for this mess.

Steve nodded in understanding, "Yeah. Thanks for the heads up." He nodded then made his way to the building.

In the headquarters building, Steve made his way through the busy office spaces to Colonel Philips' office. He stopped just short of the door and stared at the opaque glass with the name, "Colonel Chester Phillips" on it. He sighed and knocked. Steve heard The Colonel call, "Enter."

Steve opened the door and saw Colonel Philips standing behind his desk looking at him, and Chief Dooley staring out the window on one of the chairs in front of the Colonel's desk.

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**Daisy clover Dairy**

Later that same morning Peggy made it out of the comfortable Penthouse in a doctors coat over her
white business blouse and blue business skirt, she also wore her natural shade of makeup complete with red lipstick, black high heels, fake glasses, had her hair tied up nicely in a bun, and had on her a brown brief case that carried a clipboard of fake forms and her Vita ray detector.

She made her way through the busy loading dock full of trucks and people, and called out to anyone working on the loading platform, "Excuse me!" She yelled in a perfect American accent. She saw a large man wearing a black suit vest, red and white striped tie, white dress shirt, and black dress pants look at her quickly. "Are you the foreman?" She asked in a demanding voice.

The man stopped what he was doing and called back, "who's asking?"

Peggy called back, "Ruth Barton, City of New York health department! You hear of that?" She called out in a cold tone while flashing a fake ID.

The man ran down the small flight of stairs off the platform toward her, "Yeah..." He said regretfully.

Peggy rocked her head back and put her ID away, "Well you have not been acting like it." She looked coldly at him, "I've had 15 complaints that you are in direct violation of city health provision 42 article 23, i.e. the care and transport of all the milk stiffs" she said quickly and coldly, letting the ice queen go rampant.

The man asked flabbergasted, "Complaints from who?"

Peggy shot back, "Right now me." She looked at the trucks and nodded, "I have a court order to inspect all trucks in this distribution hub." She looked back at him coldly, "let's hope I don't find cheese where the milk is supposed to be." She saw him hesitate as she focused her ice cold gaze at him. She squinted, "Now...are you going to help me or hinder me?"

The man said nervously, "Help...you?"

Peggy nodded and said coldly, "Good answer." She turned around and started to do her...job. The man nearly pissed himself.

She began to thoroughly inspect every truck, and when no one was looking she scanned the interiors for vita radiation.

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Camp LeHigh

Colonel turned away from the window to face Steve who stood next to Dooley's chair, "Ah Captain Rogers. We were just talking about you." He nodded at Dooley, "Chief Dooley wants to brief you on the worsening situation regarding Howard Stark." Steve turned his head to Dooley then nodded coolly. Colonel Phillips pointed at Dooley with his hand, "Chief it's all yours."

Chief Dooley stood up from his seat and buttoned up his suit jacket, "As you know Already, we've been trying to track Stark and his weapons, but the murder of Spider Raymond at la Martinique put a slight hold on that. We've been trying to find the killer and we believe it's linked to Stark." Steve nodded as Dooley continued, "The strange destruction of the refinery was no accident. The whole refinery was destroyed completely in such a way that the weapon used is beyond conventional." He shook his head, "We're back on track and we think the murder of Raymond at the club is related to the destruction of the refinery...it all leads to Stark." He pointed to the ground, "Stark is the top of the list. There is no other explanation."

Steve nodded quietly and kept absolute bearing. He couldn't tell Dooley that he raided the refinery and found the Nitramene in a milk truck without explaining how he discovered all the details leading
him to that point. That will jeopardize Peggy and him, then they will be both royally screwed. Steve just simply stated, "What do you need me to do."

Dooley smiled and put his hands in his pockets, "We'll send you other leads and we need you to follow them up while my guys handle our angle. Then if we get any leads that demand action we need you to be ready to assist."

Steve nodded, "will do." He looked at Colonel Phillips, "Sir."

The Colonel nodded, "Just give him what he needs and he'll get it done."

Dooley smiled, "Outstanding." He looked at his watch, "Well gentlemen, I have an imploded refinery to investigate." He turned for the door.

The Colonel nodded as Dooley left his office. Phillips and Steve remained silent for a moment, but As soon as the Colonel felt the coast was clear, he spoke. He leaned on his desk, "The destruction of the refinery and Agent Carter's little clandestine operation in La Martinique isn't really helping clear Stark's name."

Steve nodded and remained standing, "we didn't have much room for finesse sir. The man with the milk truck got away right after arming the Nitramene grenade, and Peggy left Spider alive." He paused, "That assassin I told you about was probably the one who killed him."

The colonel stood up straight, "you two did what you had to do. But now everything is going to be a lot harder." Steve nodded in understanding. The colonel crossed his arms, "I can't request nor authorize Agent Carter helping you. She's too close to Stark and she's also engaged to you. If you two fail something and the circumstances seems strange, they'll suspect her to be traitor and then throw you in for good measure." He shook his head, "Our government just set up a trend of old friends becoming new enemies..."

Steve nodded, "makes sense sir."

The colonel nodded, "for now...work closely with the SSR. If they do anything that requires action, be there."

Steve nodded, "yes sir."

"Remember do what you think is right Captain." Phillips sat down.

Steve again nodded quietly.

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**Daisy Clover Dairy**

After hours of scanning the trucks at the dairy, Peggy's search proved unsuccessful. Her vita ray detector didn't get a single hint of vita rays during the whole search. Immediately following the unfruitful search, she had the foreman bring her the log books of the dairy to her at the loading dock.

As she searched the log books on the platform, she noticed there was something odd. One of the trucks and drivers weren't logged in. "Excuse me." She called out. The foreman approached her nervously. Peggy showed him the discrepancy on the page she found, "There's a truck missing." She said sternly.

The foreman replied nervously, "He's been out a couple days, he uses his truck to commute."
Peggy shot back, "Has he never heard of a bus?" She looked at him sternly, "Name and address.

The Forman replied nervously, "Sheldon McFee, but I don't have an address..."

Peggy grabbed her brief case, "I'll take care of that." She walked quickly away. The foreman sighed in relief that the ice doctor finally left.

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**Top Secret NYC SSR Warehouse**

Dooley arrived in the warehouse and met up with his two top agents, Agent Thompson and Agent Krzeminski. He arrived just in time to see the truck carrying a massive ball of debris into the warehouse through the garage door. Dooley stood to the left of Thompson and Krzeminski as the truck slowly stopped inside the warehouse. Thompson stated plainly, "well here's the majority of what's left of Roxxon."

Dooley looked shocked as he saw the ball of debris, "all of Roxxon is mostly in that..." He said to himself.

Thompson agreed and put his hands in his pocket, "An entire chemical refinery squashed into a ball of debris." He shook his head, "Never seen anything like it."

Dooley looked up and down the massive ball of debris with a shocked expression, "This is scary stuff gentlemen. Kind of Technology that could give the A-bomb a run for its money. We need to find it fast."

Krzeminski turned to Thompson, "Think its magnets?" He asked curiously. Both Thompson and Dooley looked at him. Krzeminski shrugged, "What?"

Thompson stepped forward and tapped the ball of debris, "This mass has wood fused with metal fused with iron fused with concrete fused with stone..." He returned back to his old place and put his hands back in his pocket, "Last time i checked, stone didn't carry a magnetic charge."

Krzeminski laughed, "Excuse me Sir Isaac Newton."

Thompson looked up at the ball and countered, "That's gravity, you dumb ape."

Krzeminski shook his head, "Then what do you think did it?"

Dooley was staring at the mass and said plainly, "I think Howard Stark did it." He nodded, "Come on. We're going to Roxxon. Nobody burns your house down on accident." The trio turned but Dooley put his hand on Krzeminski's shoulder, "Not you Krzeminski. I got a special detail for a man with your skills." He walked off with Thompson as Krzeminski nodded and put his hands in pockets. Dooley called back, "Grab a crow bar, pull that thing apart, and find me some evidence!" His voice echoed.

Krzeminski sighed, "Ugh, you gotta be kidding me."

Thompson and Dooley got to the exit, but Dooley stopped and wagged his finger aimlessly, "We got more help now."

Thompson turned to face his chief, "who?"

Dooley looked straight at Thompson, "I got Captain Rogers all the way into the fold now. He's no longer tasked just to find Stark."
Thompson smiled, "We got Stark now."

Dooley shook his head, "Not yet." He then pointed out, "Now Captain Rogers can work alongside us instead of working individually with the intel we give him. We're now conducting a joint operation to find Stark and his technology."

Thompson smiled, "we shouldn't let this opportunity go to waste. We need to put the hero to work."

Dooley nodded, "Agreed. Though..." Thompson raised a brow in question. Dooley wagged his finger again, "Make sure Carter doesn't distract him while he's on the job. They may be engaged but finding Stark needs to be priority for Carter." Thompson laughed.

SSR New York City Branch "Bell Co. office"

Peggy just hung up the phone after she wrote down the address of the missing milk truck driver and milk truck in her notepad. She tore out the paper from her note pad then turned around and grabbed her jacket from the coat rack behind her desk. She draped her coat over her arm as she walked toward the elevator, but stopped when she saw what Sousa was working on at his desk. Out of curiosity she leaned to look over his shoulder and saw he was looking at the racing journal, he had circled in red "Uncle Bob". She said confidently catching Sousa by surprise, "Whibley's prospect third race."

Sousa turned around in his chair then looked back at his paper, "Sure?"

Peggy smiled, "Not at all. That's why it's called gambling." Sousa nodded then circled Whibley's Prospect in red. Peggy put her coat on, "I have to pop out to do an errand. Cover for me?"

Sousa focused on his paper, "You got it. You owe me one." Then nodded, "Say hi to Captain America for me."

Peggy rolled her eyes, "Not you too."

A man in a lab coat walked in front of Sousa's desk and dropped a brown paper sized envelope, "Got the pictures developed for you Daniel." The man walked off.

Sousa smiled and nodded, "Thanks a bunch!" he called out. He turned to face Peggy, "a photographer from the society pages was in the club and may have gotten a shot of the blonde Spider was with before he was killed." He turned and prepared to take the pictures out of the envelope.

Peggy bit her lip nervously as Sousa opened up the envelope. She buttoned up her suit coat, "That would be a big break. May i help you look?" She asked nervously.

Sousa looked back briefly at her, "Hm? I thought you were leaving." He pulled out a portion of the picture. But then stopped when he heard his name.

Krzeminski entered the room on the far side, "Sousa! Need you at the warehouse!" He called out.

Sousa looked up, "I'm busy."

"Well now you're extra busy." Krzeminski called. He stuck his hands in his pockets, "I got a ten ton ball of rocks and garbage with your name on it."

Sousa sighed, "Alright I'm coming, I'm coming." He put the pictures back in the envelope then placed it in his desk drawer and locked it.
Krzeminski called out to Peggy and pointed to her desk, "Carter, can you finish those reports and file them for me?" Peggy turned around and saw someone put a large stack of folders loaded with papers on her desk. Krzeminski clapped his hands, "Carter! Quit dreaming about Captain America and get on it." he turned and walked away to the hallway, "Let's go Sousa!"

Sousa stood up after locking his desk, grabbed his crutch, "Looks like I'm going to miss that race."

Peggy smiled nervously, "Probably for the best." She started to turn around for her desk but couldn't help look at Sousa's drawer. She paused deciding on a course of action then decided to make a phone call. She got to her phone and pressed the "no trace" buttoned then dialed the number.

Jarvis picked up his phone in his home and answered calmly, "Jarvis residence."

Peggy quickly spoke, "Mr. Jarvis I don't have much time so listen carefully. I need you to dispose of Howard's car."

Jarvis head shot up in shock, "I beg your pardon. Peggy did her best to speak quietly on the phone so she doesn't get heard by others in the office, "SSR is looking into Roxxon right now, and that car sustained damage at the refinery and is likely teaming with vita radiation. Make it disappear and fast."

Jarvis sighed and nodded then checked his watch, "Very well. The linens get out in 30 minutes so that gives me..."

Peggy shot back, "Now Mr. Jarvis."

Jarvis sighed again, "Fine. I'll forgo the linens. Did you locate the dairy truck?"

Peggy shook her head, "No, but I found the driver. Sheldon McFee uses the truck to commute from Cedar Grove, New Jersey."

Jarvis asked, "Should I contact Captain Rogers and leave straight away and get you?"

Peggy shook her head, "No. There's something I need to take care of first." She hung up the phone. She needed to be there to question Sheldon McFee because Steve and Jarvis don't know the questions to ask.

Camp LeHigh Head Quarters Building

Steve in his stars and stripes combat uniform with his shield on his back and helmet strapped to his war belt, walked into the headquarters building once again. He was radioed to come in while he was training his team, especially the new guys, to be combat ready. Once he walked in a young woman secretary at the front desk smiled at him, "Captain, phone for you." She held out the phone for him.

Steve took it and smiled back at her, "Thank you." He put the phone to his ear, "This is Captain Rogers."

It was Dooley using Hugh Jones' (the owner of Roxxon) phone in the main office of the Roxxon office building in the city. He said calmly, "Chief Dooley here Captain. I'll make this brief. I'm with Agent Thompson in the Roxxon Oil Corporation Headquarters." He nodded, "The owner, Hugh Jones gave us valuable information on Stark. Turns out Howard Stark has a molecular formula known as Nitramene. Nitramene can result in a concussive blast followed by an implosion. His work
with Nitramene is tied to his work and break through with Vita radiation." Steve stayed silent as he listened intently. Dooley nodded, "That being said, The refinery was definitely destroyed by Nitramene and we believe that this may have been an inside job, and we come to believe since Jones has contacts in Stark's company...we don't see why wouldn't stark have contacts in his."

Steve asked, "What do you need me to do chief?"

Dooley continued, "Turns out anyone who was near the blast would have vita radiation on them. We're going to scan the entire Roxxon staff and employees, and we need you to come in and be an extra pair of eyes. Whoever done this might still have the weapon on them, so we might need to take 'em down. That's where you come in Captain."

Steve responded coolly, "I'm on my way sir." He hung up the phone and thanked the secretary.

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SSR New York City "New York Bell Co."

Peggy sat back against her chair with her feet up on her desk as she ate a tangerine slice by slice. She needed to break into Sousa's desk to grab the pictures he obtained, but she needed a brief window to break in. But so far there has been a lot of foot traffic in and out of the area she was sitting. But, suddenly her luck changed when the office became quiet and a little empty all of a sudden, probably because most of everyone was off on their lunch break, save for a few agents at their desks including her.

She grabbed her lock picking device that was disguised like a hair clip on her desk, then stood up smoothly. She quietly and slowly walked toward Sousa's desk. She spotted Sousa approaching from the far end of the hallway, which she figured gave her at least 90 seconds to break into his desk. She knew he didn't see her so she swiftly and silently got down on her knees, tucked herself under his desk, then stuck her locking picking tool into Sousa's drawer that held the picture and began to pick it. As she tried picking the lock she heard Sousa's desk phone ring. Peggy swiftly peeked under his desk and spotted Sousa's cane approaching closer than she expected. She whispered to herself, "Bloody hell." She removed her tool and quietly crawled back to her desk, out of sight from Sousa as his desk phone continued to ring.

When she crawled back to her desk she sneakily grabbed a pencil from one of her desk drawers while she was still on her knees. She planned to pretend she dropped a pencil and was looking for it.

Sousa limped to his desk and picked up his phone, "Sousa." He turned around and saw Peggy slowly stand up with a pencil in hand. She fixed her blouse and skirt before sitting down. She smiled at him and he smiled back. Sousa nodded, "Yes chief, she's here. Yeah I'll put her on." He held out the phone away from him, "Carter, Chief Dooley wants you."

Peggy nodded and stood up then headed to Sousa and grabbed his phone, "Yes Chief Dooley." Sousa looked at her curiously as she nodded. Peggy nodded, "Vita Ray detector? Yes, I think I can find that in the Project Rebirth boxes." She hung up the phone.

Sousa asked curiously, "what was that all about?"

Peggy sighed, "Probably going to end up filing something again."

Sousa nodded, "I hope you get to do more for this case."

Peggy smiled, "Me too." She looked down at him, "Weren't you going to the warehouse?"

Sousa nodded, "Yeah but Krzeminski found someone better."
Peggy smiled, "Fair enough." she said while she walked off.

**Roxxon Oil Corporation Headquarters**

Peggy was directed to the main office all the way at the top floor. She entered the large main office with the vita ray detector in hand and saw Chief Dooley and Agent Thompson standing in front of a large desk besides two chairs reading through files. The president of Roxxon, an older white gentleman in a dark blue suit, named Hugh Jones was drinking whiskey behind his large green chair next to his long haired assistant who was wearing a white suit. Peggy walked in silently and with a cold expression. Dooley looked up from his file and saw Peggy, "Carter about time."

Hugh Jones stepped to the right of his chair intrigued by Peggy's beauty, "I didn't know our government hired Captain America's beautiful fiancé as a secretary." He chuckled recognizing her face from the article about the engagement announcement, "Our government has good tastes in secretaries I give them that. I'm sorry, what was your name Darling?"

Peggy stopped in front of Dooley and replied coldly, "Agent."

Jones chuckled, "that's a lovely ring to it. Is that what Captain America calls you? Spice up your romance a little." He laughed as did his assistant.

Peggy kept her cold expression and handed the Vita ray detector to Dooley, "Vita ray detector as requested." she took a step back, "I'll see you in the office."

Dooley put down his file upon receiving the detector and said, "What's the rush?"

Thompson nodded, "Yeah stick around. We can use your help."

Peggy looked at the two of them, "it isn't filing is it?"

Dooley shook his head, "turns out anyone next to the Nitramene blast was exposed to vita radiation which is probably still somewhere on their person."

Thompson nodded, "So we're scanning everyone on the Roxxon staff. There's a chance this is an inside job." He continued to go through the file in his hands.

Jones chuckled, "Yeah there's a chance I'll be taking Rita Hayworth home tonight, but it's unlikely if you catch my drift." He pointed out to Thompson as he laughed. Peggy smiled for the first time since she got in there.

Dooley pointed out once again, "If you got some of Stark's guys in your pocket there's a chance he's got some of yours in his."

Peggy asked, "What do I need to do?"

Dooley held out the detector, "How comfortable are you with this? You'll be dealing with the ladies." Peggy nodded and took the device.

Thompson stated plainly as he looked through the file, "I volunteered. But chief said it wouldn't be appropriate." He looked up and smiled. Peggy gave a small laugh.

Suddenly everyone looked to the door when it opened. At the door way stood Captain America in full gear with helmet on as well. Peggy's face lit up when she saw him, she smiled lovingly toward him, happy to see him. She was glad no one but Steve could see her face right that second. Steve
gave her a small brief smile before stepping forward, "Captain Rogers reporting as ordered."

Dooley nodded, "Ah Captain Rogers good to see you. Now we can begin scanning the staff."

Jones looked at Dooley in surprise, "What's he doing here again?"

Dooley said without looking back at him, "He's here to ensure nothing crazy happens if there is Nitramene involved here." Jones nodded in understanding. Dooley turned to Thompson, "Agents Thompson and Carter with me, we're heading down to get everything started." He then nodded to Hugh Jones, "Mr. Jones its best you join us so you can see we aren't doing anything illegal."

Jones nodded, "That is the plan gentlemen."

Dooley looked at Steve and said calmly, "Captain, its best you join us to assure extra security."

Steve nodded, "Understood."

As soon as they left the office, Peggy broke off from the group and said, "I'll meet you down there, I have to go to the ladies room."

Dooley continued walking with the group and said without looking, "make it quick Carter."

Jones smiled at Steve, "Got a mighty fine woman there Captain America. She's splendid."

Steve said nothing at first, causing an awkward silence. Then Steve said calmly, "You don't treat people like that Mr. Jones. Men or women. They aren't things, they are people." He stopped causing everyone to stop as well. He and looked coldly at Jones, "So your disrespect to Agent Carter I'll consider it dead between us for now." Steve continued walking.

Dooley smiled, "Nice." Dooley started walking after Steve leading the group.

Jones rubbed the back of his neck, "He's a little too defensive I think."

Thompson stated plainly, "You insulted his fiancé...he doesn't take kindly to that. Trust me I know from experience."

Jones raised an eye brow, "really?"

Dooley shot back, "Yes really." He started to pick up the pace to catch up with Steve, "Let's go. We have a job to do."

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Peggy stepped into the ladies room and quickly started to check the stalls for anyone in the ladies room. Once she was all alone, she placed the vita ray detector on the sink counter then walked over and locked the bathroom door so she can be in private. She removed her suit jacket and placed it on the sink counter, then picked up the vita ray detector and began scanning herself. Worried that she may have gotten Vita Radiation on her body from her raid at the refinery, she quickly but thoroughly scanned every inch of her body. She kept looking over her shoulder, checking if someone was trying to open the door.

After scanning her body, she felt satisfied that she was clean. She put the vita ray detector down on the counter and sighed a sigh of relief as she leaned on the counter. The detector started to go off causing her to quickly look at the device resting near her left wrist. She lifted her wrist and the detector stopped buzzing, she put her hand down and it buzzed again.

Thinking quickly, she picked up the detector and scanned her left wrist over and over again, still the
detector buzzed. She removed her watch, placed it on the counter, and then scanned her wrist. Nothing. She let out a sigh of relief then scanned her watch causing the detector to go off again. She shook her head, "Sorry nana." She carefully picked up the watch and tossed it in the trash can next to the counter. Peggy tossed on her suit jacket on, fixed her business attire, fixed her hair, and made herself look presentable. She grabbed the detector then was about to step off when she came to a sudden realization. Steve was dangerously close to the Nitramene in the refinery and was fully exposed to it for longer. She looked at the mirror and she had a face of worry and concern. She hoped they wouldn't detect anything on Steve.

Every Roxxon employee was lined up in a single file line in a large, bright, and open hall way. Peggy and Thompson stood in front of the long line scanning their respective employees as Chief Dooley and Roxxon President Hugh Jones sat at a long table watching intently behind the agents. Dooley divided his attention between watching the line and looking through the roster of everyone who works in the building. Jones' assistant provided him with a constant flow of drinks during this whole process while Steve stood behind Dooley silently watching everyone.

After hours of scanning hundreds of employees, there were no results so far and they still had another hundred to go, but Dooley kept his calm and cold stare at the line. Steve remained silent behind Dooley and kept a calm expression as the scanning continued. Many of the employees looked nervous to start but became extremely nervous when they saw Captain America. Things must be getting real if Captain America is around. Another man stepped forward to the Agents, Thompson scanned him with the Vita-ray detector and got a negative result. He nodded letting the man go. A long blonde haired woman in a bright color full dress stepped forward to the Agents. Thompson nodded at Peggy, "Carter." He said as he handed her the vita rat detector.

Peggy took the detector and scanned the blonde woman up and down. No result. She looked at Thompson, "Clear." She handed him the detector.

Thompson nodded, "Next." He called to the line.

A short stern looking man with dark hair in white workers overalls stepped forward, and Peggy instantly recognized him. The man stared at her for a moment. Steve saw the man and also instantly recognized him. He slowly reached for his shield on his back. The man's face remained stoic even when he recognized Peggy and seeing Captain America reaching for his shield slowly. Steve unlatched his shield slowly then held it out in front of him by the rim against his pelvis.

Thompson stepped forward with the vita ray detector to begin scanning. He scanned the man up and down and so far he was clean. Peggy noticed his name tag which read, "Van Ert". The man smiled smugly at both her and Steve. Peggy bit her lip, she needed to expose him without giving away her involvement at the refinery.

Thompson stepped aside, "Clear! Next!" Van Ert turned around and started to leave. Steve clenched the rim of his shield.

Peggy stepped in front of Thompson and called, "Excuse me sir!" Van Ert didn't stop. She yelled out more forcefully, "Sir, Stop!" Finally Van Ert stopped with his back towards her. Steve clenched his shield tighter.

Thompson looked at Peggy curiously, "What are you doing Carter?"

Dooley tilted his head and focused his attention on Peggy, "What's this about?"

Peggy glanced at Steve then back at Dooley, "Mr. James, I noticed employees wearing combinations
of uniforms. Do they have a place to change on site?"

Hugh James nodded and stated plainly, "we have locker rooms for employees who handle hazardous materials." He smiled cheekily.

Dooley focuses his eyes, "get to the point Carter."

Peggy stated, "From experience, the low levels of Vita Radiation will barely saturate the top layer of a person's skin and a hot shower would wash it out straight away." She turned briefly to the man then back at Dooley, "But clothing...it will maintain the radiation for longer. Trousers, shoes, and even a simple wrist watch." She leaned on one hip, "I suggest we check the clothes the men wore to work this morning."

Dooley nodded and tapped his finger on the table, "Not a bad idea Carter get on..." He noticed the man in question turn around and run away from them. "HEY!" Dooley called out.

Van Ert took off sprinting to escape, Thompson gave chase immediately followed by Dooley shooting out of his chair and chasing right after them. Steve instantly brought his shield up to throw it but realized he would most likely hit an innocent person in the line. He lowered his shield then ran around the table next to Peggy. He heard Thompson yell, "Stop!" As Thompson and Dooley ran down the hallway passed confused employees. The man they needed was outrunning the SSR agents.

Steve looked at Peggy who had a confident smile on her face. Peggy looked at Hugh Jones and asked, "Where does that lead?" Steve looked at Jones then at Peggy curiously.

"Down to the main lobby." Jones said calmly.

Peggy asked, "Stairwell?" Jones smiled and pointed to a door behind her. Peggy nodded and walked off briskly with Steve following close behind. They passed the front part of the line where the employees were both confused and amazed of what's going on. Steve stepped passed her and opened the stairwell door for her. Peggy smiled, "Thank you darling." She said as she quickly walked into the stairwell.

As Peggy and Steve walked quickly down the steps, a number of employees looked at them confused and surprised. Seeing Captain America in full combat gear, shield in hand, walking with a beautiful woman, which some recognized her as his fiancé, was not an everyday site to see here. Though not many people recognized Peggy from the picture in the paper, which was a plus for her.

Steve and Peggy reached the first floor and left the stairwell in no time at all. Peggy quickly reached out and grabbed a man's brown brief case, "Mind if I borrow this?" She asked rhetorically while the man looked at her shocked. Peggy nodded at Steve as they leaned up against a wall, hiding around the corner near the stairway entrance. Employees watched them in confusion. Steve didn't need explanation on the plan.

They heard rapid steps and Thompson yelling, "I SAID STOP!" As the sound of rapid footsteps got closer, Peggy leaned forward and swung the brown brief case at knee level, causing the Van Ert to trip forward and lose his footing right as Steve swung his shield out from around the corner. As if it was in slow motion, Van Ert made contact with the star on the shield for a brief moment while the rest of his body continued its forward motion flipping him upside down, and crashing him down onto the ground head first with a massive thud. Steve looked down at the unconscious man then nodded at Peggy. Peggy smiled as she put down the brief case so she can fix her business attire.

Dooley and Thompson caught up to them but out of breath. Dooley was perspiring heavily as he
stepped next to Peggy. Thompson waddled tiredly to the unconscious man then knelt down to handcuff him. Peggy looked at both Thompson and Dooley. "Well. Is that all?"

"Good work Carter." Dooley said in between breaths.

Thompson nodded, "Yeah." Then said in between breaths, "Good hit Cap."

Steve chuckled as he hooked his shield on his back, "It was Peggy's idea." Peggy turned away for a moment to hide a smile.

SSR New York City "New York Bell Co."

Van Ert woke up slowly with a wad of fabric shoved up both his nostrils and a bandage taped over the bridge of his nose. He groaned as his eyes focused on the dark ceiling above him. He looked down at his wrists and found out both of his wrists were handcuffed to his chair. He looked up and noticed the room was dim, and he was sitting behind a table with a lamp on the left side of the table providing the only source of bright light. He saw a stern looking man in a suit sitting at the other side of the small table. He looked left to the single door and saw a man in a white collared shirt and black tie, black suspenders, and black pants, rolling his sleeves. He groaned again.

Dooley leaned forward and nodded, "You know those bandages on your face?" He smiled, "That's from Captain America's shield." Van Ert groaned. Dooley smiled, "Rise and shine." He put a carrot and a large wooden stick on the table in front of Van Ert. He sighed, "I'm not going to lie to you...you're in a bad spot. We got physical evidence linking you to an act of industrial sabotage...and probably treason." Thompson finished rolling his sleeves then leaned against the door with his arms crossed. Dooley drew a circle over the table, "With the charges you're looking at now...I don't see anywhere you'll end up besides the electric chair." He said softly. He pointed at Van Ert, "But. You do have the opportunity...to switch seats with someone else." He leaned closer, "Thing is. Fighting crime...is a lot like fishing with your buddies. Biggest fish wins." He put his hand up, "No offense. But, you're not the biggest fish. But, that doesn't mean you aren't plenty big enough for me to feed my bosses." He leaned back, "Say you lead me to a bigger fish, like a grouper or a shark...I can see myself letting you off the line."

Van Ert shook his head, "I don't believe you."

Dooley leaned forward and put his arms on the table, "Well you should. I'm in law enforcement." Thompson gave a cold stare at Van Ert. Dooley chuckled, "Thing is, Mr. Van. Ert." He nodded to Thompson, "We are in a bit of an accelerated timeline. A lot of pressure to get this case sewn up and tied with a bow." He pointed to the door, "So this deal I'm offering... Will expire as soon as I leave the room." He leaned even closer, "All you need to do...is point us in the direction of your employer. Just give us a name." He paused, there was no answer. Dooley pressed, "Just. Give. Us. A. Name." Van Ert just stared at him silently. Dooley shook his head and stood up, grabbing the carrot, "Don't say I didn't give you the easy way."

Van Ert finally spoke up, "You going to send in your henchmen Captain America?" He shook his head, "I won't talk. Not even if he came in."

Dooley smiled, "Captain Rogers...isn't here. He doesn't like the idea of..." He looked at the stick then at Van Ert, "Using the stick in an interrogation. If you catch what I'm saying." He smiled evilly. Van Ert closed his eyes. He tapped the carrot on the table then laughed as Thompson let him out of the room.

Thompson approached Van Ert then stopped in front of him, leaning against the table. Van Ert shook
his head, "Even Captain America won't break me. I'm not going to talk."

Thompson chuckled then grabbed the stick and tapped Van Ert on the shoulder with it, "As chief said. Captain America frowns on this kind of thing. So what he doesn't know won't hurt him." He tapped Van Ert on the jaw with the stick, "But, unlucky for you...I'm here to make you sing." Thompson smiled evilly, "You might want to bite down on this."

The moment Van Ert got a good bite on the stick, Thompson punched him at the side of his face with such velocity it made Van Ert get whiplash.

Behind the interrogation one sided mirror window, Chief Dooley, Sousa, and Peggy watched as Thompson put the beating on Van Ert. Peggy slightly shook her head, she too didn't agree with physical abuse of a prisoner who couldn't defend himself. She's a lot like Steve, against bullies, against harming defenseless individuals, and seeking to always do the right thing. She understood why Steve left for base after delivering Van Ert to the SSR, and refusing to take part in the interrogation. He didn't want to be the one beating down on a defenseless weaker man.

She again shook her head when she saw Thompson hit Van Ert with another powerful punch. Yes, Van Ert is the enemy who is blamed for constructing the Nitramene, but he's still a defenseless man. She heard Sousa, "Hate to see what would happen with the carrot." He said plainly.

Dooley looked at Peggy, "Hey Carter since you're his fiancé and all that...why doesn't Captain Rogers not like interrogating bad guys."

Sousa nodded, "Yeah. He kills them but..."

Peggy smiled, "He refuses to take part in the physical abuse of the interrogation." She nodded to the beating in the other room, "He doesn't believe in killing or mistreating unarmed individuals who can't defend themselves. He's about doing the right thing." She smiled.

Dooley chuckled, "This is necessary. Van Ert is the bad guy." He nodded at the interrogation scene, "I guarantee it, and if everything depended on it...I'm sure Captain Rogers would put the beating on someone to talk." He smiled, "Everyone has their exceptions."

Peggy shook her head. Even in the worst of times during the war, Steve always tried to do the right thing.

Dooley looked at Peggy, "Take off for the night Carter." He smiled, "A lady shouldn't be looking at this."

Peggy sighed, knowing she couldn't convince them to stop nor take part in questioning. "Play nice." She said plainly. She turned and walked out of the room, her high heels clicking as she walked.

**Stark Penthouse**

It was late in the evening in the city and the sun is just about to disappear behind the horizon, displaying beautiful colors in the evening sky. After work Peggy drove over to the Stark penthouse to meet up with Steve. Although she said they'll only stay there for a night, it might be a little longer because they have nowhere to go.

She waited patiently in the master bedroom, in the same attire she wore all day, laying on the bed with her head propped up on a pillow. She was going over how to go about...catching Sheldon McFee and questioning him. On top of that she was worried about the picture Sousa has of the
blonde in the club. This is getting too dangerous for both of them. Seems like the deeper they dig the more in danger they are. Especially Steve, he's practically acting blind through the majority of this. All she wants is to have her shot in this job and then marry Steve. That's all she wants, but now she has to fumble about clearing Stark's name while the threat of treason, losing her life, and losing the love of her life looms over her.

She heard the front door open and Steve call her name, "Peggy?"

Peggy smiled happily to see Steve, "I'm in here!" She called back. She heard Steve's heavy footsteps as he approached the room. He stepped into the doorway and paused with a big warm smile. He had a white t-shirt, red/blue combat trousers, and his brown combat boots. She beamed happily at him, "Hey darling."

Steve finally stepped in, "Hey beautiful." He said softly. He sat down on her side of the bed. She sat up and started to rub his back affectionately. Steve smiled and looked at her, "That was a good hit you did earlier."

She smiled, "Thanks. You weren't to bad yourself."

Steve chuckled, "Looks like Dooley and Thompson might be warming up to you."

Peggy sat up onto her knees and hugged him from behind and rested her chin on his shoulder, "I hope so."

Steve smiled and turned his head to look at her, "I know so."

Peggy smiled, made him look at her, and kissed him on the lips, "I love you." She kissed him again, "I love you." She rested her chin back on his shoulder again.

Steve smiled, "I love you too." He looked forward and held her hands that were wrapped around his body. He turned serious, "Are they..."

Peggy stated plainly, "Yes. When I left they just started." Steve sighed and ran a hand through his hair. Peggy understood his frustration. He doesn't want the SSR to torture an unarmed person, but he knows he can't actually stop them without being hostile. The SSR are on their own program, so Steve has no operational authority unless the SSR is with him in a combat exercise when the Army is in charge.

Steve sighed, "You know they linked the refinery and the club incident to Stark right? We're back racing." Peggy just looked down and kissed his shoulder.

Peggy kissed his cheek and decided to change the subject, "I got the milk truck and the name and address of the man who operates it."

Steve smiled, "Nice, so who and where is he?"

Peggy stated plainly while keeping her chin on his shoulder, "His name is Sheldon McFee, lives up at Ceden Grove, New Jersey."

"When do we go?" Steve said confidently.

Peggy laughed and hugged him tighter, "Tonight was the plan. We'll go meet Jarvis at the diner in an hour and he'll drive us to the address, so we don't have to risk of someone seeing our car."

Steve smiled, "Sounds like a plan." They shared another brief kiss.
The sun set far beneath the horizon by the time Peggy and Steve left for the diner, and the dark sky was illuminated by the bright city lights of New York City. Steve had essentially the same thing on as earlier, white t-shirt, blue combat trousers, brown combat boots, his US Army canvas bag holding the rest of his uniform, and his shield strapped to the pack. Peggy wore her business suit from the previous days, white business blouse, under blue women’s business suit jacket, and matching blue business skirt. Steve was far from inconspicuous, but he didn't care. He was sure he and Peggy could spot a tail if there was someone following them. But to everyone in the public, it just looked like Captain America is taking his best girl out to the town. Which he is in a manner of speaking.

Steve and Peggy walked closely together to the diner, with Peggy's arm linked around Steve's holding him close. They walked slowly through the busy streets of night life New York City, as many people spotted Captain America instantly as they walked passed the couple. People worshipped Steve, while women envy Peggy. They whispered sweet nothings as they walked through the city, and when they finally made it to the diner there was no sign of Jarvis. Peggy opted to stand and wait in front of the diner for Jarvis for however long it takes him. So much for being that punctual butler.

Steve and Peggy fiddled with each other's hands as they talked to pass the time. Steve rubbed Peggy's hand with his, "So. I remember saying you're friends with someone here." He nodded to the diner, "Something about a good friend. Can I meet her?" He chuckled.

Peggy laughed, "Angie will talk you're ear off." They laughed, "And she's a quite a fan of yours."

Steve chuckled, "She sounds like a nice person."

Peggy laughed, "I'm sure you say that about all the girls."

Steve looked shocked, "Peggy I..."

Peggy laughed loudly and patted his shoulder lovingly, "Darling I'm only joking." She drew him closer by the belt with her free hand, "You make it so easy for me to crack jokes."

Steve shook his head, "You're and evil, evil woman." He laughed, "But I love it." Peggy smiled.

There was a loud tapping on one of the windows of the diner that got their attention. They looked and saw Angie the energetic go-happy waitress tapping on a window from the inside. Angie held up a cut out of a "want ad" against the window with a huge smile, "I found one!"

Peggy looked at Steve for a moment then looked at Angie, "We're late for our appointment!" Steve nodded understanding what she's trying to do.

Angie kept going, "It's got its own bathroom!" She said through the window.

Peggy turned her back while holding Steve's hand, "I have no idea what you're saying!"

Angie smiled then held out the ad again, "Don't make me come out there!" She just realized the man next to Peggy. He turned around with her and noticed a big circular object on his back. After a moment she noticed who it was. She gasped and jumped up and down then started to squeal in excitement in a high pitch little girl voice.

Both Steve and Peggy turned around with questioning looks. Steve smiled, "That's Angie isn't it."
Peggy smiled, "That's Angie. You're number two fan."

The few patrons in the diner stood up and looked out the window with curious looks to see what got the waitress all worked up. Angie squealed in excitement, "Captain America is outside!" Everyone including other employees in the diner, whispered to each other, and looked excitedly out the window. Some of the patrons walked slowly to the door cautiously.

Peggy saw what was happening and turned to Steve, "Darling wait right here."

Steve nodded, "Sure thing."

Peggy went through the revolving door to calm down an excited Angie. Moment she walked through, Angie ran up and hugged her tightly and excitedly. Peggy smiled as she hugged back, "Angie, I really think you should..."

Angie let her go and said excitedly interrupting Peggy, "It may be dark outside, but just seeing his silhouette, I can tell he's way hotter in person!" She jumped happily, "You got to let me meet him and tell me all the details of how you two ended up together!"

Peggy smiled gently, "Angie, I..."

Angie held a finger to silence her then brought the want ad up, "One second English, let me tell you about this place. You might like it and you could let me meet Captain Hunk out there." She started to read the want ad quickly and energetically, "Safe community for modern professionals: Apartment for rent, five hundred and fifty square feet, furnished, full bath, high floors, quiet building, security assured, close proximity to the Lexington Avenue Local, Continental breakfast upon request...

Angie looked up at Peggy, "Paradise or what?"

Peggy nodded astonished, "That sounds... perfect."

Angie smiled, "That's because it is. Everyone will love you there, especially if Captain America ends up living there too." She handed her the want ad, "3C if you need a cup of sugar." She smiled widely.

Peggy didn't know what to say. She wanted to take this offer and move in with Steve there. It would be perfect, she would be living with Steve and she'll have Angie as a neighbor. It would be absolutely perfect. But... Peggy didn't want to drag her close friend into this life of espionage, fearing an assassin's bullet will take Angie instead of her. She'll rather take the hit than someone else who was never even a part of it. Angie smiled, "Can I meet your Fiancé Captain Steve Rogers America! Now!"

Peggy frowned, "Angie...We can't take this."

Angie frowned too and shook her head, "This place is great, and you two need a place, its co-gender, family living... So I'm thinking it's me..."

Peggy shook her head, "No it's not. Steve and I...might not be good neighbors." The ladies realized that patrons and employees in the diner were both watching Steve as he stood outside, and whispering to each other about something the two ladies couldn't quite hear. Angie frowned at Peggy sadly. Peggy didn't want to blow off her friend or hurt her, she was sad too.

Steve saw Jarvis pull up in a all-new black car. Jarvis looked through the passenger window and nodded. Steve turned around and entered the diner through the revolving door, "Honey, our ride is here." The patrons and employees all gave looks of surprise when they saw him enter.
Peggy turned and smiled, "Coming darling." She tried reassuring Angie with a friendly smile, "I'll see you later." She turned to go to Steve. Angie gave a sad smile.

Steve waved, "Hi Angie." Then left with Peggy. Angie smiled a happy smile. Captain America said hi to her, and the only reason why he would know her name is if Peggy talked about her. Angie's spirit lifted.

Outside the diner, Jarvis hopped out of the car to try open the door for Peggy, but Peggy and Steve already reached the car before Jarvis could make it around. Peggy said plainly, "Too late Mr. Jarvis."

Jarvis jumped in the car as Peggy jumped into the front passenger seat and Steve in the back.

The black car carrying the trio drove quickly down a wooded windy dirt road. The Captain America Adventure Program came on the radio. The announcer with heavy bravado, "Back to the Captain America Adventure Program! Back in the snowy mountains of the Eastern Alps battalion triage nurse, Betty Carber, tidies up while the men fight for their country."

Steve was putting on his combat gear when the show came on, "Wait, what?"

The show continued with a large wooden bang and a girly damsel in distress voice came on, "Oh no! Nazi's...Again! They got me all tied up! If only Captain America was here to save me!"

Peggy slammed her finger on the radio off button, "Who writes this rubbish?" She yelled angrily.

Steve put his helmet on, "What did I just listen to?"

Peggy turned to look at him, "Radio show doing fictional stories about your..." She put up air quotes, "...'adventures'..." She frowned, "There's a company that still owns your theater title."

Steve sighed, "...I hate show biz." He shook his head, "I hope they know I'm engaged right? That I didn't have a thing for some triage nurse."

Peggy smiled, "That's why it's just a show darling. It's rubbish."

Jarvis smiled, "I rather enjoy it actually." He looked at the rear view mirror at Steve, "Though it's nothing like the real thing."

Peggy smiled, "Not even a little bit." Steve loaded his .45 and cocked it then holstered on his hip. Peggy took out her pistol from her purse and loaded a magazine then said, "You did dispose of that car Mr. Jarvis?" She then removed her engagement ring and gently slid it into her purse.

Jarvis nodded, "Yes, I left it on the side with the key in the ignition." He frowned, "It felt like a terrible waste though."

Peggy chuckled, "It was used in a crime we committed Mr. Jarvis."

Steve leaned forward, "We need to hurry." Peggy nodded.

"He's right, we don't have much time. I'm afraid Agent Thompson could be very persuasive." Peggy said.

At the SSR Agent Thompson finished the physical interrogation of Van Ert. After being beaten into submission and the stick breaking, Van Ert finally gave in. Before becoming unconscious from multiple beatings, he gave the name Leet Brannis, and said there was a milk truck from the Daisy
Clover Dairy present at the refinery before it was destroyed. Leet Brannis paid the owner of the truck to transport the Nitramene for him, and that's why the milk truck was at the refinery. Those specific answers made Thompson surprised that he lasted that long and gave a cognitive answer even after his hit from Captain America.

Chief Dooley felt that there was a connection between Leet Brannis and Stark, and that Brannis will lead them eventually to Stark and his weapons of destruction. Leet Brannis is the key while Van Ert is just a pawn in a much bigger "Stark Scheme".

After the interrogation Sousa was able to find out more about the missing milk truck and the one who operates it, he was able to get the name Sheldon McFee and his address. Dooley quickly ordered the Agents Thompson, Krzeminski, and Sousa to follow him to retrieve McFee.

Cedan Grove, NJ

It was late at night with the moon shining bright when Jarvis, Peggy, and Steve finally arrived near the target address, miles from the bright lights and the hustle and bustle of the big city. They arrived on a dirt road to a large 418 acre clearing of farm land that was surrounded by tall trees. Peggy saw the small two story house in the middle of the clearing about half a mile away from them, "Pull over to the left." Jarvis stopped the car on the side of the road next to a long dog ear cut wood fence that spanned the majority of the road.

Steve scanned the lone house and noticed all the lights were out, "Lights are out." He stated plainly then noticed the milk truck parked out in front, "He's definitely home. Got eyes on the milk truck."

Peggy took out her small binoculars, "From the looks of things. We got the element of surprise."

Jarvis sighed, "Here we go again." He turned around and saw Steve quietly get out of the car and gently close the door.

Peggy took off her blue suit jacket, "Fewer guards than Roxxon at least."

Jarvis looked at Peggy and asked sarcastically, "Shall I leave the engine running in case you two trigger another implosion?"

Peggy folded up her jacket nicely, "Mr. Jarvis, go home to your wife. If you leave now you might even catch the end of Benny Goodman." She leaned forward then draped her nicely folded jacket over her seat.

"Ms. Carter, when you called for my help, I thought you needed more than a cab. I thought I was rather useful last time." Jarvis pleaded to help. There was a quiet tap on the passenger window, they both looked and saw Steve quietly telling Peggy to go.

Peggy nodded then looked at Jarvis, "You were, but in this occasion." She quietly opened the door, "I got my own ride home." She looked out to the car, "So go home. We have this under control." She quietly closed the door. Jarvis shook his head in frustration, the nerve of this woman.

Peggy stood outside with Steve scanning the area around the house quietly. Steve whispered, "Looks clear."

Peggy nodded, "Let's go. Nice and quiet."

Steve smiled at her, "You're show. I'll follow you." He grabbed his shield then drew his pistol. Peggy quietly started walking slowly on the gravel road.
The couple made as little noise as possible and hugged the shadows to hide from the bright moon light as they approached the target house. When they finally got to the milk truck in front of the house, Peggy automatically went to the back of the truck to check if the Nitramene was still in there. She quietly opened the back doors of the truck and was greeted by the bright orange gold glow of dozens of trays of Nitramene grenades. Peggy closed the doors quietly and looked over at Steve who had his back to her as he scanned the house, she whispered quietly, "Steve. All the Nitramene is in here still."

Steve turned his head to her briefly, "Good. Now let's..." He was interrupted by the sound of the radio coming on from inside the house. The radio started to play the "Captain America Adventure Program".

Peggy shook her head then quietly walked to Steve, "I'll go through the back door." She whispered.

Steve nodded, "I'll go through the front door." They both nodded then quietly went their separate ways.

Peggy quietly entered the dim lit house through the back door and stepped lightly and quietly on the rugs covering the hard wood toward the sound of the radio show. She rounded the corner and saw a quite large man leaning against the fire place mantel piece next to the small box radio. She figured the man is Mr. McFee. The damsel on the radio called in distress, "If only Captain America could come and rescue me!"

Peggy stepped quietly closer toward McFee as the impersonator of Captain America came on, "Ms. Carber isn't going anywhere with you Nazi Scum!" She stopped when she accidentally made the hard wood floor under her creak. She saw the man turn his head slightly then after a moment of pause, he quickly grabbed his shotgun that was next to him and turned around.

Peggy kicked the shot gun causing him to drop it, she instantly ducked under a swing from McFee's fist then she quickly stood up again and kicked him in his gut sending him stumbling backwards to the mantel. Her high heel became an effective weapon at that moment. McFee quickly got his balance against the mantel as Peggy stepped forward, ready for another bounce. He was about to lunge at her when Steve's sheild rocketed into his side.

McFee screamed in pain as he grabbed his wounded side and fell to his knees. Through his agony he looked to his left and saw Captain America's sheild in the dim light. He groaned and coughed up blood, then looked up to his front door that was now wide open and saw a silhouette of a tall muscular man standing in the moon light. He coughed up more blood then looked to his right and saw a woman looking down at him. He closed his eyes.

Peggy grabbed the back of his head by his hair and punched him across the jaw. She let go and his body went limp as it fell to the ground. Peggy's heels clicked on the wood floor as she walked over and picked up Steve's sheild. She chuckled, "I hope that sheild didn't hit anything important. We need him to answer questions."

Steve chuckled as his heavy steps were heard throughout the house, "Says the beautiful dame who knocked him out." They both shared a small laugh.

The "Captain America Adventure Program" continued on. The damsel happily called out, "Oh Thank You Captain America. Thank you for saving me!"

Steve sighed, "Want to turn that off?" He grabbed his sheild from Peggy and secured it to his back.
Peggy nodded, "Most definitely." She stepped over the unconscious body of McFee and turned off the radio, "Why does this keep playing when I'm around..." She rolled her eyes. Once Peggy stepped away from the body, Steve effortlessly picked up the body and put him down gently on one of the chairs in the dining room. Peggy moved McFee's hands through the back of the chair and handcuffed him.

Peggy stood next to Steve in front of the unconscious McFee and shook her head, "So hard getting straight answers from people nowadays." She sighed, "What happened to a nice cup of tea and a simple nice interrogation."

Steve chuckled, "I missed the time when I believed the craziest thing Stark ever created, was me." They chuckled. They heard the front door open, they reacted quickly and ran for the door.

Outside the house, Peggy and Steve saw a man trying to start the milk truck, they quickly ran to the truck and both drew their weapons at the driver. It was the same man they had a standoff with at the refinery. He was wearing a black suit and tie this time. Peggy had a look of realization as Steve kept his weapon pointed at the man while he held a cold stare. The man took his hands off the wheel and the ignition, then held them up. Steve walked into the truck and yanked him out of the seat.

Peggy shoved him against the side of the truck and held her gun to his head, "Having car trouble?" The man closed his eyes in frustration.

Jarvis appeared around back of the truck and leaned against the side, "Nothing that can't be fixed." He said confidently.

Peggy looked at him, "Jarvis?" She said surprised keeping her gun against the man's head.

Steve nodded at Jarvis, "Good work there Mr. Jarvis."

"What are you doing here?" Peggy asked angrily.

Jarvis nodded and rubbed his hands together, "I sabotaged the truck so it won't start.

Peggy looked at him, "Jarvis?" She said surprised keeping her gun against the man's head.

Steve nodded at Jarvis, "Good work there Mr. Jarvis."

"What are you doing here?" Peggy asked angrily.

Jarvis nodded and rubbed his hands together, "I sabotaged the truck so it won't start.

Peggy rolled her eyes, "We know now." She nodded to the engine, "Now go fix it because that's our ride out of here." She said angrily. Jarvis sighed and went around the group to open the hood of the truck. Peggy stared coldly at the man, "Who are you? I remember you from the refinery! Now tell me who you are!" The man smiled smugly at her. She groaned and reached into his suit pants pocket with her free hand and pulled out his device then pressed it flushed against his throat then asked again, "who are you?"

The man replied in a synthesized voice, "My name is Leet Brannis."

Peggy glared at him, "How are you involved?"

Brannis had a neutral expression, "I'm merely a businessman. I sold a Nitramene bomb to Raymond and paid to use Mr. McFee's milk truck to move the Nitramene..."

"Where's Stark's inventions?" Peggy asked coldly.

Brannis spoke through the voice synthesizer, "I want protection."

Steve stepped forward and holstered his weapon, "The SSR will take you in as long as you talk to us right now." He said seriously.
Jarvis stopped working on the engine for a moment then turned to them and whispered, "Ask him about a leviathan."

Peggy sighed then asked, "Who is Leviathan?"

Brannis instantly replied, "Not a who. A what."

Steve stepped closer to them, "They're your employers?"

Brannis shook his head slightly with Peggy's weapon against his head, "Not anymore."

Peggy started to dig deeper, "So Leviathan sent you to rob Howard Stark's vault, and you double crossed them." She shook her head, "Either that's incredibly brave or incredibly stupid of you."

Brannis smiled smugly again, "Leviathan only wanted one thing from Howard Stark."

Jarvis closed the hood with a bang and rubbed his hands, "Well, all finished."

Peggy looked at Jarvis, "Go fetch Mr. McFee, I need to take him in too."

Jarvis looked at Steve. Steve nodded to the house, "She's calling the shots here." Jarvis turned and walked quickly into the house.

Peggy focused her attention on Brannis again, "What was the one thing."

The synthesized voice came through slowly, "I. Want. Protection." Brannis emphasized.

Peggy too emphasized, "Then start talking."

Jarvis appeared from the house out of breath, "uh. It seems Mr. McFee left the premises." Peggy sighed then lowered her weapon from the man's head. Jarvis held up a shotgun, "But I found this." He shook it gently.

Peggy gave a fake smile, "Careful not to shoot yourself in the face." She pushed Brannis into the truck, "Get in the truck. Both of you."

Jarvis hopped inside and went through the cab to the cargo hold. He sat nervously in between the Nitramene racks in the cargo area with the shotgun between his knees pointing upwards. Steve took a knee in front of him and held onto the drivers and passenger seats for balance. Peggy took the passenger seat while keeping her gun pointed at the Brannis who is going to drive.

The lone milk truck drove quickly through the dark wooded roads on its way out of New Jersey. Steve, who was holding onto the passenger and driver's seat, turned his head slightly, "You okay back there Mr. Jarvis?"

Jarvis smiled, "Perfectly thank you. These racks of explosives are distracting me from the smell of stale milk." He did his best not to move, fearing the explosives instability.

Peggy kept her gun on Brannis, "Oh good. You did say you wanted to help." She focused her attention on Brannis this time, "Take the Lincoln Tunnel back to Manhattan." Brannis frowned and squirmed in his seat. Peggy smiled confidently, "And quit fidgeting. Nothing is going to happen." She said confidently.

They drove under a bridge then instantly the group heard a loud bang on the top of the milk truck. Everyone looked up instantly, Jarvis leaned forward to Steve and asked curiously, "Did any of you
They heard a silenced gun shot and instantly a round passed right over Steve's head and into the windshield. Peggy reacted by pushing herself to the door, "I certainly heard that." There was someone riding the top of the truck and obviously trying to kill them.

Steve reacted instantly, he drew his .45 and shot upwards four times. Steve looked at the driver, "Shake him off!" Brannis pressed heavily on the gas and did a series of "S" turns to try and shake off the assassin.

Peggy got up and slipped through the window to get a shot on the assassin. She swung herself out, held onto the truck, and steadied herself by propping her leg on the hood. She quickly aimed and fired her weapon, the assassin dodged her shot by mere centimeters. The assassin went down on one knee and quickly fired back, hitting Peggy in the thigh. She screamed in pain as she rolled forward all the way onto the hood, dropping her pistol onto the speeding road.

Steve saw what happened and called in distress, "PEGGY!" He twisted to face up while lunging forward, as he squeezed off another three rounds. The assassin moved quickly and again was left unscathed.

Peggy held onto the truck while keeping pressure on her wound. Through the darkness she realized the assassin was a man and was wearing a suit. She could make out the suit jacket and tie flapping in the wind. Brannis quickly turned the truck left and right to get the assassin off, but the assassin kept his footing. Peggy called, "Steve!" As she held on, trying not to get shot again.

Steve holstered his pistol and got into the cab, "Jarvis shoot up! Shoot up!" He yelled as he started to open the door to give space for his sheild on his back. He had to kill the assassin before the assassin killed Peggy.

Jarvis accidentally pointed the shotgun at an angle and hesitated before he pulled the trigger. When he finally pulled trigger the blast shot through the roof of the truck and completely missed the assassin.

The assassin got his balance again and aimed his gun at Peggy who was bleeding on the hood. Steve flipped onto the top of the truck and quickly faced his back to the assassin right when he pulled the trigger. The assassin's bullet bounced off Steve's sheild with a loud bang. Steve quickly turned around and swept the assassins's feet from under him causing him to fall on his back. Steve got up, "Peggy you alright?" He called for her. He couldn't hear her answer through the wind and adrenaline pumping.

Peggy decided to get back into the truck, knowing that Steve could handle the assassin. She was bleeding from the thigh, but she still had the strength to fight, but she didn't want to get in the way of Steve in that small space on top of the truck. She grabbed the open passenger door and swung into the cab, she grunted in pain as she settled into the passenger seat. She put pressure on her wound and turned to Brannis, "Keep trying to shake him loose!"

The assassin quickly got up to match Steve. Through the dark Steve realized that the assassin he's fighting is the same one from the apartment. The assassin tried to aim his gun at him but Steve grabbed his wrist and elbowed him heavily in the chest just when he pulled the trigger. The bullet went straight through the roof and hit a cargo strap that kept one of the Nitramene racks in place. Jarvis dropped the shotgun and slammed his body against the loose rack, praying that the Nitramene won't detonate. He yelled at the top of his lungs, "CAN YOU PLEASE STOP SHOOTING THINGS!"
The assassin kicked Steve in the gut and then pistol-whipped him across the face. Steve stumbled back as the assassin tried to take another shot at him. Steve quickly caught his balance and lunged forward, quickly grabbing the assassin's wrist yet again, shoving it downward, then punched the assassin square in the face. The assassin still managed to pull the trigger as the assassin whipped back from the hit. The bullet ripped into the roof again but, this time shot Brannis in the back and ripped through his body and exited his chest.

Brannis lunged in his seat and fell on the wheel, and groaned in pain as blood flowed out of his wounds. Peggy and Jarvis instantly reacted to save Brannis. Peggy grabbed the wheel of the truck, "Mr. Jarvis, lean Mr. Brannis back!" The truck started to dangerously swerve to the right edge of the road where there was trees and a large cliff to the sea. Jarvis quickly leaned Brannis back then automatically applied his hands over the wounds, trying to stop the bleeding. Peggy stood up and took the wheel of the truck and steadied it on the road. Brannis' body went limp for a moment but his foot stayed pressed against the gas pedal which kept the truck accelerating.

When the truck shuddered as it turned down the road Steve and the assassin lost their balance. Steve fell backwards and landed on his back, he quickly tried to grab the truck in an attempt to stop himself from rolling off the side. At the same time, the assassin fell over, and dropped his gun as he fell. The assassin quickly got up and whipped out a knife. Steve got to his feet and removed his shield from his back. The truck shuddered again causing one of the Nitramene grenades to fall off its rack and hit the truck floor. Both Peggy and Jarvis turned around and saw the Nitramene grenade rolling on the ground, glowing bright, and making its distinct charging sound.

Steve and the assassin continued to fight it out on top. Every stab or slice the assassin tried to make, Steve countered by hitting him hard with his shield and fists. Peggy leaned forward in the cab, "Steve!" She called trying to warn Steve about the grenade.

Steve called back, "I hear it!" He kicked the assassin in the gut causing him to bend over. Steve then smashed the rim of his shield against the back of his head, knocking him down onto the roof. The impact of the Assassin's body caused a pair of keys to fall out of his pocket and slide across the roof. Steve turned and saw a sharp turn coming up on the road with a sign that read, "Danger, sharp turn ahead. Cliff". He yelled, "Peggy, Jarvis, grab Brannis and jump clear!"

"What?" Jarvis yelled in fear and confusion.

Peggy looked at him, "We have to jump!" The Nitramene grenade started to fume.

The assassin tried stabbing Steve in the leg but Steve was able to stop him and catch his thrust. Steve stepped on his back and applied pressure as he yanked his arm backwards, breaking his shoulder. The assassin tried to scream in pain as he dropped the knife on the truck. Steve let go of the broken arm then picked up the knife and thrust it into the hand of the assassin, nailing him to the truck. The assassin's muted scream showed on his face.

Steve looked up and saw the sharp turn in the road coming rapidly closer. He strapped his shield to his back and leaned down and opened the driver side door. He gripped the truck's frame and swung down to the driver's side, and yanked Brannis and Jarvis out first. They rocketed to the ground hard and hit the ground rolling. Jarvis yelled in pain as he slid and rolled over the dirt road.

Steve then grabbed Peggy and hugged her tightly with one arm as he let go of the truck. He held onto Peggy tightly and leaned all the way back, making sure his shield on his back would take the brunt of the impact and friction. Peggy hugged him tightly as they hit the ground. When they hit the ground they skipped on the road like a rock on water, the shield sparked as it slid across the ground.

The truck continued its forward motion and drove passed the sharp turn and drove off the side of the
road, and over the cliff. The milk truck shot nose first into the deep Atlantic water under the cliff, the sudden impact into the water charged all the Nitramene explosives in the truck.

Steve and Peggy finally came to the stop about twenty feet from the sharp turn. Peggy had a death grip on Steve's uniform and was breathing heavily as she rested on Steve. Steve was still holding on to Peggy tightly as he calmed his breathing, he looked at her on his chest, "You okay?" He asked concerned.

Peggy nodded, "I'm okay darling." She then rested her head back on his chest.

Steve nodded then looked to his right and saw Jarvis getting up in the distance to get to Brannis who wasn't moving. Steve slowly sat up, "Let's get Brannis." Peggy nodded. They slowly got onto their feet to walk. Peggy took a step and limped, she grunted in pain as she put pressure on her wounded thigh. Steve picked her up in his arms, "I'll carry you." Peggy didn't argue and held on to Steve's shoulders.

There was a bright flash behind them, blinding everyone, almost like a nuclear weapon just went off. Steve got down on one knee to brace himself and hunched over to shield Peggy, "Don't let go..." He said softly.

"Never..." Peggy said as she tightened her grasp on Steve and pressed her head against his shoulder. Then the shock wave of hundreds of Nitramene explosives shot by them. The massive suction quickly followed, sucking everything toward the detonation point. Trees, rocks, dirt, and even parts of the road barrier got sucked out of its place and flew effortlessly to the point of detonation.

The Nitramene implosion was over in mere seconds, but felt like an eternity for everyone. It became all quiet as the dust settled around them. Steve straightened and looked at Peggy, "You whole?"

Peggy smiled reassuringly, "Yes darling."

Steve smiled and stood up, "Let's get Brannis." She nodded. Steve began to walk toward Jarvis and Brannis while carrying Peggy in his arms.

Jarvis had his hands on Brannis' chest wound when Steve arrived. He looked up, "Mr. Rogers..." He said nervously. Shaken from the ordeal he just went through.

Steve gently put Peggy down, "Mr. Jarvis, you alright?" Peggy steadied herself on Steve as she tried putting weight on her wounded leg. Adrenaline is no longer pumping, so the pain is now running through her body more freely.

Jarvis applied more pressure on Brannis' wound, "Mr. Brannis won't stop bleeding." Brannis coughed up blood while he bled out slowly on the road, he looked up at the dark sky as he started going in and out of consciousness. Jarvis groaned in pain from his bruises and burns from sliding on the ground.

Peggy took a step forward then went down on her knees to speak to Brannis, "The rest of the weapons you stole from Howard, I need to know where you hid them." She started to reach into his pockets to find his voice device, "Mr. Brannis, you're the only one who knows, I need to find those weapons..." She pulled her hand out of his pocket with the device. Her heart sank when she realized it was completely smashed. Peggy dipped her head saddened. She began urgently, "Leviathan is coming, help us stop them." She looked up at Steve then back at Brannis.

Brannis groaned and blinked slowly, then slowly started to draw a picture in the dirt with his finger. He began drawing a portion of the heart, Steve tilted his head curiously, "What is that a heart?"
Brannis continued weakly finishing the picture, it was a portion of a heart with a curved line going through the middle of the heart. Jarvis too cocked his head to make sense of it.

Peggy begged for answers, "Mr. Brannis..." Brannis was no longer moving and his eyes were closed. She looked at his body and saw it was completely still. Suddenly she heard sirens in the distance.

Steve looked up instantly, "The SSR are here..." He looked down at Peggy, "they must've broken Van Ert. We gotta go." He said calmly.

Peggy realized that Mr. Brannis is dead. She sighed, "Where's the car?"

Jarvis looked left and right then pointed down the direction they traveled, "it's that way." He looked down at Peggy, "I think we should retrieve it immediately."

Steve nodded, "Let's go."

Peggy sighed and decided to check if Brannis had a pulse. She quickly put her fingers against his neck, and felt nothing. She sighed again. "Ms. Carter, please..." Jarvis said urgently. Peggy destroyed the picture in the dirt with her hands before getting up.

Steve went around the body of Brannis to Peggy then wrapped an arm around her, "Peggy lets go." She nodded. Steve spoke softly, "Hang on." He picked her up effortlessly in his arms and started to run. Peggy gripped onto his uniform tightly. Jarvis followed close behind. Steve turned to the trees on the side of the road, "We got to go through the trees, can't get caught out here." Jarvis and Peggy nodded in agreement.

Chief Dooley, Agents Thompson, Krzeminski, and Sousa picked up Sheldon McFee running on the side of the road with his hands handcuffed to the back of a chair, almost two miles away from his house. Sheldon McFee did his best to describe what happened to him and why he was strapped to a chair. At first Dooley was considering believing him, but as McFee continued both he and Thompson laughed at the story.

The agents were on their way back to the SSR building in New York City when they saw a bright flash like a nuclear bomb in the distance. The Agents quickly gave chase to the flash. When they arrived they were met with a body in the middle of the road, and a massive ball of debris sitting off the side of the road and down at the base of the cliff at the water's edge.

The agents were getting frustrated that someone has been beating them at every turn. From the club all the way to here, the SSR has been second place. Chief discovered multiple foot prints near the body. One pair was a woman's high heel print, boot prints, and shoe prints from a dress shoe. Thompson has a gut feeling that the woman's heel prints were from the blonde who was at the club. But so far Sousa has no idea who the blonde is.

Sousa found a hotel key in the middle of the road, the only solid piece of evidence from this scene...

**Stark Penthouse**

Peggy sat on a black bedroom bench at the end of the bed in the master bedroom. She leaned against the end of the bed, still in the same attire as before, as Steve, still in his star and stripes uniform minus the helmet, kneeled down in front of her to begin stitching her wounded thigh. Steve carefully rolled up Peggy's skirt to see the wound, he smiled reassuringly at his fiancé, "Alright, you ready?" She was still bleeding, but it wasn't catastrophic.
Peggy nodded, "Yeah."

Steve smiled, he reached into one of his pouches in his war belt and got out his personal medical first aid kit. Jarvis walked into the room with a silver tray carrying a wet rag, one dry rag, and bottle of scotch, scissors, and thread and handed it to Steve, "Found what you were looking for Captain Rogers."

Steve nodded, "Thanks Mr. Jarvis." Jarvis put the tray down next to Steve and stepped to the side. Steve picked up the wet rag and held it over Peggy's thigh.

Peggy nodded, "Let's get this over with." Steve started to clean the wound with the wet rag. She grunted in pain as the rag passed over her wound.

Steve put the rag down and smiled at Peggy, "You're lucky, the bullet missed the bone by about three inches." He picked up the bottle of scotch.

Peggy asked curiously as she grunted in pain from the sharp stings, "that's good at least." She saw him unscrew the cap of the bottle of scotch, "Steve?"

Steve smiled reassuringly, "This is going to sting." Peggy controlled her breathing, then a sharp burst of pain went through her as Steve gently poured a little amount of scotch on her thigh. Steve put the bottle down and wiped the wound from excess scotch and blood. He took the string and the sterile needle from his aid kit, "Alright, here we go." He then quickly looked over at Jarvis, "Jarvis, start heating up some honey."

Jarvis nodded, "Right away." He walked off quickly.

After a painful process, Steve was almost done stitching Peggy's thigh wound. She grunted in pain as he finished up stitching, "I must say Steve, I love your magic fingers."

Steve chuckled, "hope that's not the only thing you love about me."

Peggy smiled, "Obviously not the only thing." She grunted in pain as Steve finished and cut the thread.

Jarvis walked in with a oven mitten on one hand as he carried a pot of hot honey and a wooden spoon in the other hand, "Hate to interrupt your romantic banter, but I got the hot pot of honey you requested Captain Rogers." Peggy rolled her eyes. He carefully kneeled down next to Steve.

Steve nodded, "Thanks Mr. Jarvis." He took the wooden spoon and got a little bit of hot honey on it and held it over Peggy's wound. He smiled reassuringly at Peggy again, "This will hurt a little." Peggy nodded with a small smile. He carefully poured the hot honey on her wound.

Peggy grunted in pain then she reached down and grabbed one of Steve's hands and held it tightly. Once the pain subsided she let go of his hand. Steve smiled then stood up and kissed her cheek. Jarvis stepped forward to clean things up but Steve stopped him. He gave a calm smile to him, "Mr. Jarvis, I'll clean this stuff up. Just wrap her leg for me." Jarvis carefully handed Steve the hot pot of honey. Steve put the spoon in the pot then walked out, Peggy watched affectionately as he walked out.

Jarvis removed the oven mitten then put his glasses on, and kneeled down in front of Peggy. He took the bandage Steve left to begin wrapping Peggy's leg then said softly, "You're very fortunate you know."

Peggy rested her head against the bed, "Missed the bone by three inches."
Jarvis put pressure on the wound, "That's not what I meant."

Peggy rolled her eyes and looked at him, "What do you mean then?"

Jarvis looked up at her, "I meant you're very fortunate that I disobeyed your orders."

Peggy shook her head and rolled her eyes again, "Oh you're so right. How Steve and I managed to stay alive, I have no idea."

Jarvis responded calmly, "I don't know if you're being arrogant or ignorant." He took off his glasses.

Peggy turned away, "Both I imagine."

Jarvis leaned forward, "People who care about your wellbeing are willing to stitch up your wounds."

Peggy looked at Jarvis, "...if I allow other people to get close to me, I'm putting them in danger." She looked to the door, "Even Steve..." She sighed, "He didn't ask to do this, I asked and I'm sure Colonel Phillips asked him too." She looked down, "I even put Steve in danger... he was cooking me dinner when that assassin came into our place. If he was a second slower Steve would've been dead." She frowned, "I ask so much from him and he asks nothing in return from me..." She shook her head, "He went into that refinery because of me, and if we didn't run into him, he was certainly going to die..." She couldn't stop herself from venting a little, "I shouldn't let Steve help in this anymore. I'm putting his life and career in danger."

Jarvis responded calmly, "So your solution is to remove yourself from the world you wish to protect? And separate yourself from the love of your life? Where's the sense in that." He put down the bandage. Peggy looked away. He continued, "There's no man or woman, no matter how fit he or she may be, is capable of carrying the entire world on their shoulders alone."

Peggy looked down saddened, "Steve is..."

Jarvis again responded calmly, "From what I heard from Mr. Stark and from what I've seen today..." He placed a gentle hand on her lap, "Captain Rogers relies heavily on you." He emphasized. He went on, "For courage...strategy...and moral guidance..." Peggy smiled and shook her head, trying to bottle herself up. He went on, "You are his support. His sword and sheild." He nodded, "I doubt you'll make much success if you don't let anyone help you." Peggy sighed. Jarvis continued, "Even the mighty Captain Rogers needs support and he needs you. He loves you and he will be there with you even if you don't ask him to."

Peggy shook her head, "I sometimes feel like I shouldn't be the one doing this." She sighed, "maybe Steve would be better off doing this than me, he's the hero."

Jarvis shook his head, "Captain Rogers, believes in you that's why he's following you. He doesn't know espionage, he isn't a spy. He's a soldier who fights open wars. You're the best agent he knows, trusts, and loves that's why you're in the lead instead of him." He gave a small smile, "He will follow you to the end of the Earth, just as you would follow him."

Peggy smiled and nodded. After a moment of silence she finally spoke, "You can carry on with my leg." Jarvis smiled and put his glasses on and continued.

Jarvis nodded, "Now plan your wedding accordingly, solve this case, and get married." Peggy smiled and nodded.

Steve walked in, "How you feeling?"
"Great! I'm glad you're here." Peggy said genuinely. She actually understood and appreciated Jarvis’ pep talk.

That night after Jarvis left for his wife, Steve and Peggy had a moment of calm after a long day. Peggy walked into the bedroom trying not to limp, wearing a white robe. She saw Steve sitting on the bed without a shirt and wearing only his grey sweats. She walked to him and sat next to him on the bed and instantly rested her head on his shoulder and played with his hand. She asked curiously, "You alright?"

Steve chuckled, "I was going to ask you that question." He intertwined their fingers.

Peggy chuckled, "I'm fine darling. Hurts a little but I'll be fine." She squeezed his hand, "Just hoping I don't limp as bad tomorrow." She kissed his cheek, "So, what about you Steve?"

Steve smiled, "Thinking about get married." He laughed, "All the time."

Peggy chuckled, "Me too. I think about it all the time."

"I also been thinking." Steve said cautiously as Peggy looked at him curiously. He chuckled, "Once we get married...I was thinking we buy a house." He said cautiously, "I don't know just a thought." He looked at her with a curious glance, trying to gauge her reaction.

After a moment of realizing what he said, Peggy beamed happily and smiling a very wide happy smile, "Darling, that sounds like an excellent idea. I love it!" She put a hand against his cheek and kissed him gently.

Steve smiled, "A house out of the city." He nodded, "I spent a lot of time in the city, I think I rather settle in somewhere quiet."

Peggy kissed him again, "Sounds perfect darling. I couldn't agree more."

Steve smiled, "Let's focus on getting married." He chuckled, "we need to discuss wedding date and venues."

Peggy nodded, "let's start with venues, but keep dates in mind, because I don't know how long this Stark case will take."

"Far enough." Steve smiled. He kissed the top of Peggy's hand.

"I also have to get the dress, and we have to get the guest list sorted." She started listing off what they need.

Steve chuckled, "Peggy, let's just keep it simple. We'll take care of those details when the time comes." He smiled.

Peggy smiled and kissed him, "Sounds good to me darling." She rested her head on his shoulder again. They stayed silent for a long moment. Peggy came to a realization, "Oh darling." She said without moving her head from his shoulder.

"Hm?"

"You know we can't stay here as long as we have?" She said, lifting her head to look at him.

"Yeah, this is Stark's and if we get caught living it...we're pretty much screwed."
Peggy smiled, "Precisely. My friend Angie..."

Steve laughed, "Who I haven't met by the way."

Peggy laughed, "You will soon. Real soon." She gripped his hand a little tighter, "Anyway, she gave us an opportunity to move into a new place near her."

Steve looked shocked, "Really?" Peggy nodded. He laughed, "Let's take it!"

"We can move in there for a little while until we find Stark and get married. The place is temporary, furnished, and all we have to do is move our clothes there." She smiled deciding to take the risk, hoping she wouldn't put Angie's life in danger. "Just got to meet up with Angie and check out the place."

Steve smiled, "We can do it together. I'll take some time off, just let me know what time."

Peggy smiled and kissed his lips, "Planning to take the morning off and give Angie a call to set up a meeting."

"What time?"

"Probably set up the meeting around 8 or 9."

"Sounds good." He agreed. He stood up while Peggy watched him curiously. He smiled, "Now. Let's go sleep, it's super late." Before Peggy could respond, Steve picked her up in his arms.

Peggy gasped in surprise, "Ah! What are you doing?" She laughed.

Steve gently laid her down on the bed, "tucking you in." He smiled as he hovered over her.

She smiled seductively then yanked on his shirt so he ended up resting right on top of her. He propped himself on his elbows and gazed into her eyes. She ran a hand across his cheek then pulled him down by the neck line of his shirt and kissed him.

Griffith Hotel

It's about 8:30 in the morning and the city never lost its beat. Hustling and bustling as it always is in New York City. Peggy and Angie walked with their arms linked together as they walked around the respected Griffith Hotel. Peggy wore a long sleeve, knee length, black tea dress that flared at her knees, and elastic nip in waist. The dress also had four pink buttons from her belly to the very bottom of her collar bone, black tie belt, pink cuffs at the end of her sleeves, and a pink collar. She hand carried her black purse as she walked with the happy energetic Angie with their arms linked together. Angie wore an elegant dark blue, short sleeve knee length tea dress. The dress had a knotted front, a keyhole opening at the back, and the dress flared past the knees. Angie set up a meeting for Steve and Peggy to meet the landlady Miriam Fry to discuss moving in. Until the meeting, Angie happily gave Peggy a quick tour of the outside of the building while they waited.

Angie held Peggy's arm tighter as she happily said, "Oh! I can't wait to meet the handsome Captain Rogers today!" She happily looked at her friend, "He's so dreamy." She laughed, "You're quite the catch too."

Peggy laughed with her friend, "Thanks Angie." She smiled a little nervously, "He's actually really excited to meet you."
Angie jumped excitedly as they walked, "Oh! He is?" She smiled, "When is he arriving?" She asked happily.

Peggy chuckled, "I gave him a call as soon as you set the meeting. He'll be coming, though I'm afraid a little late."

Angie waved her free hand dismissively, "Oh well." She chuckled, "I get to still meet him, so that's what matters." She laughed.

They continued walking around the hotel, and Angie started to point out all the people she knew to Peggy. They walked up to a young woman in a formal women's business suit, Angie waved happily, "Hi Mary."

The young woman was putting make up on her face but still smiled happily to her, "Hi Angie."

Angie leaned closer to Peggy, "That's Mary, she's a legal secretary, and engaged to a very wealthy business owner. They're staying here until they get married and buy a house." Peggy smiled and waved.

Angie smiled happily at another young woman walking with her arm linked with a tall man in a nice suit, "Evelyn. James." She greeted them both.

The young woman tightened her grip on her man, "Hey Angie." She said happily.

The man smiled and waved, "Good morning ladies." He said in a gentle tone. Peggy again, smiled and waved.

Angie whispered to Peggy, "That's Evelyn, she's a lounge singer at a club in midtown." She tightened happily on Peggy, "Her fiancé is former Army, and he inherited his rich family business." Peggy smiled.

Another young woman approached them. She was swaying her hips and was dressed in a very nice knee length dress. Angie smiled, "Sarah."

The young woman smiled and greeted, "Hi Angie." She walked passed them happily.

Angie whispered to Peggy, "That's Sarah, she's a slut." Peggy chuckled. Angie beamed happily, "I am SO happy you changed your mind. You and Captain America will love living here!"

Peggy smiled, "It's temporary until we get married. Buy a house and settle down." She chuckled, "In a matter of speaking." She too wanted to buy a house truly. She would like to settle down with Steve in a house, it would be perfect. Though she wants to manage both the spy life in the SSR and the simple life. She knows Steve will agree in letting her be a spy and be a wife.

Angie waved her hand dismissively, "Oh it's okay English! I'll just enjoy your company here for however long!" Peggy smiled nervously. Angie quickly noticed, "What's wrong?"

Peggy smiled, "It's just...I never had an interview for renting a flat." She was nervous for a couple of reasons, one is that she doesn't want to put Angie in danger, and the second is the high end flat she and Steve want to rent. Why does it require an interview is beyond her.

Angie waved her hand again, "Don't worry about it. It's only a formality, Miriam Fry is a total pussy cat. You'll ace it for sure." Peggy smiled nervously again.
What Angie said about Miriam was far from the truth. She's an older lady wearing a dark grey woman's business suit and glasses. She spoke with a stern and cold tone with every word she said even when Peggy greeted her for the first time in the landlady's office. After the greetings Miriam Fry gave Peggy a clipboard of paper work to fill out that detailed references, the reasons of moving to the Griffith, working status of Peggy, relationship status, partner's name, and career.

In the landlady's office Peggy stood straight and proper in front of Miriam's desk after giving her the clipboard. Steve was not there yet, and she breathed uneasy wishing Steve would hurry up and get here. She nervously shifted her weight on her heels and stared out the office window to Angie who gave a reassuring smile while going through her mail.

Miriam tapped her pen on her desk as she went through Peggy's paperwork. She looked up and peered through her glasses at Peggy, "Your references are impeccable, and Senator Palmer is extremely complimentary."

Peggy smiled, "He and my father were dear friends."

Miriam smiled a surprising warm smile then looked back at the clipboard, "I see you are close ties with the Army, you have a Colonel Philips listed as a reference. A very highly decorated officer."

Peggy nodded, "I served under him in Europe when I was in the Army." Miriam nodded with another warm smile. Peggy looked out the window and saw Angie smiling widely and giving a thumbs up. Angie was obviously listening in to the whole meeting.

"I saw you limping when you came in. Old injury from the war perhaps?" Miriam asked curiously.

Peggy gave a friendly smile, "Caught my heel on a cobble stone, you know how the West Village is."

Miriam shook her head and said sternly, "I never go up past 23rd." She looked down at the clipboard again, "So I do not." Angie gave Peggy a frightened grin, Peggy just shrugged her shoulders not knowing what was wrong. Miriam looked back up, "How long do you see yourself working for the telephone company?"

Peggy tried giving a text book correct answer, "Only until I'm married Ms. Fry." She smiled. Angie nodded at her from behind the glass.

Miriam took off her glasses, "It says you have fiancé. Who's still in the Army?" She looked down and read, "A Steven Rogers, Captain in the United States Army." She didn't recognize Peggy from the paper nor did she associate the name of Peggy's fiancé with Captain America. She figured it was a different Captain Steven Rogers.

Peggy smiled happily, "Yes. He's quite a gentleman Ms. Fry."

Miriam nodded, "I sure hope so." She shook her head, "Here's the problem Ms. Carter. I need to meet with him too if you want to live in this establishment. So far I don't see the gentleman in him because he isn't here." She looked sternly at Peggy, "In a city full of temptation and mischief, the Griffith Hotel is a haven for proper young men, women, and couples. Our conduct is indisputable, attire is elegant and sharp..." She looked up and down at Peggy, "Now if he shows up, I can manage to give you suites to live in near to each other or next to each other so you may mingle as engaged couples do..."

Peggy shook her head, "We were planning just to move in together in the one suite, Ms. Fry."

Miriam shook her head, "That will not do Ms. Carter. Gentleman or not, in this society we live in
today that is not proper. The Griffith is a high caliber proper place for proper ladies and gentlemen."
She shook her head again, "If you wish to live together before marriage, I suggest you go to a brothel."

Peggy looked at her coldly, "Ms. Fry, Steve and I are not the average engaged couple, we are in the position in life that what we do isn't quite...normal to most people." She said sternly, "We do not need society to tell us how to love each other nor how to live as loved ones..." Things were getting heated between the two. Angie looked worried as she broke eye contact from the scene.

Steve walked into the building in his dress uniform with his rows of service ribbons on his chest and all. Both men and women alike in the building recognized him and instantly started to talk about him. Steve recognized Angie from a distance then walked toward her quickly and Angie looked up and saw him walking toward her. She started to sweat excitedly so she started to fan herself with her mail. She didn't know whether to be excited to finally meet Captain America or be scared for her friend who is about to have a heated debate with her landlady.

Steve stopped in front of an excited Angie, "Ms. Angie, I'm late for the meeting with Peggy, where is..." Angie couldn't speak out of excitement and worry for her friend, so she pointed at the office window behind her. Steve saw Peggy standing straight and looking incredibly angry in front of an older lady sitting behind a desk. Peggy instantly saw Steve and smiled a brief smile of relief.

There was a knock on the office door interrupting Miriam's little lecture on character and attire. She looked to the door and said coldly, "Come in." She said irritated at the argument she was having. She was two seconds away from sending Peggy out. Steve walked in. Miriam looked shocked and slowly stood up from her chair. She looked up and down his sharp creased uniform, observing his rows of service ribbons, and his shiny rank on his uniform. She slowly spoke, "You're fiancé is THE Captain Steve Rogers." Obviously the war is still fresh in everyone's mind still, and the stories of Steve's exploits whether true or not were also a talking point to people.

Steve smiled disarmingly and walked to shake Miriam's hand, "Sorry I'm late ma'am"

Miriam smiled a small in shock smile, "It's quite alright..." She shook his hand. She gave a smile, "...my young nephew was with the 107th."

"Was he?" Steve asked cautiously.

She nodded, "He's quite alright now. He never stops talking about you. You saved his life when you freed all those prisoners from the Germans."

Steve smiled and nodded, "I'm glad he's home safe ma'am." He walked over to Peggy and she instantly linked her arm with his and held him tightly.

She whispered, "You came just in time."

Steve nodded, "Sorry."

Miriam nodded, "Now I was just telling your lovely fiancé that we can't put you in the same suite..." She shook her head, "I'll make an exception for you too." She gave a small smile, but she felt a little outnumbered and defeated.

Steve smiled warmly, "Thank you ma'am." He looked at Peggy and whispered, "What happened?"

Peggy tightened her grip on his arm and whispered, "I'll tell you later."
Miriam smiled, "We'll go through the code of conduct here one more time for you Captain Rogers, then I'll show you your place of residence." The couple nodded.

Angie looked in and smiled. She went back to fiddling with her mail, she giggled quietly. She can't wait to meet Captain Rogers.

SSR New York City Branch "Bell Co. Office."

Peggy's high heels clicked along the wood floor as she walked out of the elevator. She was trying to do her best not to limp as she walked. She immediately spotted Dooley, Sousa, and Thompson gathered Sousa's desk looking at a series of photos.

Dooley had his hand on his hip, "That right there that's the angle."

Thompson shook his head, "Not even close."

Sousa shook his head, "are you sure?"

Dooley nodded, "I'm positive. That's the angle don't back off. Focus on this one." Peggy stopped in her tracks nervous that she might've been spotted in the club after all. She looked at the group of agents nervously. Dooley looked up and saw her, "Carter, come here for a second." He waved at her. Peggy walked toward them carefully. Dooley looked at her, "settle a bet for us will ya?" He held up the black and white photo and pointed to a man in a suit, "Is that Joe DiMaggio?"

Peggy breathed a sigh of relief for a moment before looking deeply into the picture. She nodded, "Yes it is." She smiled.

Dooley nodded his head with excitement, "Told you!"

Thompson looked at both of them curiously, "How are you so sure?"

Peggy shrugged, "Steve is a fan of baseball and the Yankees are his favorite team. Believe me, I know what Steve likes."

Dooley chuckled, "I'm sure you do." He coughed and laughed. He turned and left for his office.

Thompson shook his head, "I still don't think it's him."

"How do you figure?" Dooley called from his office.

"Believe me! I think I would know if I was in the same room as Joe DiMaggio." Thompson called back.

Dooley chuckled, "How?"

"I would sense his presence." Thompson took money out of his pocket and handed it to Sousa. He patted him on the back then left.

Peggy looked at Sousa curiously, "you bet against me? How could you be sure?"

Sousa nodded, "I wasn't. That's why they call it gambling."

Peggy fixed her hair, "Spot anyone else?"

Sousa shook his head, "Nothing definitive yet." He held up a picture of a blonde, "We did get a shot
of the blonde, but she sure knows how to duck a camera."

Peggy smiled, "tough break."

"Nobody is lucky forever. We'll find her."

Peggy smiled a friendly smile and hummed. She walked to her desk and sat down on her chair then proceeded to open up her purse and reach inside it. She removed a small picture frame then propped it up on her desk. The small picture in the frame was that of Steve before Project Rebirth, the same picture she acquired from the file. She figured that the SSR wouldn't go crazy over one picture, besides the SSR took plenty of photos to document the project.

Peggy leaned back on her chair and stared at the picture happily.

Down at the SSR warehouse, Agent Krzeminski aided by other agents were hard at work prying away at the massive ball of debris. The remnants of the Roxxon refinery. But in the debris they were able to yank out, Krzeminski spotted a car bumper and a license plate.

There you have it. Episode 2 of the show with the Captain America Twist.

Understand that at the time couples/engaged couples didn't live with each other, but I thought it be kind of cute to let these cool kids have some fun together. Besides its adorable!

I also changed the Griffith to co-gender living place just Steve can live with Peggy.

Kinda dug myself into a hole with this but GG

Going to have a little accelerated timeline here, AND specific wedding planning details will be coming soon, followed by the actual wedding.

Stay tuned

THANKS FOR READING

PS: Makes me sad every time I watch the gosh dang show! I watch TV to enjoy myself damnit!

Hence I watch Archer

Going on a rampage in this story.

THANK YOU TO ONE SPECIAL READER: JuliaAurelia for the OUTSTANDING feedback and great attention to detail.

Update 15/09/24
A few days after Steve, Peggy, and Jarvis raided Sheldon McFee's residence, Peggy and Steve were doing their best to piece together the importance of the symbol Leet Brannis showed before he died. On top of trying to solve the mystery behind Stark's framing and Leviathan, the couple have been trying to sort their wedding details out. It was a bit difficult considering everything going on plus it was hard to focus on anything other than the job they have now, but they still managed to enjoy each other regardless. Since moving to the Griffith, the couple has been getting closer to Angie and have been enjoying the time with her. Angie of course LOVED spending some of her down time with her best friends, though she can never be with Steve she can at least say he's one of her best friends. Yes, she has a crush on Steve, but who doesn't? She will settle with calling him a best friend even though she hasn't known him as long as she known Peggy. Calling him a best friend seems to be the best way for her to get close to him, in her mind at least. Peggy on the other hand knows that Angie has quite a fancy on Steve, but she trusts Steve and Angie so she isn't worried about anything happening between them. Additionally the newest resident and close neighbor of Steve and Peggy is the cheerful and talkative Dottie Underwood who quickly tries to befriend them.

Both SSR and Peggy continue to try and dig deeper into finding the stolen Stark technology. Peggy, Steve, and Jarvis still manage to be one step ahead of the SSR in trying to clear Stark's name, but unfortunately the Army had other things in mind. Due to the growing threats of Soviet aggression, Captain Rogers, the Howling Commandos, 107th Regiment, and much of the BRT (Battalion Raiding Team) are being mobilized to Europe as a stabilizing factor in the still war effected Europe.

New York Port of Embarkation

At the New York Port of Embarkation the Howling Commandos, BRT, and the 107th were quickly boarding a large Liberty troop ship bound for France. At the same time the large cranes of the pier and the ship hoisted crates and caches of supplies, material, vehicles, and weapons onto the ship. At the pier where the ship is docked, Steve and Peggy said their final goodbyes. Steve stood in his iconic "Stars and Stripes" uniform with his shield strapped to his back and his helmet strapped to his war belt, his US Army green canvas duffle was resting idly on its side next to Steve's leg. Peggy wore natural make up, her favorite red lip stick, and a dark blue dress that flared just below the knees. She was determined to look more beautiful than usual for Steve's going away, but Steve always thought she was beautiful no matter what time of day it was.

They held each other close as the time for them to part ways was fast approaching. She hugged him tight as she rested her head on his chest and remained silent. Steve smiled as he rubbed her back, "Peggy."

Peggy looked up at him, "Hm?"
Steve looked down at her concerned, "You're trembling."

Peggy nodded, "I'm…Fine darling." She lied.

He shook his head, "What is it?"

Peggy nodded and decided to tell him. She didn't want him to leave feeling concerned, "I'm scared darling."

"Of what?" Steve smiled reassuringly.

"I know you're Captain America and you could look out for yourself and all that but…" She looked into his eyes, "This is the first time I will be away from you for a long time since…"

Steve smiled at her, "I know." He cupped her face and kissed her passionately. All the passion he could muster he put it in the kiss. She happily reciprocated as she rubbed her hands up and down his uniform. After a long moment they broke the kiss and Steve spoke up first, "I love you Peggy. Please don't worry too much, the war is over."

Peggy smiled and kissed him again, "I don't want to lose you again… I love you."

"You won't lose me again." Steve chuckled, "Besides I got Dugan with me."

Peggy laughed and kissed him again, "No unnecessary risks okay? I know you." She played with his hair, "I'll miss you."

"NO risks. Got it." He smiled.

Peggy began to cry. She rolled her eyes at her tears, "Bloody hell. I promised you and myself not to cry."

Steve smiled warmly and wiped her tears away with a gloved thumb, "It's okay to cry Peggy." She kissed her again, "I promise to be careful."

"You better darling." She said as more tears fell.

Farther down the pier Colonel Phillips and Dugan were part of the few that needed to board the ship. Colonel Phillips looked down at his watch then spoke to Dugan, "It's almost time."

Dugan nodded, "I'll get Captain Rogers."

"Very well." He nodded at Dugan, "Get the Captain and board the ship and tell him I'll see him tonight in the officer's mess."

Dugan saluted, "Yes sir." He then grabbed his duffle and his gear and swung it on his back with one hand then began to run down the pier. He ran quickly to the other end toward the couple. Peggy spotted Dugan running toward them causing her to point to Dugan causing Steve to turn around to see what she was pointing at. He still had one arm wrapped around her back and she had one of hers wrapped around his as they both watched Dugan approach. Dugan stopped in front of Steve, a little out of breath, "Sorry to interrupt you Cap, but… it's time to go."

Steve nodded, "Thanks Dugan."

Dugan nodded, "No problem Cap." He looked at Peggy, "Hey there Peggy."

Peggy smiled as she wiped another tear away, "Dugan. Always a pleasure."
Dugan chuckled, "Looks like she's going to miss you Cap."

Peggy smiled and nestled her head against his chest, "Yes I am."

Dugan laughed, "Alright. Sorry to say it again, but we got to go."

Steve nodded, "On it." He turned his back to Dugan so he could talk to his fiancée. He smiled, "This is it Peggy." They embraced for a moment then he kissed her one last time, "I love you."

"I love you too." She said while containing her emotion the best she could. She smiled, "Come back safe okay?"

Steve smiled then let go of Peggy, grabbed his duffle and swung it on his back and then slowly stepped back.

Peggy called out, "You better come back and marry me Steve!"

Steve smiled, "Oh I will Peggy!" He waved.

Peggy pointed to Dugan, "Dugan! You better watch out for him!"

Dugan laughed, "He's Captain America, he watches us."

Peggy blew a kiss to Steve as he and Dugan turned around and walked away to board the ship. She watched them as she covered her mouth with one hand as she slowly cried. It wasn't like Steve was going to war, but she grown quite attached to him and hated to see him go.

The days, weeks, and months that followed Steve's deployment was rocked with uneasiness and fear as she and Jarvis continued on to clear Stark's name by themselves. Jarvis and Peggy discovered how Stark got his vault broken into and then located the ship docked in the bay where a number of Stark's inventions were located. Jarvis unanimously tipped off the SSR about the ship, while Peggy fought a large unknown man who was onboard. She was able to knock him out and the duo were able to escape without a trace before the SSR showed up. Once the SSR arrived, they boarded the vessel and took custody of all the inventions onboard and captured the man Peggy knocked out. Agent Ray Krzeminski was assigned by Chief Dooley to escort their new witness back to headquarters, but unfortunately Krzeminski was killed at gun point along with the witness immediately after leaving the pier. Chief Dooley and the SSR blame Stark for the death of Krzeminski. The reasoning was that he may not have pulled the trigger but his actions lead to his death.

Shortly after the death of Agent Krzeminski, Peggy was working hard to clear Stark's name while she did her best to cover her tracks from the SSR. The shroud of being charged for treason seems to be enveloping her more and more. Ever since Steve left for Europe, she hasn't been a 100%. She knew he could take care of himself, but she couldn't help but worry. Things didn't brighten when she found out Stark returned to New York City from overseas and was being held ransom in a train yard by subordinates of the smuggler named Otto Mink. Peggy and Jarvis quickly staged a rescue, and in no time they got Stark free. After his rescue, Peggy reluctantly lets Stark stay in her room in the Griffith.

Peggy warns Stark multiple times of the land lady Miriam Fry's hatred for prolonged guests. She tells Stark to keep a low profile, but Stark is busy gallivanting in other rooms to spend time with women. After Stark’s multiple exploits, he tells Peggy that he is searching for a devastating device called the Blitzkrieg Button. She promises Stark that she'll get the device. Peggy parks her car at her usual spot on the side of the street near the SSR and goes to work as usual, but this time goes through the tech department and locates all of Stark's inventions they acquired from the ship. She finds the Blitzkrieg
Button and carefully puts it in her purse and slips away undetected.

She later opens the device and discovers a vial of blood inside it. She then confronts Stark back in her room, and Stark tells her that he was entrusted with one of twelve samples of Steve's blood, while the government was supposed to have eleven they ended up having ten. The reason of that is because he swiped one of them to give to Peggy before they found Steve in the ice. Stark wanted to use the vial of blood to be the catalyst of change, to use what it can provide to save the world. He believed that Steve's blood may even cure sicknesses that many still believe are incurable. Peggy punched Stark in the face, and yells at him for using Steve's blood to make money. She tells Stark forcefully that he is using the generosity, kindness, and professionalism of Steve to line his pockets, and souring what Steve fights for. Both Peggy and Stark have a falling out causing her to throw him out of their room. Peggy resorts to hiding the vial of blood in the wall of her room for safe keepings.

The SSR at the other hand discovered some interesting news from a homeless veteran who was at the pier. Agent Sousa and Thompson find out a woman and a man boarded the ship, but the woman wasn't blonde. She had dark hair. Sousa decides to look at the picture they have of the blonde woman again.

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**SSR New City Branch "Bell Co. Office"**

Just another day in the Big Apple, but this time it was a little rainy than usual. The weather like today reminds Peggy of England back when she spent a lot of time there. She didn't hate the rain nor did she love it, but the rain did bring a little pleasant change to her. She stepped out of the elevator into the SSR headquarters carrying her small brown purse, and wearing a woman's dark blue business suit with a brown belt that wrapped around her torso at stomach height. She just came from the automat where she met up with Dottie to help her find places to visit in New York City. The clumsy bubbly Dottie was very pleasant with her in the morning, but Peggy enjoyed her company nonetheless.

Peggy stepped into the office and saw that the office was extremely chaotic, she quickly walked toward her desk to see what's going on. She spotted Sousa limping toward her, "Daniel, what's going on?"

Sousa limped by her toward the briefing room, "The magic typewriter turned itself on all by itself."

Peggy followed him and asked curiously, "What did the message say?" They walked side by side as they cut between desks on their way to the briefing room.

"It's encoded. We got a cryptographer from Arlington trying to crack it." He shook his head, "He uh…stinks at his job." He said coldly. He opened the door to the briefing room for Peggy.

They entered the room to see a slightly overweight man, who is supposed to be the cryptographer, sitting at the table next to the typewriter surrounded by books and messy stacks of paper. Thompson and Chief Dooley were crowding the man and were obviously increasingly impatient. Thompson was without his suit jacket with his white dress shirt sleeves rolled up and Dooley in his usual grey suit, both stared coldly at the cryptographer. The man, said nervously, "It's obviously not a German cypher or the Turing Method would work." The man fiddled through his coding book.

Dooley stepped closer to the man's left, "What would work in your estimation." He said coldly. Sousa sighed and took a seat at one of the chairs while Peggy stood and watched the scene unfold.

Thompson stepped closer to the man's right and threw the coding book across the room. He leaned down and hovered near him, "You already looked through that book ten times." He said coldly.
Both Peggy and Sousa sighed as they watched the situation worsen.

The man nervously stuttered, "I-I have to take this back to Virginia where I…"

Dooley put a hand on his hip and shook his head, "You're not taking that anywhere."

The man shot up from his seat, and it became apparent that the man was clearly shorter than Dooley and Thompson. "Look as difficult as it might be, for you people to understand I can't beat a code into submission!" He turned to Thompson, "Or SHOOT it with a gun." He said frustratingly.

Thompson stood straight and looked down at the short man, "Yeah." He stepped closer to him, "But that works great with pencil pushers like you." He said in a threatening tone. The man stepped back nervously

Peggy did one of the many things she's good at. Solve problems. She stepped forward, "May I see it." Her beautiful English voice broke the tense situation. She took the code and a piece of paper and started to decrypt it herself. Dooley sighed and paced the room impatiently. She looked at it then quickly came to a realization, "I seen a code like this before. It's a onetime pad system.

The man looked down at her, "You think I didn't try a pad immediately." He said frustratingly.

Peggy looked at him, "Did you account the original message to be written in Russian?" She said plainly.

The man stayed silent. Dooley glared at him then looked down at Peggy, "Can you read it?"

Peggy started to decode the message, "Map coordinates." The man plopped down on his seat and sighed in defeat. She wrote down the coordinates and read aloud so everyone could hear her, "53 degrees, 17 minutes north, 27 degrees, and 37 minutes west." Dooley signaled Sousa to find out where the location is. Peggy continued, "Purchased confirmed 0800, April 27."

Thompson crossed his arms and looked at the calendar across the room, "That's less than four days from now."

Sousa found the coordinates, "Coordinates are in the Maryna Horka Forest in Belarus."

Thompson looked sternly at Peggy and Sousa, "That's deep in Soviet territory."

Peggy continued to decrypt the code, "Leviathan…to acquire prototype…Havoc reactor."

"I'm sorry. Leviathan?" Thompson asked curiously.

Sousa sat down on the table, "As far as I know, it's an Old Testament sea monster…who types apparently."

Dooley chimed in, "No. It's a covert Russian organization… supposedly." He paused briefly, "I always thought it was a spook story. Rumors had it, after the war, their group wanted to purchase weapons to fight the allies."

Thompson looked down at Peggy, "Well, if they're real and if she's reading that right…" He began as he doubted Peggy's abilities.

Peggy interrupted him, "SHE is trying to concentrate, thank you." She looked at him coldly. She continued her decryption, "Payment of… $100,000 American upon delivery." She paused and realized what the last part read. She had to continue, "Payable to…Howard Stark." She stood straight
upon completing her task.

Thompson clapped his hands excitedly, "Hot damn! We got him!" He pointed down at the code, "We got Stark red-handed selling weapons to the reds."

Dooley looked at Thompson, "Thompson grab your gear. You're heading to Belarus ASAP. Take Li and Ramirez."

Peggy jumped in, "And Carter."

Dooley looked at her surprised, "Come again?"

"And Carter. There is no one more qualified to go on this mission." Peggy looked sternly at him, "I'm going to the Soviet Union." She said confidently.

Peggy and Thompson were both arguing their reasoning to Dooley as they followed him back to his office. Peggy trying to convince Dooley that she is qualified to go while Thompson refuses to have Peggy come along solely because she's a woman. Their argument continued to escalate in Dooley's office as Dooley sighed at them bickering. Dooley raised his voice, "Enough! Both of you." He sat down on his chair and leaned back, "It's your team Thompson, what do you want?" He asked at the brink of anger.

Thompson sat down on his desk and sighed, "Look, it's great that Carter cracked the code. I am proud of her. I AM." He shook his head, "But, we have no idea what we're getting into over there, okay?" He started to list out things he needs, "I don't need brains. I need brawn, I need…"

Peggy interrupted, "You need someone who speaks the language and understands the region."

Thompson yelled and pointed to the door, "Ramirez speaks Russian!"

Peggy stated calmly, "I spent three years in the mud of Europe. The Eastern Front, the Western Front, and Everything in between." She looked at Thompson, "And I became a qualified sniper and counter sniper."

Thompson looked at her, "Yes. Surrounded by our best MEN."

"Agent Thompson, do you know what the smell of Hearing in the air in the middle of a Belarusian summer."

Thompson smiled smugly, "Mm, Someone's having a fish fry."

"It means wind is blowing in from the Baltic. It means a snow storm in July, and if you can smell the wind, it means you have 30 minutes to find shelter and build a fire before your die of Hypothermia in the morning." She said plainly, "I know all this because I've been there." Dooley raised his eyebrows, actually impressed with Carter.

Thompson smiled smugly and stood up, "Now I know too." Peggy rolled her eyes.

Dooley looked up at her, "Put yourself in my shoes Carter. If I send you and you get killed, I'm the moron who got a woman." Peggy shook her head. Dooley continued, "I send you and one of my guys buys it, I'm the one who set him up to die." He nodded at her, "I know you spent time in the Soviet Union. But we're setting up a European Tac Team that knows the terrain."

Peggy shook her head, "Not like I do. Not like Captain Rogers, the 107th, and the BRT." She
looked at him, "You sent me with them before to grab General Reinhardt."

Thompson laughed, "That was because Captain America wanted you." He shook his head, "Besides no one knows Europe better than them." He looked at Dooley, "Captain America, the 107th, and the BRT are all on deployment in Europe right now. I wish I can snatch them up, but we can't because Uncle Sam has other things planned for them."

Peggy looked at Dooley, "What would you say if I can deliver them."

Dooley stated plainly, "I'd say, pack your bags. But that's not going to happen." Peggy turned on her heel and left the office for her desk.

Thompson laughed, "I'm going to miss her." He leaned on Dooley's desk, "Chief you really can't be seriously considering sending…"

Dooley held a hand up, "Son. I like you. But, I'm running an office here." He shook his head, "I got the vice president of the United States calling me at home, asking me when I'm going to deliver him Howard Stark. At the SAME time, I got a Nazi war criminal telling me that Stark was involved in a massacre. I'm trying to run an investigation here." He pointed at Thompson, "I don't have time on my docket. For your little CRUSH on Carter."

Thompson stood up, "Yes sir." He said plainly.

Peggy called Camp Lehigh to find a way to get a hold of Colonel Phillips or Steve. After she told the secretary that she was from the SSR, the secretary transferred the call to the acting base commander. The acting base commander answered, "Lieutenant Colonel Walt, acting base Commander of Camp Lehigh." Peggy recognized the voice and name.

She responded calmly and respectfully, "Good Morning Colonel, My name is Agent Margaret Carter of the SSR." She had to be cautious just in case he didn't remember her.

"Oh! How you doing Margaret! What do you need?" He responded happily realizing who it was.

"I'm doing very well. Do you remember France? You still owe me from that fire fight in France back in the summer of '44." She said humorously.

"How can I forget? What can I do for the soon to be Mrs. Captain America."

"I'm trying to head out to Belarus to track down a Soviet organization that is trying to buy illegal weapons and I need Steve…sorry, Captain Rogers and the 107th Commandos to meet me at the Polish side of the Russian border. Tell Colonel Phillips it's from Peggy." Peggy said quickly.

The Lieutenant Colonel said calmly, "You got it. Stand by." Peggy heard the phone go silent. After a long moment the Lieutenant Colonel came back on the phone, "Colonel Phillips has ordered Captain Rogers and the Commandos to meet you at your location."

"Thank you Walt." Peggy smiled while she spoke.

"Oh and both Colonel Phillips sends his regards." Lt. Col Walt said in a cheery tone, "Take care and good luck Agent Carter." They both hung up the phones.

Peggy entered the office just as Thompson was telling Dooley the plan. She leaned on the door frame, "Captain Rogers and the Commandos will meet us at the Polish side of the border. That is the
Dooley nodded, "Gear up. You roll out in an hour." Thompson was about to argue but Dooley looked sternly at him, "That's all." Peggy smiled then left the office.

Peggy waited impatiently outside the men's locker room with her OD green canvas duffle bag full of gear. She shook her head at the childish tones and conversations taking place on the other side of the door. There are a lot of men and even women that just flat out disgust her. She sighed as she waited impatiently.

Thompson appeared from around the corner with his tie already undone around his neck and his canvas duffle bag, "Carter, if you're looking for a peep show, try Time Square." He said disrespectfully.

Peggy shook her head, "This is the only changing room in the SSR and I need to change."

Thompson walked passed her and stopped at the door, "Try the ladies room."

"The ladies' room is down stairs in the lobby of the ad agency. I'd rather suffer the musk of a men's locker room than have to change into tactical gear in a public restroom." She picked up her duffle bag with one hand.

Thompson shook his head, "Thought you'd be used to the musk of men. You know Captain America and all that." Peggy walked passed him and opened the door to the locker room. Thompson shook his head and called out to his fellow agents in the room, "Pull up your skirts boys!"

The door swung open revealing two agents in their white skivvies. Both Li and Ramirez clad in their white tank tops and white underwear got a shock when they saw Peggy walking through the door. Ramirez jumped in surprise, "Woah!"

Li shook his head, "Geez Carter give a guy some warning."

Peggy shook her head and went to the other side of the row of lockers from the men so she can change in private, "Oh, such fuss. Do none of you have sisters?"

Ramirez shook his head, "None that look like you."

Peggy put her duffle on the bench on her side of the locker room, "You know if you ever be so fortunate to have a woman in your life, you would need to get comfortable being a little intimate."

Li spoke up, "You offering?" He said sarcastically. Peggy rolled her eyes as she unpacked. Ramirez punched him hard on the shoulder. Li reacted, "Ow!"

Peggy spoke up, "Thank you Ramirez!"

"You got it!" He replied back.

Thompson put his bag down next to the men, "Come on congratulate the lady, she's coming with us."

Li got his utility trousers on, "Jack, you really think that's a good idea?"

Thompson unbuttoned his dress shirt, "Not my call."

Li leaned forward and whispered, "We can't be responsible to baby sit…"
Thompson turned around to Li and said sternly, "Let me know if you want to stay home. I got six guys out there who’d love to take your place."

Peggy removed a vest that looked like a standard Army Air Corps flak jacket but was far lighter and had chain mail lined on the outside. She looked at it surprised, "Oh this is new. It's lighter than it looks, but pretty loud if you ask me."

Thompson removed his, "Yep. Lab boys just dropped it off. It's 10% Titanium alloy." He put his vest on the bench, "Although, I don't think they had 38-22-38 in mind when they designed it."

Peggy started to unbutton her suit to get undressed, "I just want this thing to stop a bullet from hitting something important."

"I can't imagine what Carter." Thompson said sarcastically.

"I might want to start a family in the future, and I need them to do that Agent Thompson." She said sternly.

"That’s, 'I need them to do that, sir’" Thompson said as he removed his shirt to get his gear on.

Peggy replied sarcastically, "Yes, sir, Lieutenant Junior Grade, sir."

Thompson smiled, "Guess you're so used to serving UNDER a Captain, huh?"

"I'm used to serving with men, not so much boys." She shot back.

Ramirez laughed lightly, "Oh. She got you Jack." Li chuckled.

Sousa entered the locker room with a file in hand, he didn't notice Peggy was on the other side as he limped forward. He limped to Thompson and handed him the file, "Field reports, maps, weather, charts, all known bogey dope of the area." He nodded and finished off, "And dossiers files on the tac team." Thompson opened the folder and looked through it. Sousa nodded, "Though, Carter is all you need on them."

Peggy smiled as she removed her business blouse. She was now only wearing her bra and her business skirt.

Thompson smiled, "As thorough as ever Sousa. Good work." He came to a realization, "Compass! I need my compass." He looked around then came to another realization, "Sousa, my compass is in locker 42. Can you grab it for me pal?"

Sousa nodded, "You got it." He limped away. Thompson paused and held up a three count to his fellow agents behind him. They went silent and smiled widely as they anticipated for what came next.

Peggy was just about to remover her bra when Sousa appeared. She jumped in surprise, "Oh Bloody Nora!" She turned around quickly and grabbed her suit jacket and covered her chest.

Sousa almost fell back in shock, "Oh! Uh… You're…"

Peggy nodded, "Yes, Everything is fine."

Thompson called out, "Found it!" His fellow agents laughed along with him. He called out again, "You don't have to worry about it, Sousa." He laughed, "Though I wouldn't tell Captain America you were eyeing his half naked fiancé" Everyone but Peggy and Sousa laughed.
Peggy cleared her throat, "Is there anything else, Daniel?"

Sousa stuttered, "Uh...uh...NO." He saw a scar on her right shoulder and realized it was an old gunshot wound. They were quiet for an long awkward moment as they both regained their composure.

Peggy nodded, "Alright then."

"Have a swell trip." He turned around quickly as he turned a bright shade of red.

"Right thank you." Peggy replied. She called out to Thompson, "Agent Thompson, Lieutenant Junior Grade Sir, you are a bloody wanker."

"If you're going to insult me, at least do it in English I understand." Thompson replied back.

"I tried, but then I'd have to tell the joke multiple times for you to get it." Li and Ramirez laughed lightly. Peggy smiled as she reluctantly removed her engagement ring from her finger.

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**Poland 1946**

Days later, after crossing the Atlantic, and multiple flights through Europe, the team was finally on their last leg of the trip to drop into Poland at the edge of the Belarusian border. They were officially in hostile territory, since this is the Soviet Union. Unlike other nations after the war, the Soviet Union maintained its large army and military in order to counter its next big adversary. The United States. The SSR team was essentially in dangerous water now.

The C-47 sky train carrying the team was painted OD Green on the fuselage and top of the wings, and painted black on the entire bottom to maintain a stealthy entrance. The plane flew at high altitude in the clear midnight sky so it wouldn't be spotted as easily from farmers and villagers on the ground. The skies were clear and the moon was bright, but the plane still managed to be hardly visible in the night sky. Peggy sat near the door in the small dark confines of the plane. Her main parachute, reserve chute, and her Thompson submachine gun were already bulky as it is. But, she also carried a canvas bag full of ammunition and supplies on her chest and wore a green M1 helmet. She was pretty bulky like everyone else, but unlike the men her hair was tied up nice and neat under the green helmet. Like everyone else she wore a black combat blouse, OD green combat trousers, and black boots.

The plane bounced as it hit turbulence in the Polish skies. Peggy grabbed one of the beams to steady herself as the plane bounced. She looked around in the dark and saw Ramirez and Li sitting together near the front of the plane waiting patiently for the green light. She looked right and saw the Army jump master sticking his head out of the door. She then looked in front of her and saw Thompson rocking himself back and forth as he fiddled with his hands nervously. Peggy smiled and called out over the sound of the loud engines of the plane, "Relax! You might sprain something. It's just how you remember it."

Thompson shook his head, "You a mind reader, or is that your woman's intuition speaking?"

"How's this for women's intuition. This is your first jump, isn't it?" Peggy started to put on her gloves.

"Ninth." Thompson nodded, "Eight training jumps. I was a Marine in the Pacific, we didn't do this whole jump out of planes thing."

Peggy smiled, "Well you've infiltrated hostile territory before. Just relax and follow our lead."
Thompson nodded, "Thanks Carter, but I already have a mother." He said nervously.

"JUST Relax. You're starting to make me nervous." She laughed.


Suddenly a red light came on at the door way. The jump master looked at his watch then called out as loud as he could to be heard over the loud engines, "FIVE MINUTES! FIVE MINUTES!" He made a hook sign with his finger, "Make ready!" Everyone took out the silver static line hook attacked to their main chutes. The jump master signaled everyone to stand up with his arms, "Stand up!" Everyone stood up. Thompson stood in front of Peggy as Ramirez and Li stopped behind her. "HOOK UP!" Yelled the jump master. Everyone did as they were told and locked the line hook onto the wire above them. The jump master patted his shoulders, "Equipment check!" Everyone began checking each other's equipment to make sure everything was secure and tight. Thompson checked his helmet for the nth time. "Sound off for equipment check!"

Li patted Ramirez's shoulder, "Four Okay!"

Ramirez tapped Peggy's shoulder, "Three Okay!"

Peggy did the same for Thompson, "Two Okay!"

Thompson stuttered, "One. One Okay!" He turned around to Peggy, "The Tac Team better be there!"

"They will!" Peggy yelled.

"They better be!"

The light went green and the Jump master called out, "GO! GO!"

Thompson yelled, "Let's go boys!" He charged out the door followed by Peggy, Ramirez, and Li.

Everyone made a clean jump and landed in the middle of a flat snow covered Polish clearing that was surrounded by tall trees. Luckily their jump was spot on, so no one got caught landing in the tall trees. Everyone got their chutes and reserves off their body and got ready to go. The team carried their opens chutes, reserves, and helmets into the tree line to cover their tracks. Li found a nice natural hole to throw their expended gear into, Peggy and Ramirez quickly threw snow covered branches and foliage onto their gear to cover any trace of their landing. Peggy breathed the cold Polish air as she threw on her canvas bag loaded with ammunition and supplies.

Thompson nodded, "We're eight klicks east from the RV. I'll take point, Carter you're tale end Charlie." He walked forward quietly with his Thompson submachine gun out, "Stay tight."

Peggy checked to make sure her hair didn't come undone from the jump. She then unslung her weapon and followed closely to the group.

After walking for what seemed forever in the dark frosty Polish night in the dense forest, they approached their rendezvous point. Thompson heard a branch snap causing and quickly got down on one knee causing everyone to follow. He pointed his weapon at the direction of the noise and whispered to his team, "Don't move."

A deep voice rang through the darkness, "Emu."
Thompson looked confused and whispered to his team, "What?" He kept his weapon up.

He heard a male English voice come from behind, "Ostrich Man! Ostrich!" Ramirez and Li quickly trained their weapons to the rear. Peggy lowered her weapon and chuckled to herself.

The man with the deep voice called back, "Shut up!" He softened, "Emu." Peggy smiled and stood up. Thompson looked at her sternly then back ahead.

The English man spoke up again, "Bloody hell. Carter, Dugan forgot the bloody password again."

Peggy stepped forward and saw a large burly looking man in a Bowler hat come out from the shadows. Peggy smiled, "The password is 'Eagle'. You apes."

A man with a large mustache stepped into the moon light with a big smile and holding a trench gun. He smiled, "Oh, Hi Peggy." He said cheerfully. He looked at the agents, "Fellas." More armed soldiers stepped into the moon light surrounding the SSR agents.

Li stepped forward and whispered to Thompson, "Thompson, that's Dum-Dum Dugan." He said excitedly as he pointed out to the man with the Bowler hat.

Peggy smiled, "Li, Ramirez, Thompson." She nodded to the commandos, "This is Dugan, Gabe Jones, Jim Morita, James Montgomery Falsworth, and Jacques Dernier." She listed off the original veterans of the group. She nodded to the new ones, "That is 'Junior' Juniper, 'Pinky' Pinkerton, and 'Happy Sam' Sawyer. This is the Howling Commandos, our tactical team part of the 107th and the BRT" She said happily. She knew the new guys' names because Steve told her all about them and even showed her a picture of them, she was essentially the expert on the team aside from the members themselves.

Ramirez started to get excited, "You… you the Howling Commandos are all legends."

Happy Sam Sawyer rolled his eyes, "I hate that name"

Dugan looked at Sawyer, "Buck up man. I made that name."

Sawyer groaned, "That you did…"

"Hey, Captain America endorses that name." Junior said plainly. Junior looks so young he doesn't look like he's even old enough to shave.

"Don't remind me. He's the only reason I put up with it." Sawyer groaned. Suddenly the agents realized why he's called "Happy" Sam Sawyer.

Ramirez smiled happily, "Dugan and the rest of you…did you all fight side by side with Captain America during the war?"

The original members nodded. Dugan nodded to Peggy, "Yeah. But…not as long as her." Peggy smiled. He smiled at the agents, "You all better treat her right she's an incredible woman." Peggy chuckled as the other agents including Thompson just stared. Jacques Dernier started speaking French to Dugan. Dugan shook his head, "You been with us for so long! And you haven't picked up a lick of English yet!" Jacques just shrugged.

Gabe chuckled, "He said to be careful. You sound like you're falling in love with Peggy." Peggy laughed.

Dugan was about to retaliate when Jim spoke up with clattering teeth, "Can we get moving. My nuts
are freezing." Jim shivered with his hands in his pockets while he carried the team radio. Everyone but Thompson laughed.

Thompson stepped forward and shook Dugan's hand, "Agent Jack Thompson, I'm running point for the SSR."

Dugan looked at Peggy then back at Thompson, "The Colonel said Peggy was taking point." Peggy elbowed him in the gut. Dugan hunched forward and groaned, "Alright Jack…you're on point."

Peggy started to look around curiously to see if Steve was here since he's supposed to be here with them right now. She wasn't concerned as of yet, but she couldn't help being curious of his whereabouts at the moment. Thompson leaned back, "We'll head do east till we hit the border."

Steve emerged from the shadows behind Dugan in his "Stars and Stripes" combat uniform with his helmet on and his shield strapped to his back, "We'll hit a wall of Soviets before we reach the border." He just got back from scouting their present location and found nothing to worry about. Peggy smiled happily at him, she was extremely happy to see her fiancé again. Steve looked at her and smiled warmly at her briefly. He looked to Dugan, "You got the road map."

Ramirez was about to have a heart attack as his idol and hero stood before him. Li slapped his shoulder to try to get him to calm down. Typical Sawyer rolled his eyes at Ramirez.

Dugan nodded, "We'll head up to Lithuania, cross over into Belarus."

Thompson looked at Steve and Dugan, "You all planning on walking halfway across Lithuania?"

Dugan looked at Steve and they both chuckled to themselves. Steve laughed, "Well Thompson, that's up to you." He walked passed him and then looked at Peggy, "Care to join me Agent Carter."

She smiled and played along, "Why I never thought you'd ask." She joined Steve as they walked through the trees together.

Dugan laughed, "We will take the trucks." He patted Thompson on the shoulder and walked passed him.

Behind the trees was a small road with two US Army 2.5 ton 6x6 cargo trucks and a US Army motorcycle. Steve walked next to Peggy as he directed the newly formed team, "Load up! I'll take the motorcycle and scout ahead for any Soviet activity." Everyone acknowledged his orders and made their way to the trucks. He looked down at Peggy, "Well, have to cut our reunion short Peggy."

Peggy smiled, "it's okay darling." She kissed him for a long moment. Thompson stopped and couldn't help but to watch for a moment. She cut the kiss and smiled at Steve, "I'm really happy to see you again Steve." She ran a gentle hand across his jaw that wasn't covered by his helmet, "It's been a while. I missed you."

Steve smiled, "I missed you too Peggy." He said warmly.

Peggy kissed him again, "I love you." She let him go so he can get on the bike.

"I love you too." He said lovingly.

Dugan laughed, "Let's go love birds!" He waved his hand at them. He then turned to the SSR agents, "Agents join Junior and Happy Sam in the lead truck. Pinkerton will drive." He looked at Peggy excitedly, "Peggy join the rest of us in the second." Everyone paused as they saw Steve start
the bike and drive off rapidly down the frosty road.

Gabe chuckled as he loaded the truck, "She's engaged Dugan…" The Howling Commandos actually only found out recently from the newspaper about the engagement of their Captain and Peggy. The Commandos obviously were extremely happy and excited for them, but had to give Steve some trash because he didn't tell them right away. Steve later told all the details about how he proposed after the commandos roasted him for a good day or two for not telling them immediately.

Dugan turned back to Gabe, "Shut up. She has something of mine."

Peggy laughed, "Oh come off it boys. I'll go on the truck just as long as Jim isn't driving."

Jim hopped onto the truck and protested, "That truck crash wasn't my fault. We hit a land mine!"

"Yeah, if we really did hit a land mine we would be dead." Peggy retorted. Everyone laughed.

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Steve rode his motorcycle about a mile ahead of everyone else, making sure there wasn't any Soviets on the road to stop them. Behind him were the two 6x6 trucks speeding down the twisting frosty Soviet road. In the last truck Peggy sat between Dugan and Falsworth, and across from them was Jim with his radio while Gabe was driving the truck with Jacques Dernier riding shotgun.

Jim smiled, "We haven't seen you in a while Peggy." He looked out the truck, "Shoot…it's been months…maybe even a year." He laughed, "Was the last time we saw you the day we all got back from our deployment in Europe in '45?"

Peggy nodded with a smile, "Yes I believe it was." She laughed, "Just got back from our time in Austria."

Dugan came in sarcastically, "Yeah. I remember when you two told us you got engaged all the way in Austria in front of a beautiful panoramic view of the Alps." He nodded, "OH. Right you two didn't tell us. We had to find it out on the newspaper!"

Peggy laughed and patted Dugan on the knee, "I figured you all would eventually find out about it." Only reason she didn't want the Commandos to know is because she know they are a talkative bunch, especially when drunk. At the time she didn't want many people to know about their engagement, she wanted it private…and the Commandos would more than likely tell the world from the seats of a bar.

Falsworth's calm English voice came in, "Give her a break. Congratulate her on the engagement." He laughed, "We already gave the Captain a bunch lip for it."

Jim nodded, "Congratulations Peggy. You and him make the perfect couple."

Peggy was a little taken back from his statement, she simply smiled, "Thanks Jim."

Dugan put a hand up, "Before I congratulate you…why did you two not tell us?"

Peggy nodded, "I wanted to keep it private as long as possible." She shrugged, "The less people knew about it, the more private we can be. Steve, believe it or not, doesn't exactly have a private life. Everyone knows what he looks like."

Jim asked curiously, "What, you don't trust us to keep it quiet?"

"No. You'll tell it to the world in no time." She laughed.
Dugan laughed, "Ow Peggy."

Falsworth shook his head, "I wouldn't trust any of you in holding my first child." Peggy stared at him with a raised eyebrow. He put his hands up, "But I trust you and the Captain no doubt!" Peggy nodded with a victorious smile.

Dugan patted Peggy on the lap, "Well. Congrats!" He went stern for a moment, "You're inviting us to your wedding right?"

"Of course." Peggy said with a smile. She continued, "Steve and I were trying to make the wedding plans, but we've been caught up trying to clear Stark's name."

Falsworth nodded, "Ah Stark…that little rascal is always getting into trouble." He shrugged, "Always getting us into trouble. From Europe during the war to this mess with those Leviathan chaps." He laughed, "He sure knows how to pick 'em."

Peggy shrugged, "The SSR got it all wrong, and they think Stark is selling weapons to Leviathan and enemies of the United States. He may be an utter wanker but he's still one of us."

Falsworth laughed, "Wow."

Dugan nodded, "We can't do much like you and Steve, but we've been looking into it with him when we get a chance." He smiled, "But…You better invite all of us to your wedding or I swear I…"

Peggy put a hand up, "We are, we are."

He nodded, "Good then." He looked out of the truck then lowered his voice, "Back to business. Peggy do you have what I asked for?" The truck bounced on the road a few times as it progressed along the frosty road. Falsworth and Jim stared at them curiously.

Peggy smiled, "From our own private stash." She removed a bottle of Bourbon from her canvas bag and handed it to Dugan.

"Ah, Attagirl." Dugan took out his silver canteen cup and held it out in front of him along with the bottle of bourbon, "Get your cups out fellas." Jim and Falsworth got excited and quickly grabbed their cups. Peggy smiled as she watched her friends get excited over a simple bottle of bourbon. Dugan began to pour into his cup, "See the Germans are geniuses when it comes to beer." He started to pour Bourbon into Jim's cup, "But no one knows Bourbon like the U.S. of A." Peggy laughed. Dugan began to pour into Falsworth's cup. After he finished pouring he looked at Peggy curiously, "where's your cup?"

Peggy shook her head, "Don't want any." She said with a warm smile.

Dugan screwed the cap on the bottle, "Suit your…" He paused then looked at Peggy curiously again, "Wait…are you…"

Peggy raised her hands a little surprised, "Me? No. No heavens no. Not yet at least. I hope not actually, it be bad timing."

Jim laughed, "It be interesting to see little Captain America's running around."

"A pleasant thought." Said Falsworth in between sips of bourbon.

"I am thinking about it, but I just want to get married first." Peggy said happily. She laughed as she
leaned to Dugan, "I don't drink when I'm on a mission like this."

Dugan raised his cup, "Understandable. More for us." He took a sip then looked at Peggy, "You think this whole deal we're heading to is a trap?" He shook his head, "It's always a damn trap."

Peggy nodded, "That's why we bring the guns. Question is, if Leviathan is trying to lure us in with promises of capturing Howard, then what is it they really want?"

Jim burped, "maybe it's the pleasure of your company." He burped again.

Dugan took out a cigar and plopped into his mouth and was ready to light it, when suddenly Peggy yanked from his mouth and threw it out the back of the truck. He yelled in surprise, "Hey!"

Peggy smiled, "You all smell bad enough."

"And you used to be fun!" he said shocked.

Falsworth took a sip of his bourbon, "Don't tell me being engaged to the Captain made you boring." He laughed.

Peggy chuckled, "Still am. Just annoyed with the SSR agents."

Dugan laughed, "Those agents giving you a hard time?"

"Only all the time." She chuckled.

Jim burped again, "We'll show them." Everyone laughed.

After hours of driving in the dark, the column of vehicles pulled over to the side of the road to rest for the night. The team dismounted the vehicles and set up camp and a camp fire in the tree line so they can stay warm in the cold Eastern European air. Jacques made chow from their rations as Thompson, Li, and Ramirez joined Steve in scouting their surrounding area. The rest of the team including Peggy sat on logs and rocks around the fire and cracked jokes as they waited for the food to be made.

Peggy smiled at Gabe, "How we doing?"

Gabe spoke in French to Jacques who then quickly responded. Gabe looked at Peggy, "He says we're almost done, though don't expect a gourmet dish. This is military food after all." He sat on the ground and leaned back on his log.

Dugan laughed, "Just keep it easy on the beans. The Reds will know we're coming just my smelling the air." Everyone laughed.

Peggy chuckled, "I'm sure they can already smell you Dugan."

Sawyer rolled his eyes, "You won't believe how much soap this guy needs just for him to smell less like ass."

Pinkerton's strong English accent broke through the conversation, "Doesn't matter. He still smells like ass."

Everyone laughed. Jacques spoke in French and signaled for everyone to hand him their plates so he could serve everyone food. Out of the shadows walked out Steve and Thompson. Thompson unslung his weapon and took a seat on a log across from Peggy. "Coast is clear, Li and Ramirez are
taking the night watch. We should be good to go by first light."

Dugan smiled and leaned back on his rock, "Which means...we stand relieved." He said happily.

Steve laughed as he stepped around Jim, Falsworth, and Junior, "Hey, did Junior tell you his Abominable Snowman encounter when we crossed into Poland?" He strolled casually to sit next to Peggy on her log as he removed his helmet.

Peggy reached for his hand and gently pulled him down as he sat, "Hey." She said quietly. When he sat down she immediately leaned into him causing him to wrap an arm around her shoulder. They cherished their mutual warmth.

Jim handed Junior the bottle of bourbon. Junior stuttered, "I never said anything about...a... Abominable Snowman."

Pinkerton laughed, "In fairness he did specify Yeti."

"Yeah a Yeti." Junior agreed.

Dugan laughed, "Sorry, it was a little hard to make out words in between the sobbing." Everyone laughed. Peggy continued her light laugh as she hugged Steve's frame.

Junior took a swig of the bourbon, "Shut up it was scary."

Thompson received a plate of chow from Jacques. He nodded in thanks as Jacques moved on. Thompson smiled, "So what's the difference between an abominable snowman and a Yeti?"

Junior gulped down another sip of bourbon, "One's real and one isn't." Everyone laughed.

Peggy looked at Thompson and laughed, "So I hear they got mermaids in Japan. Run into them?"

Steve smiled wide, "Story time."

Junior passed the bottle of Bourbon to Falsworth, "yeah story time!"

Dugan chuckled, "Easy there junior. Behave and maybe Captain might even tuck you in tonight."

Everyone laughed.

Thompson took a sip of water from his canteen, "You all heard these stories before. Seen a lot of things dug a lot of holes and trenches. You're all salty commandos, you know the experience."

Peggy pried, "They don't hand out Navy Cross's for digging trenches." Everyone looked at Thompson silently.

Thompson nodded and gulped, "Yeah. Navy Cross." He went silent for a moment. After a while he groaned and repositioned himself, "1945. Okinawa. Shuri Line. Nothing detail. I fell asleep on a nigh watch. I wake up to see six Japanese soldiers walking into our position. Just waltzing in the dark." He hesitates, "One of them...bends down over my sleeping C.O. One more second he slit his throat. I snapped too, shot him in the back...then shot the rest. Before any of them knew I was there." Falsworth handed him the bottle of bourbon, he took it then saw the commandos raise their cups in a silent toast. Peggy included. He nodded and took a swig. He smiled, "I'm just curious now Cap...I mean sir."

Steve nodded, "Go ahead."
"All those stories I hear from veterans who fought by you and near you, and those who saw you in combat…"

Falsworth cut off Thompson, "We just gave you a toast, don't second guess the Captain. The stories about him are true."

Dugan nodded, "Stories that aren't part of that stupid adventure show." Peggy smiled and leaned into Steve. She could tell he became serious.

Thompson shook his head, "I'm not saying they aren't true… I'm curious of the fact that after all your heroics and missions… I never seen you ever have a medal on your chest." The commandos all came to think on it and realized he was right.

Peggy looked at him curiously and saw a serious look on his face. She gently put a hand on his lap and squeezed it affectionately. Steve spoke softly, "I don't have them anymore." He paused, "I don't need them… I didn't join the Army to win medals and to be called a hero, I joined the Army to make a difference and to do the right thing." He had a small smile cross his face, "bringing my fellow soldiers and my commandos home, and protecting those people who can't protect themselves… that's reward enough for me." Peggy smiled up at him. He looked down at her for a moment then back at the group, "I can't stand being called a hero. Heroes are made to be perfect in all things… I'm not." He smiled a friendly smile.

Thompson raised the bottle to the air, "To the Captain."

Everyone raised their cups, "to the Captain." The cheered then drank.

Steve shook his head as Peggy brought a hand to caress his cheek. She leaned up and kissed his cheek then nestled her head under his chin and held him tight. Steve smiled and hugged her back silently as they enjoyed the warmth and camaraderie of the group. Falsworth took out a small camera from his bag and took a couple pictures of the couple and the group. He hoped the campfire lighting was good enough. Peggy opened her eyes and saw Falsworth with a camera, she pointed and asked, "Why does James have a camera?"

Steve chuckled, "To document our journey… and to get photos for good memories."

Sawyer sighed, "It's a waste of space Cap."

Jim rolled his eyes, "You're such a downer Sawyer."

Falsworth chuckled, "It's cause he can't shoot." Everyone chuckled.

Maryina Horka Forest, Belarus Deep in Soviet Territory

At first light the team moved out and made their way all the way into Belarus through Lithuania. After hours of driving through the cold forests of the Soviet controlled Eastern Europe they were finally near destination. The team drove their vehicles off road as far they could into the forest, once they felt they were a safe distance away from the road they covered their vehicles with camouflage netting, tarps, and foliage. Once that was done they walked through the trees to within a mile of their target and set up a little temporary observation post to scan their objective. Their objective was a Soviet complex of four large grey brick buildings that looked like old office buildings with two large chimneys protruding out vertically on each building. The complex was surrounded by a large stone wall that had barbed wire lining the top of it. What made matters worse was the complex was entirely in the open. The team was at the literal edge of the forest.
Thompson scanned the complex left and right with his binoculars and saw no sign of movement. He stood up and returned deeper into the forest where the team waited. He put his binoculars away, "Almost looks like nobody's home. We might've beaten the bad guys here."

Dugan said sarcastically, "So we could've slept for another hour?"

Peggy smiled, "Sorry Timothy but we need the advantage of surprise more than we need your beauty sleep."

Junior raised an eyebrow, "Timothy?" He said confused. Many of the commandos didn't actually know Dugan's first name.

Thompson quickly took lead, "we'll infiltrate the facility with teams of two." He nodded, "Pair up. No weapons discharge unless absolutely necessary." Peggy and the rest of the commandos stared at each other with a look of annoyance. A random SSR agent suddenly wanting to take charge of the U.S. Army's most lethal warriors didn't sit well with the commandos. They have way more respect for Peggy than Thompson, if any SSR agent is going to bark orders, it should be her. Thompson nodded, "Meet on the ground floor in 30. Clear?" Steve nodded and followed along, since this an SSR operation after all.

Sawyer looked at Steve for guidance, "Sir?" Steve stood quietly with his shield on his back and his helmet on.

Steve simply nodded at Peggy, "Peggy? This is your mission…"

Peggy smiled at Steve then looked at Thompson, "Agent Thompson's lead."

Thompson looked at Peggy smugly, "Got a better idea? Let's hear it."

Peggy shrugged, "Teams of two is faster. Teams of six is safer. We should take two teams of at least six, more security. Since discretion is the word of the day, we don't know what we're walking into down there."

Steve nodded, "Sounds like a plan." The commandos nodded in agreement and even Ramirez and Li agreed.

Thompson nodded, "Fine. Happy Sam, Pinkerton, Ramirez, Jim, and Falsworth with me. Good?" Peggy nodded.

Steve nodded as well, "Jump to it fellas. The rest of you are with me and Carter." Grabbed his shield and drew his .45 pistol as everyone else got their weapons ready. Everyone had automatic weapons except for Steve who had a pistol and Dugan who had a trench gun. Gabe carried the whopping M1919a6 Browning modified .30 Cal machine gun, Jim carried an M3 grease gun sub machine gun, and Falsworth carried the British Sten MkII while everyone else carried Thompson Submachine guns.

Thompson cocked his weapon, "Aces." Everyone split up and made their way quickly out of the tree line and ran hard toward the facility.

Once Steve's and Peggy's team cut the barb wire and climbed the wall, they broke the lock of one of the large metal doors to one of the buildings inside the compound. Steve took lead followed by Peggy. As the team slowly walked down the hallways and down stairs they were protected in the front by Steve's shield, which took up the majority of the tight hallways and stairways.
Steve spotted a door with a small clear window and saw something familiar through the window. He signaled his team to prepare to enter. Once the team was in position he kicked open the door and charged in, Peggy followed and brought her weapon up at the ready. Steve paused as he looked around the room and got a sudden chill. The room looked surprisingly like an American elementary classroom, complete with the American flag, globe, posters of the president, identical American desks, a map of the United States, chalk board with English writing, and a projector. Steve stiffened as he was getting cautious, "This doesn't look right." He said as everyone walked in slowly behind him and Peggy.

Peggy lowered her weapon, "did everyone suddenly get a sudden chill up their knickers."

Junior lowered his weapon, "I would if I wore knickers." He said uneasily.

Dugan silently stepped around them and said quietly, "I'd stay away from her knickers if I was you Junior."

Li walked deeper into the classroom, thoroughly creeped out at the sight of this room resembling an American classroom. "Almost looks like an American boarding school..." He said as he accidentally bumped into the projector causing it to turn on by itself. The projector whirled to life and played a black and white cartoon of a woman screaming for help. Li jumped in surprise, "Oh! Sorry!"

Dugan gripped his trench gun, "Shut that thing off."

Steve saw something hidden in the cartoon real, "Wait." He looked at Peggy, "Peggy, did you see that?"

Peggy nodded, "I did." She walked to the projector and stopped the reels from spinning. She started to move the real slide by slide as she watched the now stop motion cartoon. She stopped when she saw the cartoon having a large Russian word hidden in the background of the picture. "Instill..." She said translating it. She turned the reel a few more times and spotted another Russian word in the background of another frame, "...Fear."

Steve tensed as he felt a foreboding chill down his spine. He gripped his shield and pistol tightly. Junior chimed in nervously, "Really regretting the lack of knickers right now."

Jacques and Gabe peeked out the door to make sure nothing will get a jump on them. Gabe looked back at Steve, "We got a bad feeling about this Cap." Jacques replied his agreement in French.

Dugan nodded, "Don't worry kid. I think I might've pissed myself." Suddenly the team heard a kid crying in the distance. Everyone brought their weapons up cautiously.

Li looked around, "That's a little kid crying. What's a little kid doing in this place?"

Steve started to walk toward the sound of crying, "Careful. Follow me." He said cautiously. He paused briefly and turned around, "Gabe, Jacques take up the rear. Keep an eye out." They nodded in acknowledgement.

Steve led his team quietly down another hallway as they followed the sounds of a little kid crying. He slowly pushed open another door and entered a big room with rows of beds the size of little kids. Only except these beds had handcuffs attached to the bed posts. Li asked nervously, "Little kid beds?"

Peggy nodded, "It's a boarding school."

Gabe asked, "Why is there handcuffs on the beds."
Junior looked around the creepy looking room, "It's the Soviet Union man."

Jacques finally spoke English in a heavy French accent, "Bad feeling about this whole place. Smells like a trap." Li turned around in surprise.

Steve nodded, "If he's speaking English...we're about to hit a trap." Everyone tensed as they walked deeper into the room.

Dugan spotted a little girl curled up in a ball in front of her bed at the far corner of the room. She was in some kind of black Russian uniform with a low white skirt. He said quietly, "Peggy, Cap..." Everyone slowly walked forward and got a better view of the girl. Peggy lowered her weapon and watched Dugan slowly approach the girl. Dugan put his trench gun back in its holster on his back, "Its alright." He put his hands up, "We're here to help."

The girl slowly looked up at Dugan with innocent eyes. She looked around to the people in front of her and saw them lower their weapons. Then she recognized Captain America approaching the man in front of her. Dugan squatted down in front of her, "It's okay, we're not here to hurt you." She whimpered then slowly points to Dugan's hat. He smiled then bowed his head in front of her, "My hat? You like my hat?" She nodded. He smiled, "It's called a bowler hat." He chuckled, "It's called a bowler because..." he paused then quickly turned around, "Why do they call it a Bowler Peggy?" he asked curiously. Peggy and the group shared a brief chuckle.

Suddenly the girl pulled a knife and thrust it into Dugan's chest causing him to lean forward and groan in pain. She rolled forward leaving the knife in his chest and was able to draw Dugan's pistol from his hip then she rolled again behind a bed. Everyone seemed to be reacting slowly...except for Steve. The girl pointed the weapon at Junior who was still trying to process what was going on.

Steve quickly slid in front of Junior at the same time bringing his shield up to cover his head and upper body just as the girl pressed the trigger. The bullet ricocheted off the shield and hit the ceiling. Peggy quickly ran forward and kicked the gun away from the girl, but the girl still managed to quickly roll away from her as well. The girl slid under a bed then jumped over another one and power slide into a small square opening in the wall.

Dugan pulled the knife out from his chest and stood up. He angrily approached the opening and pulled out a grenade from one of his pouches. Peggy pointed her weapon at the small opening in the wall, "Dugan she's just a little girl."

Dugan shook his head, "She's anything but that." He was ready to pull the pin but Peggy stopped him.

"Dugan no!" She yelled. He sighed then slowly put the grenade away.

Steve patted Junior on the shoulder, "You alright?"

Junior nodded, "Yes sir. Thanks."

"No problem kid." Steve walked to Dugan and holstered his sidearm. He patted Dugan on the back, "You alright?"

Dugan nodded, "Yeah. The vest took the most of it. I'm good to go." Steve nodded. He signaled Gabe and Jacques to keep an eye on the opening.

Thompson and his team quickly showed up at the other side of the room. Thompson lowered his weapon when he saw friendly faces, "What happened."

Steve looked at Thompson, "We walked into a trap."
Peggy nodded, "There's a good chance Leviathan is alerted to our presence."

Thompson shook his head, "We come to far to turn back now…"

"We need to move quickly."

Dugan looked at Steve, "We need an exit strategy out the back…"

Steve nodded, "agreed, but we can't leave until we know who's setting up Stark." He turned around to the team, "Dugan, Pinky, Junior, Ramirez, find a way out of here." He looked at Peggy, "Peggy you got the road map?" Peggy nodded with a confident smile. Steve looked back at the team, "Everyone else follow me and Peggy."

The remaining team consisting of Steve, Peggy, Thompson, Li, Falsworth, Jim, Gabe, Jacques, and Sawyer pushed deeper into the facility to find out more about it, but more importantly discover Leviathan's plan and the link associated with Stark. Steve took point with his shield up as he lead the team down the cramped stairway to a subterranean hallway. They were now in a massive basement. He cautiously rounded the corner and spotted a Soviet Soldier standing guard about ten meters from him. Both the Soviet and Steve reacted quickly, but Steve reacted and moved faster than the Soldier. Steve rocketed his shield at the soldier before he could get his weapon off safe. The shield with its uncanny physical and molecular properties hit the soldier with such velocity it bounced off his head and sent him unconscious. Instantaneously after striking the soldier, the shield hit and bounced off the wall back to Steve's hand.

Steve nodded to his team, "Gabe and Jacques stay here and cover our back." He started to walk down the hallway cautiously, "everyone else with me." The team complied.

They made their way down the hallway and realized on the left side of the hallway were cells in ten meter intervals with iron bar doors. The team began to check each cell as they walked, and each one they checked were empty and looked roughly the same. The cells were small individual rooms with a bunk bed center and perpendicular against the left wall, single dim light bulb hanging from the ceiling, grimy toilet on the far right corner, a small table and two chairs against the right wall, and dark concrete dirty walls.

Jim cleared another cell and said, "Never thought I'd see a hostile foreign cell again."

Steve whispered with light chuckle, "I don't know Jim, these cells look way better than the ones Hydra put you in."

Jim stopped in his tracks, "Don't remind me."

Falsworth sighed, "Good times…"

Peggy chimed in, "These cells are the typical look of communist oppression…"

Steve continued to lead the way down the hallway then stopped at the first cell with people inside it. Two middle aged men in ripped clothing stood behind the bunk bed and watched as they saw more Americans appear outside their cell. One man had long hair and facial hair and the other was bald but looked incredibly older compared to the other. The bald man spoke in a light Russian accent, "You're not Leviathan… you're American… who are you?"

Steve smiled then looked at Peggy who approached the iron bar door. She smiled confidently, "we're the good guys."
The balder older man walked toward the bars and leaned against it, "Are you going to kill us."

Thompson shook his head, "No, we're not."

Peggy nodded to the man, "Why is Leviathan holding you down here."

The man sighed, "They acquired some schemata in the black market… A weapon they don't know how to build." He said while shaking his head. He nodded to his friend hiding away in the back, "They wanted us to build it for them."

Steve looked at the other man, "So your engineers."

The bald man turned around and nodded to his friend, "HE is the engineer." He turned back to face the Americans, "He is Nikola, and I serve as his Terapevt…” He shrugged as he figured the translation, "Psychiatrist."

Thompson chimed in plainly, "So the Reds locked up a head doctor and a mad scientist to build a bomb of some kind." She shrugged, "Sure…why not."

The bald man got defensive of his friend, "He is not mad! He is burdened!" He walks back to Nikola and places a hand on his back, "Look, he sees things in dimensions that we can only imagine. You look at a field of grass, and you see pretty picture. He sees Biology, Phytochemistry… Keeping his gifts from overwhelming him…” He stressed his words to the Americans, "This requires discipline and stability. Since Leviathan took his family, stability does not come easy." He pointed to himself, "I provide the discipline he needs. I Doctor Ivchenko provide that discipline."

Peggy asked curiously, "This weapon Leviathan wants you to build, what is it?"

Nikola finally spoke, "Oh…It's beautiful." He walked toward the table on the side of the cell and grabbed the folded blue prints and brought it to the iron bars, "It's a photonic amplifier." He held the folded blueprints against the bars, "Okay, you understand light is both particles and waves?" Peggy nodded. Nikola was essentially only talking to Peggy, "Mr. Stark has found a way of altering the behavior of the waves."

"Stark…” Said Steve and Thompson at the same time.

Nikola nodded and showed the Stark logo on the blue prints to Steve and Thompson, "Yes. Stark. Here see?" He pointed to the logo.

Peggy asked, "Is Stark here?"

Nikola was getting worked up, "No! Of course not! They stole the schemata! If he was here Leviathan would have no need for me!" He pointed to himself as he yelled, "If he was here, I would be in Kiev with my wife!"

Ivchenko rubbed Nikola's back and spoke in Russian to him gently. He then turned to the Americans, "You thought you would find Howard Stark here? That's why you came?" He shook his head, "I have heard no mention of Stark himself from our captors. Only the work…”

Suddenly there was an explosion followed by automatic weapons fire. Gabe called out from the far end of the hallway, "Incoming!"

Nikola grasped the bars, "Please! Please!"

Steve nodded, "Step back." Nikola and Ivchenko took a step back as Steve shot the lock with his
pistol.

Gabe and Jacques ran down the hallway toward them, stopping to turn around and shoot at the approaching Soviet soldiers. Thompson opened the door, "Go now!"

Steve ran toward Gabe and Jacques, "Peggy lead the way out of here! Jacques, Gabe, and I will cover your retreat!"

"Got it!" Peggy turned and ran around the corner with Ivchenko and Nikola with Thompson, Sawyer, Li, and Falsworth hot on her heels.

Steve took a step in front of his men, making sure the shield was the bigger target so the Soviets will focus on him rather than Jacques and Gabe. Steve fired his pistol as more Soviets came down the hallway. Gabe sent a massive concentration of rounds down the hallway with his M1919a6 machine gun as he took cover behind Steve. Soviet bodies started to build up as more soldiers came through. Steve yelled, "They keep on coming! Jacques, Gabe pull out!"

"Got it!" Yelled Gabe as he turned around with Jacques and ran down the hallway.

A soviet soldier threw a grenade from the far end of the hallway at Steve. Steve quickly reacted by hitting the sailing grenade with his shield, sending it back to the Soviets. He crouched down and hid behind the shield. The grenade exploded killing more Soviet soldiers as Steve remained safe behind his shield. Steve got up and saw that there weren't anymore soldiers coming through, he has some time to move now.

Peggy led the way through another subterranean hallway then up the stairs to the dim and dark boiler room. Once the team emerged from the staircase they were met by a hail of Soviet bullets as the Soviets cut them off from the other end of the boiler room. The team dispersed and took cover behind pipes and boilers to lay down fire on the approaching Soviet soldiers. Thompson ran across the open pathway to another boiler across from Peggy. He began to lay down blind fire at Soviet Soldiers that seemed to be everywhere. Nikola and Ivchenko hid behind the same boiler as Peggy as she did her best to defend the position.

Peggy yelled, "Doctor! If you have a way to get out of here now is the time to share it!" She yelled as she reloaded her weapon.

Li yelled, "Yeah! Use your big brain of..." A bullet went straight through his shoulder from behind causing him to fall forward.

"LI!" Peggy yelled as she saw him slowly get up and drag himself back into cover. Thompson stopped shooting and resulted to hug his weapon and bite his lip as he froze in the heat of the fire fight.

Sawyer stepped away from Peggy and stood up and shot in the direction from the shot. He suddenly spotted a little girl with a gun in the dim light. Before he could shoot her, she shot him in the leg. He dropped his weapon and fell back as he screamed in pain. Peggy reacted quickly and grabbed Sawyer by the collar and dragged him back to her. Falsworth lowered his weapon and began to take out his med kit as he spotted Gabe and Jacques appear from the stairs followed by Steve.

Jacques and Gabe set up their spots and started to fire. Steve took a knee next to Peggy, "More Soviets behind us."

Peggy looked at Jim who was next to Thompson, "Jim! Get Dugan and ask him where is our exit!"
Steve rolled forward and took a knee behind his shield in the open. The Soviets started to point their attention at him and started to shoot at him. Steve was able to shoot his pistol at the enemy when there was a break in gun fire.

Jim was on the radio with Dugan, "Dugan! We're in the boiler room! Where's our exit." Steve started to crouch walk forward.

Gabe yelled out, "I'm out!" He lowered his weapon and took cover.

Peggy looked at Li who was stopping the bleeding in his shoulder wound, "Li! Need your weapon!" Li nodded then slid his weapon past Steve toward Thompson. Peggy saw Thompson sweating and looking pale as the look of fear became more apparent to her. She yelled, "Thompson slide that weapon over here!" She looked at the fire fight ensuing and at Steve who was slowly moving forward. She yelled again, "Thompson!" There was no response from him. She shook her head then called to Gabe, "Gabe!" She tossed her weapon toward him.

Gabe was able to catch it then he began to open fire once again, "Thanks!"

Nikola stood up when he recognized a shadowy figure in the opposite end of the boiler room walking calmly toward them. As Nikola stood up the shadow figure drew his pistol and shot him in the head. Nikola fell over onto the ground as blood oozed out of his head. Ivchenko yelled, "Nikola!"

Jim looked from his cover and saw a man in all black, wearing a flak jacket, and has a silver left arm. He said plainly, "Who is that?" Suddenly the gun fire ceased as the man walked forward toward Steve. Steve stood up and tensed as he approached.

Peggy got on her own small radio, "Dugan we got an opening. If you're not here soon I'll be very cross with you."

The man with the silver arm stepped into the dim light, both Steve and him were about twenty feet from each other. The man had relatively long dark hair and had his lower half of his face covered by a black mask. Steve noticed the silver arm looked metallic in nature and had a large red star on the shoulder. For a tense second nothing happened...until the man quickly pointed his pistol at Steve. Steve reacted quick and threw his shield at him, but unlike most people...this man was faster AND stronger than most. The silver armed man caught the shield with the silver arm and looked at Steve coldly.

The silver armed man threw the shield back at Steve with equal force. Steve didn't hesitate and caught it with both hands but with a hint of pain. Steve quickly took hold of his shield again and charged the man and closed the distance. As Steve charged the Soviets opened fire on the team again, but it seemed they were ignoring Steve. Unable to help, the team did their best to kill off the Soviet soldiers. The team couldn't get a shot off at the silver armed man without risking getting killed themselves. It was impossible to shoot the silver armed man in the first place because there would be one second where he's exposed then the next second he would be using Steve as a shield, the man was too fluid for them.

As Steve closed the distance, the silver armed man got a shot off at the shield but realized it was ineffective. He took a quick step aside causing Steve to over shoot. This is going to be a close hand to hand fight. Steve quickly turned around and was able to block the heavy punch of the silver arm. There was a loud bang as the two metals collided with each other. With quick succession they both lost their side arms as they continued to fight.

Peggy watched helplessly as she watched her Steve struggle in a fight against a person who doesn't
seem to be human. He finally met someone who could counter him. No one was able to except Schmidt. Suddenly the wall next to her exploded, she ducked as debris flew by her. Dugan stepped in through the big hole in the wall with his trench gun, "Wahoo!" He hollered.

Pinkerton groaned as he stepped, "Look at this mess! We were only gone for five minutes!"

Peggy rolled her eyes, "Stop 'Wahooing' and help!" She looked across to the other team members, "Everyone out!"

The others poured into the boiler and started to lay down cover. Jim went around and grabbed Li and quickly dragged him out of the room. Falsworth and Jacques quickly took Sawyer together and got out. Gabe took Ivchenko out as Ramirez came in to help. Peggy looked at Thompson, "Thompson that means everybody!" She looked at Steve who was engaged in a deep hand to hand fight with the silver armed man.

Dugan fired off his trench gun, "who is the silver menace?" He asked as he noticed the fight.

Peggy ran across to Thompson and grabbed his collar, "Come snap out of it mate. Come on get your arse into gear!" She shook him, "Come on! My fiancé is in trouble!"

Dugan pointed his trench gun at the silver armed man and hoped the trench gun won't hit Steve. The man saw Dugan and quickly tried to get Steve in a choke hold, but Steve countered it and hit punched him across the face then hit him again square in the face with his shield. Dugan ducked in cover as Soviet rounds snapped where he once stood, "Damn it." Was all he could say.

Thompson nodded, "I'm up…I'm up." He quickly composed himself then got up and ran out of the room as Dugan and Peggy covered him.

Steve and the man continued their fight with neither one seeming to get an edge over the other. Dugan yelled at Peggy, "Go Peggy! Go!"

Peggy looked at him, "You go!"

"What would cap say if I left his best girl behind!" Dugan yelled as he shot his weapon at the Soviets.

"He'd say do 'What Peggy says!'" She yelled. They both got out of their cover and shot at the exposed Soviets.

Dugan charged out of the room. Peggy dropped four more Soviet soldiers then took cover. She and Steve were the last ones…she was not going to leave him behind. She yelled, "Steve we need to go!"

Steve was battered, bruised, and bleeding. He was able to kick the silver armed man with enough force to give him space. Suddenly the bullets stopped flying. He ran to Peggy and stopped next to her as he saw the man walking back toward him. He looked at her, "Go…" He said plainly.

"What? Darling no…" She shook her head.

"He's coming for us." Steve gripped his shield.

"Steve…"

"Peggy…GO. NOW." He said sternly. He softened, "Trust me." He started to run toward the silver armed man. At the same exact time.
Peggy yelled, "Steve!" She didn't know what to do. He said to trust him, so she turned and ran out of the room.

Time seemed to slow down as the two opposing warriors approached. The silver armed man whirled his silver metallic arm as Steve charged ahead with his shield in front of him.

Outside, Peggy ran out of the room to the US Army truck that was waiting. As she ran soviet troops poured out and shot at the truck and at her. The commandos returned fire from the truck and provided cover. Dugan yelled, "Come on Peggy run! Don't look back" Gabe fired his freshly reloaded machine gun, killing the most Soviets behind Peggy.

Peggy jumped into the truck as more Soviets fell behind her. She turned around just as the room she was in exploded. She watched as part of the building collapsed onto the boiler room, spraying dust and debris into the air. She leaned out of the truck, "Steve!" She screamed. The commandos and the agents watched helplessly as the dust settled. Peggy was in so much shock as she stared at the destroyed section of the building. She clenched her heart as tears started to slowly fall. She couldn't believe after all this… this would happen again.

She closed her eyes as Dugan was about to signal Jim to drive when they suddenly saw movement from the collapsed section of the building. Peggy stopped and looked and saw a large piece of debris slowly moving upwards. It could only be one of two people. Either it was Steve or the man with the silver arm. Everyone's jaw dropped as they saw Steve pushing a large block of debris off of him with one hand while the other held his shield. Peggy smiled and yelled, "Steve!" She yelled excitedly.

Steve threw the large piece of debris off of him then got up on his feet and slowly ran to the truck. Everyone including Ivchenko helped him onto the truck. Dugan yelled, "Drive!" The truck drove away from the facility quickly, not wanting to stick around for any Soviet reinforcements.

In the truck Steve let out a sigh of relief as he removed his helmet. He dropped it next to his shield that was resting against his leg. His face was bruised and cut from the fight and resulting explosion. His body was also equally beaten and cut from the fight. He rested his head back against the truck canvas as Peggy sat next to him and took his hand. Ivchenko smiled at Steve from the other end of the truck, "Not bad…for a cowboy."

Steve chuckled. Peggy gripped his hand as she nestled against him, "I thought you were dead… again." She said a little shaken with a stray tear coming down her cheek.

"I told you to trust me." He wrapped an arm around her and used his other hand to guide her chin up so she can look at him, "I died once already. I didn't want to do it again." Peggy smiled and couldn't help herself, she kissed him briefly then nestled close to him again.

Dugan looked at Falsworth who was taking a picture with his camera, "Aw. So tender." Falsworth smiled as he took another one.

Peggy smiled, "I hate you all." She wiped her face to get rid of stray tears.

Gabe asked the lingering question, "Cap, who was that? The man with the silver arm."

Steve tensed, "I don't know. He was fast and had a metal arm. That's all I know."

Falsworth lowered his camera, "You think you got him?"

Steve shook his head, "No. I know I didn't get him."
"You dropped part of a building on him." Dugan said astonished.

"Yeah, and I survived. But those explosives were his. He planted them and that means he had an exit strategy for every eventuality with me." Steve shook his head, "I forced him to trigger them and I used it to my advantage, but I don't think he's gone."

Peggy asked, "Who is he?"

Ivchenko spoke plainly causing everyone to look at him, "He is known as the Winter Soldier. He is a soldier and assassin, the Soviet counter to the United States' Captain America. Though the winter soldier is young, he has been trained in both armed and unarmed hand to hand combat. He is also an extremely skilled marksman who can speak both Russian and English."

Dugan asked, "How do you know all this?"

"I was forced to work for Leviathan remember?" He sighed, "That man is cold and heartless. He has one arm and his missing one is replaced by a prototype bionic arm. That is all I know."

Dugan sighed, "Thanks for brightening the mood…"

Steve looked up, "Don't tell me Jim is driving…"

After hours of driving they made it to a small airfield in Poland where two C-47 sky trains waited for them. One was bound back to the Army in Northern West Germany while the other was bound for Southern West Germany. The team dismounted their vehicles and proceeded to say their goodbyes. Steve shook the hands of Thompson, Li, and Ramirez. Ramirez smiled, "thank you sir it was an honor" Steve nodded. Thompson didn't say a word and just smiled as he walked to the plane.

Li smiled, "It's been a pleasure sir." His arm was in sling and there was a large white bandage covering his wound.

Steve nodded, "Agent Li. Make sure Thompson is doing okay. A Soviet soldier whacked him and Jim from behind." Steve didn't like to lie, but this time he made an exception. He didn't want Thompson to be discredited in the SSR for being a coward. Besides Li was the only agent other than Peggy to be in the fire fight, so it wasn't much of a lie. As they always say, a white lie is good for the soul.

Li nodded, "Will do Cap." He walked off with Ramirez to the plane.

Dugan and the rest of the commandos were saying bye to Peggy. "Sure you want to get on that plane? Commandos are always looking for another good fighter. We just need to make up a good nickname for you."

Peggy chuckled, "Tempting, but I put my days on the front lines behind me." She smiled, "Someone needs to mind the wheel back in the states AND someone needs to convince the SSR of Howard's innocence, wanker or not." She smiled a wide smile again, "I'll miss you!" She said in a cheery tone as she hugged him.

Dugan hugged her back with a wide smile, "I'll miss you too Peggy." They released then Dugan struck gold, "Wait a second." He wagged his index finger, "Miss America!" He looked to the commandos, "Huh? Fellas how's that?"

Peggy shook her head, "Never speak again."
"Okay." Dugan's smile faded.

Falsworth looked at the surrounding team and asked the obvious question, "Why not just Mrs. Rogers?"

Gabe nodded and shrugged, "Yeah, it's got a sound to it and it will be official soon."

Peggy put her hands on her hips, "I love it. It's got a ring to it." She turned and saw Steve smiling and shaking his head.

Sawyer actually smiled, "Lets give her a farewell fellas!" The commandos surrounded her in a huddle and cheered three times. After that was done with Peggy waved at all of them then took Steve's hand as he walked her to the plane.

Dugan smiled at them as Falsworth again was taking another picture. Dugan smiled at Ivchenko, "What about you doc? Need a ride home?"

Ivchenko shook his head, "Uh. I do not know where is home anymore."

"You can always go to New York. Ms. Carter can always use your help to stopping Leviathan."

Ivchenko nodded, "I'll do anything I can."

"We'll keep Europe in peace." Dugan smiled and handed him the half empty bottle of bourbon.

Ivchenko gladly took the bottle and looked at it curiously, "Don't have any vodka?" The commandos all looked at each other with funny grins. Ivchenko smiled and shrugged, "Desperate times I suppose." He took a swig of the drink then coughed, "This is terrible." Everyone laughed. He smiled, "May I have the rest?"

Before Dugan could say anything, Sawyer nodded, "It's all yours."

Ivchenko smiled and ran toward the plane where all the SSR agents are boarding.

By the plane, Peggy and Steve were saying their good byes. Peggy smiled at Steve, "Don't scare me like that again darling."

Steve smiled, "I'm sorry… I know you can defend yourself, but…"

"I know Steve." She smiled and kissed him on the lips. She broke the kiss and ran a hand across his hair, "I really do want to be called Mrs. Margaret Carter Rogers some day. So don't do anything unnecessarily stupid." She chuckled.

"I love you Peggy." Steve said. They kissed happily for a moment before they went their separate ways.

In the plane she stopped and watched her lover and her team mates and friends start to walk to their plane. Steve still had a little bit more time before he can go back home.

On the plane ride back to Germany, everyone but Thompson and Peggy were asleep. Thompson finally lifted the burden that held him down for so long since the war. He told Peggy the truth behind his Navy Cross that he killed surrendering Japanese on accident. He didn't realize it until it was too late. Thompson began to tear as he lifted his burden, "Everybody thinks that I'm this guy that I never was…and every day it gets harder and harder to live with." He looked out of the window of the
plane. He groaned, "I've been trying to tell that story...since I came home from war."

Peggy said gently, "You just did." She may not fully understand the pain, but she was at least going to be the shoulder for him.

Thompson looked at her in a new light. He asked, "Thanks Carter."

She put a hand on his lap, "You're welcome." She gave a friendly smile.

He had to ask, "Why do you keep coming back?"

"What?"

"You keep coming back to the SSR even when we stoned walled you. Over. And over again." He shrugged, "Why?"

Peggy smiled, "Because this is my job too. And if I quit when it gets hard then I will never become better." They both smiled.

"I know you might never forgive me for what I have said or done to you..." Thompson hesitated.

Peggy smiled, "I forgive you." Thompson couldn't hold back another friendly smile to her.

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**SSR New York City Branch "Bell Co. Office"**

It was night time when Thompson and Peggy returned to the SSR. They got changed back to their usual attire from before they left. Thompson in his grey suit and tie, Peggy in a woman's dark blue business suit. Both Thompson and Peggy stood in Chief Dooley's office as they received the debrief.

Dooley faced his cork board that had all their leads on it, "No Stark. No Leviathan."

Thompson shook his head, "No Sir." Peggy stood silently as she fiddled with her engagement ring. Thompson nodded at Peggy, "But Agent Carter was able to acquire intel about Leviathan from Doctor Ivchenko. About the enemy's possible end game."

Peggy stopped fiddling with her ring, "WE were able to retrieve him from a Leviathan prison. He's very eager to cooperate with the SSR in any way he can."

Dooley turned to them, "But he doesn't think Stark is connected to Leviathan."

"No. And I don't either." Peggy said confidently.

Dooley nodded, "Noted."

Thompson chimed in, "He may not have all the information sir. He was working off Stark blueprints. Smart money says Leviathan got them off Stark himself."

Dooley sat down on his chair, "Send the doctor in on your way out."

Thompson chimed in one last time, "When we were out there, Captain Rogers came face to face and engaged the Winter Soldier. Do you know about him Chief?"

Dooley bit his thumb nail, "Hm. This is troubling. I have heard of him..." He nodded, "I'll get you two a file on him." As Peggy and Thompson left, Dooley looked up at Peggy, "Good work Agent Carter." He said honestly.
Peggy was taken back for a moment. She stood in the doorway and smiled, "Thanks, Sir." She left then sent the doctor in.

Peggy grabbed her purse and saw Sousa sitting on his desk chair. He looked like he hadn't slept in days. She asked curiously, "Daniel, why do you look like you were the one who hasn't slept in days?" She asked humorously.

Sousa smiled and looked at her, "Just staying up late worrying about you guys." He gave her a friendly smile, "You did good."

Peggy smiled, "Thanks Daniel."

"How is our Captain America doing?" He asked courteously.

Peggy smiled, "He's doing good. I can't wait for him to come home though." Sousa smiled to himself.

Thompson put his grey fedora on at an angle then grabbed his overcoat and draped it over his arm, "Coming Sousa? Buy me a drink for every Red I killed."

Sousa leaned back, "Nah, not tonight the pillow is calling."

Thompson started to walk to the elevator, "Come on Carter!" He stopped then turned and smiled at her, "I owe you a bourbon." He turned then walked to the elevator.

Peggy smiled a happy smile, "I'll be right there."

Another long chapter.

I did have Bucky listed as a character so I decided to alter the universe a little by adding The Winter Soldier. He isn't quite the dark, cold, and perfect killer yet since he's relatively knew to the Soviets. It's a comic book universe, things don't necessarily have to be scientifically sound. LOL

In the Military Blouse is the term for your combat uniform top and trousers are the combat uniform bottoms.

Hope you enjoyed.
Another early morning at one of the busy piers in New York City but this time there was a large Liberty troop ship that just finished docking at the pier. The troop ship carried Steve, the Howling Commandos, the BRT, 107th, and many other units that were returning from their deployment as occupying forces in Europe. There were hundreds of people crowding the exit of the pier waiting for the troop ship to begin unloading. It was an electric atmosphere full of energy and excitement as families, friends, and loved ones hollered and cheered to see their servicemen come home. On top of that there were photographers and reporters mixed into the crowd to document the return of another troop ship from Europe, and of course take pictures of Captain America returning home. Onboard the ship, soldiers of all types cheered excitedly at the waiting crowd below them as they waited to disembark. Peggy waited impatiently but looked calm at the exit of the pier with everyone else. She wore a dark blue casual V-neck form fitting dress that went just below her knees and accented her curves. She wore her favorite red lipstick and natural make up, and her brown silky hair flowed down to her shoulders like it always was. She looked very beautiful, and it was obvious many people agreed because she turned heads just by standing there in the crowded pier. Her brown purse hung on her shoulder as she fiddled with her diamond engagement ring as she waited with much anticipation. She just wanted the troop ship to hurry up and disembark so she can see Steve again.

The ship didn't look like it would disembark any time soon so she continued to fiddle with her ring as she waited. She started to remember the events that transpired the last month since she returned from Europe. It has been a long month, and three of the days of that month been all round stressful. She began to run the events through her head…

Days after returning from the Soviet Union, she and the SSR were hit by a plague of deception and infiltration. The story was… She was arrested for treason for aiding Stark and the SSR was gearing up to secretly go after Steve, but both Peggy and the unknowing Steve got their charges dropped when Peggy explained to everyone why she did what she did. Through the course of events, everyone found out Doctor Ivchenko was actually a wolf in sheep clothing. The doctor had a talent to manipulate minds to bend people to his will. Dotty Underwood, the young woman who Peggy thought was befriending her and Steve was actually an enemy who worked for Ivchenko. Dooley was killed by Ivchenko's manipulation, but before he died he gave Peggy a clean slate and his faith to run the investigation. Stark reveals himself to the SSR and reveals what he knows that Ivchenko is actually Johann Fennhoff and details of the Battle of Finow. It is then decided to use Stark as bait to lure in Doctor Fennhoff (Ivchenko), but it doesn't go as planned as the SSR discovers he got kidnapped before the SSR can spring him.

Peggy and the SSR know that Fennhoff stole the deadly gas agent known as Midnight Oil, an unintended chemical weapon that drives people into violent rage. The same gas found to be the cause of death to 47 people in a movie theater the day Dooley died. Peggy and the SSR discover Fennhoff and Stark are at one of Stark's private airfields just outside the city. They discover that Fennhoff plans to manipulate Stark to deliver the chemical weapon to the city by air, and watch the city
destroy itself. Peggy leads Sousa, Jarvis, and Thompson to stop Fennhoff, but when they arrive Stark is already taking off in his private P-51D Mustang. Jarvis takes off in another P-51 to shoot down Stark before he gets to the city in case Peggy is unable to talk Stark out of it. Peggy goes after the radio room on the second floor of the hangar while Sousa and Thompson secure the bottom. But Peggy gets jumped by Dotty in the radio room as Fennhoff escapes, she fights Dotty, but no ground is covered until Peggy throws her out the window into the hangar. At the same time that Peggy is fighting Dotty, both Sousa and Thompson capture Fennhoff after Sousa knocks him out. Peggy gets on the radio and is able to break Fennhoff's manipulation on Stark, who turns around the plane and lands back on his private airstrip.

At the end of that ordeal, Peggy, Jarvis, Stark, Thompson, and Sousa return to the SSR with Fennhoff under arrest and gagged so he doesn't talk. Dotty was no where to be seen, the only thing Peggy knows is that she escaped and she was injured. When the group arrived in the office Peggy is given a standing ovation from everyone from the SSR. After that long night, Thompson ends up getting the credit of the whole ordeal and the Chief position of the New York City SSR office. Much to Sousa's dismay, Peggy doesn't mind because she isn't in this job for the glory or the medals.

As a reward for her services, and a wedding gift in advance, Stark gave Peggy one of his smaller luxurious neoclassical penthouses free of charge for her and Steve to live in for as long as they like. The smaller luxury penthouse has 3 large bedrooms, 3 bathrooms, large kitchen, dining room, living room, and a large balcony, its one of Stark's smaller places to go for entertainment. Peggy declined his offer and didn't want the penthouse because she didn't feel right nor did she feel comfortable to live in a place like that. She also didn't think Steve would be comfortable living in a penthouse of that luxurious style either. Also she didn't really want to know what Stark did on his private time in the penthouse either. Instead, Peggy offered the penthouse to her best friend Angie, for covering for her when the SSR showed up. Plus, Angie has been going on through tough times for a while, she deserves the new home. Stark was completely fine with it, one of the reasons is that he is actually afraid of Peggy so saying no would be a problem.

Peggy decided she wanted something else from Stark. Stark naturally agreed because he owed her and Steve a great deal…

Peggy was quickly brought back to the present when she heard an escalated roar from the crowd around her. She looked around trying to figure out why everyone got suddenly louder but then realized the soldiers on board the ship began disembarking. She started to see servicemen return to their families and friends. She smiled anxiously to see Steve again as more and more servicemen passed by her to the arms of their loved ones. If the serviceman didn't live in the city, then they went to the busses parked on the side to be transported to the train station. Peggy started to bounce on her high heels as she started to build with excitement. She turned and saw a young little boy run to his father in uniform. The father dropped his Army canvas duffle bag and went down to his knees and embraced his little boy as his wife and daughter approached to embrace him as well. Peggy smiled and realized that some of the soldiers on board the ship stayed in Europe since the end of the war last year. But, that family scene she just watched got her thinking for a moment.

As she turned to face the ship again, she caught a glimpse of a very unique and memorable individual walking to the exit of the pier. She smiled widely and happily at the love of her life walking happily down the pier toward her. Steve didn't wear his helmet with his Captain America "Stars and Stripes" combat uniform, his shield was on his back, and he carried his large Army green canvas duffle bag with one hand as he walked with his commandos down the pier. Peggy looked down at her engagement ring and smiled excitedly, anxious to be back in Steve's embrace again.
Jim walked to Steve's left and laughed, "Can't wait to spend some much needed time off."

Dugan who was walking to Steve's right chuckled, "So you can chow down on noodles or something? What is that Asian stuff called?"

Jim rolled his eyes, "I'm going to eat a cheeseburger Ace!"

Steve laughed, "I'm going to…"

Dugan looked at Steve, "Marry your best girl who is standing right over there ahead of us." He nodded to Peggy in the distance who was standing out in the crowd in a dark blue dress. She looked very beautiful, and she caught the all commando's eyes in a heart beat.

Steve smiled, "Yeah." He smiled a warm smile at her. He said softly, "Going to marry her."

Falsworth nodded, "with that Stark thing done with, nothing can stop you."

Steve turned and smiled at him, "Nothing and nobody will."

Dugan patted Steve on the shoulder, "As long as you invite us to the wedding, we won't stop you!"

Sawyer in his usual negativity, "Like we can do anything to stop him." Everyone chuckled.

Dugan turned around to Junior, "Hey Junior, heading back to high school?"

Junior rolled his eyes, "That's funny thank you." Pinkerton laughed and wrapped his arm around his shoulder then gave him a noogie.

As the commandos reached the exit of the pier the cameramen and reporters in the crowd emerged and started to snap pictures of Captain America and his commandos. Many of the reporters stepped in front of them to ask them questions, but Steve and the commandos never stopped to answer any questions or pose for any pictures. As soon as Steve was close enough he jogged toward Peggy making the reporters and cameramen not dare stand in his way, but they did follow him. Peggy saw him jogging toward her and she quickly walked toward him to meet him half way. As soon as they were close enough from each other, Steve dropped his canvas duffel bag on the ground then quickly embraced Peggy.

For a moment they were by themselves on the pier, no one was watching them, no one was taking pictures, it was just them. They held the embrace for a long moment, Peggy rested her chin on Steve's muscular shoulder with her eyes closed and said in a soft tone, "I missed you."

Steve kissed the side of her head, "I missed you too."

Peggy leaned up and kissed his lips. Steve happily reciprocated and held her tightly as she poured all of her passion into the kiss. Steve leaned her back slightly as they held the kiss for what seemed like an eternity. Peggy gripped his uniform with her hands, it may have been a month but it seemed like a life time to her. They finally broke the kiss for air, Steve smiled down at her, "I love you."

Peggy smiled, "I love you too." After those words, reality finally came back as they realized they were still on a busy pier with cameramen and reporters.

Steve and Peggy straightened but still in each others arms. The couple smiled at each other humorously when they saw that the commandos standing in a circle around them. The commandos had their arms wide open to prevent unwanted crowding on Steve and Peggy. The highly trained soldiers even did their best to block cameras from getting a picture of the couple kissing and
embracing. Dugan's loud voice was heard above the loud commotion on the pier, "Hey Press, get a shot of this!" He tilted his head to the right and flexed his right arm, "This is my good side!"

Peggy and Steve laughed. Steve looked at Peggy up and down, "you look… absolutely… beautiful…" He chuckled, "Wow." He shrugged, "But I'm sure you hear it enough from me and… well you're always so beautiful…"

Peggy giggled, "Thank you darling." She leaned up and kissed his lips again, "Welcome home Steve."

Steve smiled, "Thank you." He held her close.

Peggy smiled up at him, "Ready to come home?"

"Home is where you are." Steve smiled. Peggy blushed and kissed him again.

Peggy smiled and took his hand in hers, "Then let's go darling, I got a surprise to show you." She looked up at him, "And I'll tell you all about the Stark case in the car."

Steve smiled, "Sounds like a plan." He turned to his commandos, "Thanks guys! Now go home and enjoy your vacation!" The commandos turned and smiled at their Captain.

The commandos said a variety of goodbyes, "See Ya Cap!" Called out Jim.

Peggy drove their car through the busy streets of New York City while she talked to Steve about the events that happened when he was gone. Steve's duffel bag and shield sat idly on the back seat so Steve had space in the front. His head was turned to face her as he listened intently to her words. Peggy talked nonstop about the events that's transpired when he was gone, she made sure her tone didn't make it sound like she was upset with him being gone. Truthfully in her mind she was just happy that Steve is home. She was more focused on him being back than actually telling story.

Once Peggy said the final detail, Steve smiled at her, "Wow…Peggy. That's…"

Peggy rolled her eyes, "A big pain in the bum I know." She sighed.

Steve gave her a sympathetic look, "I'm sorry about Krzeminski and Chief Dooley. I know they didn't treat you right, but…"

Peggy smiled reassuringly at him, "I know darling. I already paid my respects and said a small prayer for them" She took his hand with her right and interlaced their fingers while she drove. She spoke warmly, "But, we found the ones who did it and got Fennhoff. They'll be proud and I'm sure even Krzeminski will be proud."

Steve shook his head, "All but Dotty. Can't believe she was the enemy this whole time. She was so close to us and she wanted to befriend us. She seemed so… goofy to be an assassin"

Peggy nodded, "I know. I think that's why she acted goofy so it would not attract suspicion toward her. No one would ever think someone as bubbly and clumsy as Dotty would ever be a deadly assassin."

Steve agreed, "Yeah makes sense." He shook his head, "Ivchenko played us this whole time…and his name isn't even Ivchenko…He could've taken us out in Belarus."

Peggy squeezed his hand gently, "I think he wanted to get you. Or at least Leviathan wanted to get
you thus the Winter Soldier in Belarus. But you were able to out match their super soldier so their plans changed." She tensed just thinking about Steve's opposite.

"Sheesh. What a mess." He smiled happily at her. He changed the subject, "This Stark thing is finally over. Stark is a free man once again." This time he squeezed her hand. Peggy stopped the car at a red light at an intersection then she turned her her head to meet Steve's loving gaze. He smiled warmly at her, "I know Thompson got the credit and the awards for your achievement, and I know you are fine with it. But, I just want to let you know that you'll always be the hero. You'll always be my hero. You were the same as me before, except everything was against you more than it was against me. Every door was shut in your face, but you over came that time after time. You kept going and proved yourself, and eventually made everyone notice how good you actually are. Your determination and that drive, makes you my hero." He smiled, "Who cares what other say, you know who you are and you know you can do anything. No one can change that." Peggy blushed red at his words. Steve smiled, "You saved the bloody city. Be proud of that." They were leaning toward each other but the cars behind them honked their horns.

Peggy realized and let go of Steve's hand so she could grab the wheel with both hands. She started to drive and accelerate across the intersection to keep up with traffic. Peggy laughed as Steve shrugged, "Sorry. I got carried away."

Peggy glanced at him briefly, "No, it's fine Steve." She interlaced her hand with his again, "God, I love you so much..." She smiled happily.

"You're my motivation." He said honestly.

"And you're mine." They smiled and sat quietly for a moment. Peggy realized something, "Darling." Steve looked at her curiously. She smiled, "Did you say 'Bloody' in the way I thought you said it?"

Steve turned to her with a raised eyebrow, "I did what?"

Peggy laughed, "I heard you say the word 'Bloody' like an Englishmen."

"What? No way!" He waved his free hand dismissively with a smile as he pretended to lie.

Peggy chuckled, "Mhmm sure."

"So what happens to Stark now?"

"He's cleared of all charges and now he's trying to get custody of his inventions back." Peggy turned the car right and down another road.

Steve laughed, "Is he going to build a better vault this time?"

She shook her head, "No, he's going to destroy them all once he gets them back."

Steve looked shocked, "Wow...that's..." He noticed they were leaving the main area of the city. The Griffith was completely the other way around, "Uh darling?" He asked curiously.

Peggy looked at him relatively shocked at his choice in words. She chuckled, "Yes Steve?" He's starting to say words and phrases she says. Granted she says something that he does too, and she starting to get into sports, particularly the ones he watches.

"Where are we going?" Steve asked curiously as he looked out the window.

Peggy chuckled, "It's a surprise."
"As long as it's not a crazy psycho little girl with a gun. I approve." He laughed.

Peggy laughed, "Darling you have no idea."

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**Scarsdale, NY**

After a while Peggy pulled the car up up to the curb in front of a medium sized yellow house. Steve been all over New York City, but never really spent time outside of the area until now. After quite a drive, they were now in a Scarsdale suburb, a calm and sleepy area just outside of the city complete with beautiful neighborhoods and beautiful downtown. Steve looked out his window with a calm happy smile as he looked at the peaceful neighborhood. The medium to large sized houses, trees blowing in the calm New York breeze, the green grass just told him of a life he thought would never exist for him. A white picket fence dream. He looked at Peggy with an astonished smile while she looked at him with a loving gaze of her own. He couldn't help but ask, "Want to tell me what we're doing here now?"

Peggy giggled, "Yes." She nodded to the house they are parked in front of, "Welcome home." The house is a two story yellow house with long covered porch at the front that spanned from the front door and to the left of the house. The covered porch had white columns and a white fence that lined the porch. The house itself looked like it was recently built and the outside is styled like the family homes of the 40s. The outside of the house has stunning curb appeal with a tall Sugar Maple tree on the front yard. On top of that the house has plenty of green bushes lining the perimeter of the house, additionally there is a nice white picket fence that lined the property perimeter.

Steve looked at the house again then back at her with a surprised look, "Wh-what? I thought it was at the Griffith or out last..."

Peggy laughed, "No." She squeezed his lap, "This house, is our luxurious home now."

Steve took a second to register what she said, "How did you swing that and how much did it cost you?"

"Well darling, it only cost me and you to clear Stark's name, and other than that it's free." She smiled.

"Remember you cleared Stark's name. I just helped." Steve chuckled.

"Stark gave us this house to thank us for clearing his name." She nodded, "This is his wedding gift in advance." She chuckled, "Well actually...he gave a us a neoclassical styled penthouse in the city, but I decided to give it to Angie. She deserves it." She shrugged, "I can't see us living in another penthouse of that caliber. So instead I asked Stark for a nice house."

Steve nodded, "Me neither." He smiled, "I hope Angie love her new home. I agree that she deserves it."

"She is darling. Though she would like to visit us some time, which I don't mind." Peggy laughed, "You did say you wanted to move to a house after we're married. But I jumped the gun a little."

"No. This is perfect Peggy. I mean wow..." He smiled at her then looked out the window again, "This is awesome. This is really, really great." He smiled to himself, "This is perfect. Back in the past I would never imagined to have a life like this. A perfect white picket fence scene..." He didn't realize he was talking to himself. He laughed, "Steve Rogers. Once a skinny asthmatic kid said to never do anything remarkable with his life...Is now a strong super hero with the weight of the world on his shoulders...and is soon to be marrying the most beautiful and the strongest dame in the
world…"

Peggy gripped his hand, "This is home now Steve." She said gently causing Steve to return to reality. He turned to see her smiling face. She smiled, "Margaret Carter, a woman who works in a profession dominated by men. She was told that she would never be anything more than a housewife. She's now a respected and proven agent in the SSR…and is soon to be marrying the kindest, fairest, strongest…" She squeezed his hand, "and the most handsome man in the world." Steve just smiled. Peggy opened her door and turned off the car, "Come on, I'll show you our home darling." She said as she stepped out of the car. Steve smiled and stepped out as well. As Steve grabbed his gear from the back seat, Peggy walked on the path to unlock the front door of the house. Steve strapped his shield to its usual spot on his back and carried his duffel bag with his left hand. Steve walked the path slowly as he looked around the neighborhood and the surrounding houses. Peggy stood with the front door open behind her, "You coming Steve?" She said playfully.

Steve smiled, "Yeah." He walked up the few steps onto the porch then followed Peggy in. She closed the door behind him.

Immediately inside the house Peggy put her keys in one of the drawers in the large Asian wood console tables located next to the front door. The console table had a nice blooming plant in a vase on top of it. Steve put his duffel bag on the hard wood floor next to the console table and smiled as he took in the immediate interior of the house. She smiled and wrapped her arms around his shoulders, "You said a while back that our last move was temporary." Steve nodded. She continued, "Well, Mr. Jarvis, Howard, and Angie helped me move all of our things from our original apartment and the Griffith to here. So now it's permanent." She gazed into his eyes, "Hope that's okay at least…" She knows he trusts her, but she just hopes she didn't do anything too hasty. This isn't conventional in today's society, but since when were they ever conventional. She was active in the Army, she's a lethal spy, she works, and Steve is a super soldier super hero. Nothing about them is normal.

Steve smiled, "Wow that's great!" He chuckled, "You thought of everything."

Peggy smiled, "Well, nobody is perfect."

"You are." He kissed her on the lips tenderly.

Peggy tugged on his arm, "Come. Let's see the place."

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Peggy began introduce their new home to Steve. She began to lead him to the family room that was down the short hallway and to the left. Peggy turned to Steve who was following close to her, "here is the…"

Peggy jumped in surprise when Mr. Jarvis spoke, "Ah Welcome Home Captain Rogers." He wore a dark grey suit and striped tie, and stood next to the couch and end table with a flower on top. Steve noticed the family room was furnished and wonderfully decorated. Peggy and possibly Jarvis and Angie moved in everything well. The family room furnished with two couches formed in an "L", arm chair, coffee table in the center, end tables at the ends of the couches, radio, plants, pictures, and lamps. There is also a stone fire place, and the wall the fire place shared is made of masonry as well.

Peggy put a hand on her chest and calmed herself. She wasn't expecting Jarvis to be here. She thought he would be with Howard Stark. After she calmed herself she turned to the group, "Yes, glad Steve is home." She walked next to Steve.

Steve smiled, "Thank you Mr. Jarvis." Steve nodded, "This house looks very nice. I love it."
Jarvis nodded, "Well you two deserve it." He put his hands in his pockets, "Before Ms. Carter moved in, Mr. Stark and I made…certain renovations to the house. I'll be happy to show you if I may."

Peggy and Steve shared a loving glance then wrapped an arm around each other's back. Peggy smiled, "Mr. Jarvis, I'm not complaining, but why are you here and how did you get in?"

Jarvis was about to speak when a familiar overconfident voice rang through the room. Stark appeared from the far right of the family room coming out of the adjacent eat-in kitchen. Stark wore a fancy tan suit and matching tie with a white button up shirt, "He's here because I asked him to be here." He stopped at the couches where Jarvis stood. He put his hands in his pockets, "I... We wanted to see Captain Rogers come home."

Peggy rolled her eyes, "I don't even want to know how you got in..."

Steve chuckled then nodded at Stark, "Glad to see you're all right Mr. Stark."

Stark nodded, "Yeah. Thanks Captain." He said genuinely, "Thanks for everything you did for me."

Steve looked at Peggy, "Thank her. She did the most."

Stark nodded, "I know she did, and I owe her a great deal. I can't ever repay it." He looked down, "I know I probably haven't done all the right things in my life, but I just want to let you know Captain... that in all the screw up and mistakes I did. I'm glad I did you right. You are my greatest invention." He was completely out of character. The whole ordeal he went through changed him, what he was doing right now is something completely new. Stark shrugged, "I don't know if that makes sense. I don't want to call you an object..."

Steve nodded, "I know what you mean Mr. Stark." He smiled then let go of Peggy. He walked over to Stark and held out his hand for a handshake, "I hope it's not too late to say welcome home."

Stark smiled and shook his hand, "I thought I was supposed to say that to you." They both smiled and laughed.

Steve nodded at him, "you know come to think of it... I might have a way for you to repay us in the future."

"What is it? Anything you need you can come and get me." Stark said sincerely.

"In the future, but right now just be aware I might come collect the favor." Steve patted him on the shoulder.

Stark nodded, "You got it Steve." Peggy and Jarvis smiled warmly at the two men shaking hands. This is new ground for Stark, since coming back he has changed his all round attitude and behavior. It's still surprising. Stark smiled at Peggy and Jarvis, "Shall we take him on a tour of his new home?"

Peggy laughed, "Let's."

Steve smiled, "Can't wait to see our new home." He calmly said with a hint of excitement.

Jarvis smiled, "I love his enthusiasm of the finer things."

Peggy rolled her eyes as she walked to her fiancé, "Oh come off it Mr. Jarvis."

Peggy, Jarvis, and Stark took Steve through a tour of the house. In the down stairs, on the left
through the small hallway from the front door is the family room adjacent to the eat-in kitchen. Immediately in front of the front door is the stairs that lead to the second floor. Around the stairs and to the right of the kitchen is the formal dining room that is adjacent to the living room. Adjacent to the front door is the door to the downstairs guest room then a few steps away from the front door is the downstairs bathroom followed by the glass door to the study. From the back door in the kitchen lead to the outside porch and patio. The wood fenced backyard was equally impressive with a lot of open space to garden. Upstairs lead to four bedrooms including the master bedroom and two bathrooms. The house was big but not too big for them. So hands down this house is the perfect house for them. Yes, they aren't married and none of this is technically socially acceptable in the society, but they don't care. Peggy would wait a thousand years and a life time for Steve, and Steve would die everyday just to wait for her. But luckily they are getting married soon.

After the touring the house and having conversed for much of the day while listening to Big Band music, Jarvis and Stark prepared to leave Peggy and Steve alone. Steve still wore his Captain America "Stars and Stripes" combat uniform because he didn't have a chance to change, but his shield was leaning against his duffel bag that was on the hard wood floor next to the console table near the front door. They all stood by the front door saying their goodbyes. Stark nodded at the engaged couple, "Thanks for everything. I really appreciate it." He smiled and spoke sincerely, "Thank you."

Steve nodded, "Any time Mr. Stark." He shrugged, "though, please stay out of trouble. I want to spend some time with no crisis." Everyone chuckled.

Peggy nodded and wrapped her arm around Steve, "Yes please. Let us enjoy our lives."

Stark laughed, "Sorry Peg." He turned around and opened the door. He looked back at Peggy and Steve, "I'll be waiting for the wedding." He laughed, "Let's go Jarvis." He walked out.

Peggy rolled her eyes, "Don't break into our house again either!" Everyone laughed.

Steve nodded at Jarvis, "Have a good day Mr. Jarvis."

Jarvis nodded, "Captain Rogers, Ms. Carter. If you ever need to acquire my services again." He bowed slightly, "I'll be happy to assist you. It'll be nice to serve under someone who is not as egotistical." He smiled.

Peggy smiled, "Thank you Mr. Jarvis." With that Jarvis turned around and left the house and closed the door behind him to go drive Stark back to the city.

Peggy locked the door then returned back to Steve. She put her arms around him and kissed his lips tenderly. She smiled up at him, "Well darling. Welcome home." She kissed his lips again, "Now, go to our room, get undressed, and unpacked. We have something to do in the city." She swayed her hips in front of him, "Take your time." She kissed him again.

Steve smiled, "Will do. So what are we doing in the city?"

"It's a surprise darling."

Steve laughed, "Very well then." He kissed her before he grabbed his duffel bag, leaving his shield by the door.

Steve had unpacked his duffel bag and placed his various items in the dresser, closet, night stand, and master bathroom. Over the dark brown wood dresser was a large square mirror hanging on the wall with the same dark brown wood frame. Steve looked at himself in the mirror for a moment.
remembering who he was before. He's been enhanced for a long time now, but he still remembers where he came from. He remembers being that short skinny kid that everyone was afraid to step on. He looked slightly to his left and saw a picture frame on the dresser. The picture was of him in his dress uniform and Peggy in an elegant blue dress in the Stork Club during the VE day celebrations. He smiled warmly then looked to the right side of the dresser and saw another picture frame. This time the picture was of Steve when he was skinny, the picture was taken right before his procedure with Doctor Erskine. Steve smiled at the thought that Peggy fell in love with him even before he was enhanced. In between the two picture frames Steve saw Peggy's closed wood Sorrento music box with a rose design on the surface with the key was inserted in the lock. Steve remembered Peggy telling him that the music box belonged to her late grandmother.

He smiled warmly then started to slowly undress himself from his uniform. He dropped his leather shoulder shield holster on the floor then as he started to take off his top he felt a pair of gentle arms wrap around his torso. He smiled and caressed the arms around him. He then felt a pair of soft lips kiss the back of his neck. He heard the wonderfully familiar gentle English voice behind him speak, "what are you thinking about?"

Steve smiled, "Thinking of us."

Peggy turned him around then brought him close to her by yanking on his leather war belt, "I can't wait to get married."

"Me too." He smiled. Peggy kissed him gently at the same time she undid his belt. He broke the kiss and smiled, "Peggy, I thought you wanted to go to the city later." He kissed her again, "I'm not complaining but…"

"Shut up and kiss me Steve." She said in a gentle tone. Steve kissed her again. "The city isn't going anywhere." She said in between their heated kissing.

The sun was just beginning to set and the dimming sun light peered through the window into the master bedroom. Steve's combat uniform was sprawled on the floor in a messy pile next to Peggy's dress and discarded clothes. Steve and Peggy were under the thin bed sheet, cuddled asleep on the bed after their heated session. Peggy's bare back was against Steve's chest and her hands were under her pillow as she slept soundly with a small smile on her face. Steve was wide awake with his right hand running up and down Peggy's smooth skin. He's happy to be home. He just couldn't resist admiring Peggy in all of her naked glory, though that's not the reason he loved her. He started to think about planning the wedding, they have lots to do and all the time in the world to do it. But the quicker the better. They needed a venue, the guest list, the food, the dress, and other things Steve figured they'd need. He was brought to reality when Peggy turned toward him as he hand made another trip down her arm with his hand. She smiled, "Hey." She said gently.

Steve propped himself onto his elbow and smiled warmly, "I had the craziest dream earlier."

Peggy giggled, "Me too." She kissed him briefly. "I'm so happy you're home. I've missed you so, so much."

Steve laughed, "I could tell."

Peggy wrapped her arms around Steve and kissed him again. This time a little longer than before. After a moment they broke the kiss and Peggy smiled, "come on. Let's get dressed, got something to do in the city."

"You and your surprises." He laughed.
Brooklyn Bridge

The sun was getting closer and closer to the horizon, and the orange glow of the setting sun draped the city. Peggy and Steve walked arm in arm onto the Brooklyn Bridge like they've never been away from each other. Everything was back to normal for them. Steve wore a blue checkered button up dress shirt, dark brown dress pants with matching belt, and brown shoes. Since Peggy's dress she wore earlier is wrinkled, she wore a long sleeve yellow collared button up blouse, grey business skirt, black heels, and her brown purse across her body. They walked happily together arm in arm as they enjoyed conversations with one another. Peggy stopped in the middle of the bridge and faced the sea with Steve by her side. Just like the few days after he left the hospital. Steve smiled with his arm around the small of her back, "This view never gets old." He chuckled, "Though I feel like we had this conversation before"

Peggy reached into her purse and pulled out the blood vile from the Blitzkrieg Button. Peggy smiled, "This…" She showed it to him.

Steve looked at it astonished, "You have another one?"

Peggy nodded, "The government was supposed to have eleven vials of your blood but they ended up having ten when Stark stole one from them. That was the one I had a long time ago." She looked at the vial in her hand, "This one is Stark's. He was entrusted with one of them. The government has exhausted all their sample's of your blood and are looking for more…"

Steve shook his head, "I'm not going to give them anymore of my blood. I'm still human and I won't have them take me to a lab and dissect me to figure out how to remake Erskine's serum."

Peggy smiled, "I know darling." She paused, "This vial is Stark's and he planned to use it because he thought it change the world. I didn't think anything other than him wanting to line his own pockets with your blood." She sighed, "Then after we rescued Stark, Mr. Jarvis gave me this telling me that I'm the only one who knows what to do with it." She sighed again, "I don't know what my problem is with this darling. Maybe I just don't want anyone harming you because you were given the serum, or I don't want anyone tainting who you are…" She leaned against him, "Darling, I know you can take care of yourself and protect yourself…you're a bloody super hero." Her shoulders slumped, "I guess I just want to always be able to protect you."

Steve smiled warmly and hugged her close and kissed the top of her head. He had her look at him, "Peggy. You saved me in more ways than one. I know you'll always watch out for me and protect me, and I'll do the same for you." He smiled, "Doesn't matter how strong I am, I will always need you in my life and I will always need your protection. Because in the end…I'm still human." Peggy smiled and kissed his lips briefly. They stood there in silence for a moment and gazed into each other's eyes. Steve broke the silence, "What shall we do?"

Peggy smiled, "Like last time." She carefully opened the vial and poured it into the sea.

FLUFF

Remember I said an accelerated timeline. I just wanted to hurry up and find Stark so they could continue on with their lives.

I also had people meet at the pier, for fluffy reasons

Yes, I know…in the 40s couples didn't move in with each other till they were married, but alas
they aren't the conventional couple.

Also got them a house instead of using a penthouse. Captain America doesn't look like a penthouse style man.
Chapter 10 I look at You

I do not own Captain America

Short fluffy chapter to introduce the VERY important next chapter we've all been waiting for

It has been a couple months since Steve has returned home and everything has been going extremely well for everyone. The country is still booming in the postwar peace, Stark is living his life since he was cleared of all charges, and Steve and Peggy are making their final preparations for their wedding that's coming extremely soon. Life in the postwar is finally perfect, and Peggy and Steve can finally take it easy and focus on getting married. Normally planning a wedding can be stressful, but for Peggy and Steve anything is less stressful than clearing Stark's name under the looming threat of treason. The couple can finally begin their new lives together in peace.

For the soon to be wed engaged couple, they have gotten the majority of the planning done for their wedding. The guest list is sorted, Peggy's wedding dress has been fitted and it just needs to be picked up, date and time arranged, and they got the perfect venue provided by Stark. Steve was the one who obtained the venue after he cashed in his favor from Stark when Peggy full heartedly agreed to Steve's choice. The couple didn't have to pay a penny thanks to Stark.

The wedding is so close. Both Steve and Peggy cannot wait for their perfect day to come. Peggy especially couldn't wait to take the next step with Steve.

Steve Rogers & Margaret Carter Residence, Scarsdale, NY

Another early morning in New York and as usual the city of New York hustled and bustled as it always does. The city that never sleeps never sleeping, its just another beautiful start of the week. But in Scarsdale, NY the hustle and bustle of the downtown city was not apparent in this quiet suburb of New York. It's just another calm morning in Scarsdale, few cars driving up and down the street, paperboys riding their bikes, couples pushing their baby carriages on the sidewalks, the green trees blowing in the wind, and birds singing in the early morning sun. A start of a peaceful day in Scarsdale, a drastic difference from the sprawling metropolis an hour away.

The sun peered into the windows of Steve's and Peggy's house liberating it from the darkness of the night. Sunlight beamed through the kitchen window over the sink and casted it's warmth on the beautiful purple orchid Peggy placed by the sink. Steve's shield leaned against the wall idly next to the console table by the front door, it shined brightly as it reflected the light entering in through the colorless distorted window in the door. Up stairs in the master bedroom, the sun illuminated the room like it did the rest of the house. The sound of trees blowing gently in the New York breeze and birds singing rang through the open windows of the room. Tucked in bed is Steve and Peggy sleeping and cuddling closely like they always did. Peggy slept in her knee height white V-neck spaghetti strap full slip night gown with lace on the edges. Steve slept in a white t-shirt and his grey US Army sweats. Steve had his arm draped over Peggy's side while she slept silently with her back pressed against his chest under the covers. He yawned quietly as he slowly woke up from his slumber. He raised his head to gaze at his beautiful sleeping fiancé, he smiled warmly as he watched Peggy breathe steadily as she slept. Although her back is toward him, he could still see a small sleeping smile across her face. He caressed her exposed shoulder gently at the same time trying not to wake his wonderful fiancé up. That failed…
Peggy smiled warmly with her eyes still closed. She hummed in content from the feel of his gentle touch, this is a good way to wake up. She opened her eyes then turned in Steve's grasp with a warm smile. She took her hand and touched his chest lovingly, "Good morning darling." She greeted her fiancé warmly. Steve simply smiled and didn't say a word. After a moment of staring at each other with love in their eyes Peggy asked, "what?"

No matter what she said, Steve always melted from hearing her sweet English accent. No matter what time of day it was or what she wore, he always admired her beauty. Steve gently touched her cheek, "You look beautiful." He smiled, "Like always."

Peggy smiled then got closer to Steve and kissed his lips. After a long moment, they finally broke the kiss for the need of air. Peggy couldn't help but say, "I can't wait to get married. It seemed like its been a long time."

Steve chuckled, "Yes it does. We're almost there."

Peggy kissed his lips again, "Got a date and everything. We're almost set." She said with a wide happy smiled on her face.

Steve chuckled, "You have a date? Who is he? Is it someone I know?" he said jokingly.

Peggy giggled and slapped his chest playfully, "You might know him darling." She happily played along, "He's tall, strong, handsome…Complete gentlemen. You know the love of my life who I'd wait to the end of the Earth for." She fiddled with his hand then interlaced their fingers, "And he's also very clueless." She chuckled.

Steve laughed, "Sounds like a good guy."

"He's the perfect guy." She kissed him again. They hummed together for a moment, enjoying each other's body heat. Peggy squeezed his hand, "What do you got going on today?"

Steve smiled, "I have to meet with Colonel Phillips. Probably trying to convince me to make the guest list longer so there could be politicians and press at our wedding."

Peggy rolled her eyes, "Oh bloody hell. The wedding isn't about politics or bloody press. It's about us." She sighed, "We're getting married for us, not for them. Why can't they see that?"

Steve sighed and kissed her forehead, "I don't know. But I don't plan on having them be there when we tie the knot."

Peggy smiled, "That's good. But Colonel Phillips did say he's coming right?"

Steve smiled, "Yeah he is. I'm also going to meet up with the commandos to discuss a surprise then I'm going to head over to Stark's and go over a few things."

Peggy smiled, "What surprise?"

"If I tell you it won't be a surprise." He smiled. He kissed her lips gently then let go of her hand, so he could roll over to his side of the bed to check the small clock that is on his night stand. He saw the time and thought that now would be a good time to head over to base and talk to the Colonel. But, before he could roll over to face Peggy, he felt a soft gentle arm drape over his torso and caress his chest as he felt soft lips on the back of his neck.

Peggy stopped kissing his neck, "Time for you to go darling?"
Steve sighed. He hated getting out of bed. As cliché as it sounds, Peggy makes it so hard to get out of bed. He'd rather stay in her embrace all morning because she's warm, beautiful, soft, and gentle to him. A total angel. Of course she's strong, but she isn't usually showing her strong side in bed, but there are always exceptions. Steve turned his head a bit, "Probably a good idea."

Peggy rolled him onto his back then gazed into his eyes for a moment. She smiled, "I love you Steve."

Steve smiled, "I love you too." Peggy held her smooth brown hair back behind her ear as she kissed his lips gently.

"Hurry back." She smiled in a semi commanding tone.

Steve chuckled, "Yes ma'am." He rolled out of bed so he could jump in the shower. He turned around and saw Peggy getting out of bed as well. She stood up and stretched her arms above her head, her white V-neck spaghetti strap night gown fitting her perfectly drawing Steve's eyes. To Steve, she is the most beautiful woman in the world. More beautiful than the famed Hollywood actress Gene Tierney.

He didn't realize he was staring for that long, but Peggy saw him in the corner of her eye. She faced him with her arms still locked out and her fingers laced together above her head, she smiled, "Darling."

Steve shook his head, "Sorry. I couldn't help but stare."

Peggy laughed, "Clearly." She walked to the arm chairs that was next to the open windows, to grab her pink and black robe that was draped over one of the chairs. She grabbed the robe and started to put it on, "I don't mind you staring at me darling. Don't worry." She flashed him a smile.

Steve shook his head, "Damn you're beautiful." He smiled then went into the bathroom to get dressed.

Peggy smiled widely at his comment as she tied her long robe closed covering her white sleeping gown. She started to make her way out of the room to go downstairs and make herself some tea in the kitchen. She wanted tea before she carried out her busy agenda on her day off, the most important item on her list is to go with Angie to get the wedding dress and bridesmaid dress. Of course Angie is her bridesmaid, it couldn't be anyone else. Other items include grocery shopping since its her turn, checking up on the wedding flowers at the florists, and watering her flowers.

Once she got downstairs into the kitchen, she filled the kettle with water then placed it on the stove, and turned on the heat. She turned around then crossed her arms under her breasts as she stared out the kitchen window, waiting patiently for the water to boil. She stared out the window to the backyard and admired the clean wood fence, porch, and patio. She turned her attention to the grass that looked perfectly green. She tilted her head to one side and decided that she will take it upon herself to improve her new fond hobby of growing flowers. Like this beautiful small purple orchid near the sink. She smiled warmly then gently touched the flower with one hand as she kept the other arm pressed to her body.

Peggy sighed and wondered if her mother and family in London ever got her letter she sent a while ago. She started to think about her late father, her fond memories of her family, and her youth in London before the war broke out. Her parents, her family, cousins, and friends. They were fond memories. Truth be told she hasn't spoken to her friends and family back in England for a long time… Since she came to America she hasn't spoken to them. She felt a little ashamed for that. The
whistling kettle brought her out of her memories. She wiped a stray eyelash from her eye then turned around and turned the stove off.

As she got the cup and tea bag ready she saw Steve come into the kitchen in his Army dress uniform. His fully pressed uniform coat and trousers combined with a neat tie and polished black shoes gave him a sharp military look. On his chest he had his ribbons along with the devices and badges, his silver rank on his shoulders, and the gold SSR and US pinned to his collar. In his hand, he held by the visor, his round olive drab officer barracks cover. Peggy quite fancied him in his dress uniform, he looked really attractive. Peggy smiled, "You look handsome darling."

Steve looked himself over then smiled, "thanks." He chuckled, "You look good yourself."

Peggy laughed as she poured the boiling water into her cup, "I'm not even dressed for the day Steve."

Steve laughed, "I know that." He chuckled, "I'm just saying." Peggy blushed as she finished with the kettle. He waved, "I'll see you later tonight. Going to make the long drive to the base."

Peggy smiled, "Bye darling."

"Say hi to Angie for me." He turned around and left the kitchen.

Peggy smiled as she fiddled with her tea bag.

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**Camp Lehigh Head Quarters Building, Colonel Phillips Office**

After hours of driving, Steve made it to Camp Lehigh to meet with Colonel Phillips. He parked his motorcycle in it's usual parking lot closest to the Camp Lehigh Head Quarters building. In Colonel Phillips' office, Steve sat in one of the two brown leather arm chairs in front of the Colonel's desk. The Colonel walked to a brown long office cabinet near his desk to pour himself a glass of whiskey from a fancy glass bottle. As he poured a glass he asked, "So how can I help you Steve?" He turned around to face him then raised his glass, "drink?"

Steve smiled, "Yes sir. I can use one." He leaned back on the chair and interlaced his fingers on his lap, "I wanted to talk about the guest list for the wedding."

The Colonel smiled, "ah yes. The guest list." He poured another glass. He shook his head, "I hope you know that I don't like brown nosing the politicians any more than you do." He placed the glass bottle back on the cabinet, then took the two glasses and walked to Steve. He sighed, "All those politicians and high ranking officers all want to be seen with the most iconic hero."

Steve sighed and graciously took the glass of whiskey from his Commanding Officer, "I understand that." The Colonel returned back behind his desk. Steve sighed, "But, Peggy and I aren't getting married for political reasons or any other form of arrangement."

Colonel sat down and took a sip of his whiskey, "I know Steve." He turned his chair and stared at a picture that hung on the wall. It was a black and white picture of him and Captain America, both in their combat uniform, after one of many successful operations against the Nazi's. He turned back to Steve, "I'm glad that the list isn't quite finalized yet."

Steve shook his head, "Can't have all that brass and politicians. I don't even know most of them." He chuckled, "Peggy would murder me."

The Colonel laughed, "yeah. She does scare me sometimes too." They both laughed as they took a
sip of their respective drinks. The Colonel shrugged, "what happens if President Truman wants to go?"

Steve shook his head and rubbed his temple, "oh gee whiz..."

The Colonel laughed, "No worries there Captain. I'll see to it that we make sure the wedding is private."

Steve chuckled, "And no press!"

"Absolutely no press, I couldn't agree more." The Colonel laughed. He raised his glass in a toast, "To Peggy!"

Steve laughed, "To Peggy!" They took a drink.

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**Steve Rogers & Margaret Carter Residence, Scarsdale, NY**

It was about noon when Peggy was finally fully dressed for the day after eating and cleaning up breakfast. Wearing a white collared button up short sleeve blouse, high waist blue swing skirt, nylon stockings, and black high heels, Peggy is what men called a "Beautiful Doll". With her beautiful brown elegantly curled shoulder length hair, she is the complete picture of beauty in the swinging 40s. Though she hated it when men called her a doll. Good thing Steve never called her a doll. Come to think of it they never actually had a fight about anything yet... she is sure to make it stay that way.

Peggy had her brown purse over her shoulder as she walked down the hard wood stairs. She was ready to go get Angie to head over to the Bridal Store in the city. She walked to the console table and got her keys from one of the drawers then opened the front door and left the house. After closing the door, Peggy was about to walk down the porch when she was surprised to see Jarvis and Angie leaning against a four door tan car parked behind her car. Jarvis greeted Peggy first in his usual formal manner, "Good day Ms. Rogers. Or is that too soon?"

Peggy walked down the porch onto the path with a warm smile, "Mr. Jarvis. What are you doing here?" She turned her attention to Angie for a moment, "Hello Angie." She said with a smile.

Angie greeted, "Hey there Peggy."

Jarvis put his hands in his pockets, "Well, Mr. Stark put me on loan for you once again to help expedite your wedding plans and preparations... fully knowing that you two needed to get your dresses, I took the liberty to call Ms. Martinelli." He nodded, "Thus how I ended up here with her."

Peggy shook her head with a smile, "Oh Mr. Jarvis what am I going to do with you?"

"Have me take you to the bridal store of course, and any other location you may acquire from me." Jarvis nodded then opened the front passenger seat door for Peggy, "Ms. Carter."

Angie laughed, "Beats driving Peg. You don't have to pay for gasoline."

Jarvis nodded at both the women, "She's quite right."

Peggy rolled her eyes, "Fine."

Angie jumped in excitement, "You should sit in back with me Peggy." She opened the back passenger door and slid in.
Peggy laughed and looked at Jarvis with a humorous grin before joining Angie in the back seat. She called to Jarvis before closing the door, "Shall we go to the bridal store Mr. Jarvis?"

Jarvis smiled then closed the front passenger door he had initially opened for Peggy. He quickly got into the driver's seat and started the engine.

After a long day apart doing errands to prepare for the wedding that is fast approaching, it was finally evening and Steve and Peggy are back together again for dinner. In all the day was rather successful for the two of them. Peggy got her wedding dress done and took it home. She hid it away in a closet in one of the upstairs bedrooms so Steve doesn't see it. She wants it to be surprise. With Peggy, Angie got her beautiful bridesmaids dress taken care of and got it back to her new penthouse. After getting the dresses, Peggy, Jarvis, and Angie went to the florist and got the flowers and plants sorted for the wedding. For Steve, he was able to finalize the guest list with no politicians and excessive amounts of press coverage. He well and truly made the wedding private…for the most part. He was also to work out the surprise for Peggy with the Howling Commandos, but the commandos also stated that had a surprise for the both of them. Finally, the last thing Steve did was finalize plans for the wedding venue provided by Stark. Stark obviously had no problems with doing anything for their wedding, he was truly excited to be part of the planning. The wedding was pretty much set. In all, it was a truly successful busy day.

After dinner it was quite uncharacteristically quiet between Steve and Peggy. Peggy thought Steve was quiet because her cooking was bad. Granted Steve likes to cook with and for her more often, but Peggy wanted to cook for Steve every now and then. Even when they cleaned up the kitchen table and kitchen, Steve was uncharacteristically quiet. Immediately after cleaning the kitchen, he disappeared silently into the family room to draw while listening to slow calm music. Steve still wore part of his dress uniform but only the khaki shirt, tie, dress pants, and brown dress socks. His legs were resting on the couch as his back was pressed against the arm rest as he drew in his big drawing pad. He enjoyed the calm music as he drew peacefully.

Peggy leaned against the wall watching Steve with concerned eyes. She wore a white apron over her white collared button up short sleeve blouse and blue swing skirt. She didn't know what was bothering Steve all of a sudden. This morning he was really fine and happy, but when he came home he was quiet. He didn't look or sound tired so she knew it had to be something else. Peggy untied the apron from her back and removed it then placed it on one of the kitchen counters. She walked into the family room and turned off the music so she could talk to Steve. Once the music stopped Steve stopped drawing and just looked up at Peggy. She noticed a lot of pain in his eyes the moment she looked into them. She gave a soothing smile and spoke in her gentle tone, "Darling, what's wrong?" She made her way to Steve's couch. Steve nodded knowing that he would have to explain why he was so quiet. He repositioned himself so Peggy had room to sit. He simply shook his head, contemplating on his words. Peggy sat down next to him then scooted herself closer.

Steve closed his drawing book so his fiancé couldn't see what he was drawing. He placed his arms over the drawing book defensively. He looked sadly at Peggy, "I'm sorry…"

Peggy leaned toward him and gripped his thigh lovingly, "Darling you don't have to say sorry. Just tell me what's wrong." She said gently.

Steve sighed sadly. He shook his head, "I'm sorry I'm being quiet." He couldn't look into her eyes as tears slowly fell down his cheek. He dipped his head as he hid his eyes from Peggy. He started to suddenly cry more.

Peggy kissed his shoulder and hugged him tightly, "Shh. It's okay darling. Please tell me what's the matter and I can help you." Steve continued to cry without saying anything. But he did acknowledge
her efforts by leaning into her and resting his head against her chest. She hugged him tighter and spoke in a soothing voice, "I'm here darling. I'm here." Steve gripped the sleeves of her blouse as he cried into her chest.

Steve spoke while his face was still buried in her chest, "I love you Peggy I hope you know that."

Peggy kissed the top of his head, "I know darling. And I love you too."

Steve calmed himself down a little but remained in her embrace, "I'm just…I'm… I just wish Bucky was here to see me go through this next step with you." He pulled back from her and looked into her eyes, "He was with me through everything. Always there to watch out for me and defend me when I couldn't defend myself. He always said to me 'I'm with you till the end of the line'." He wasn't ashamed to cry, especially in front of Peggy. He knew she didn't mind, and she was always there for him regardless if he was happy, strong, or weak. He shook his head, "And I wasn't able to protect him when he needed me most…"

Peggy caressed his cheek, "Darling. He would be so happy and proud what you have become and what you have done. He believed in you from the start and you believed in him all the way to the end. He believed you were worth risking his life for and you are. I'm sure if you could ask him, he'd say he'd do it again." She smiled, "I know I would for you."

Steve gave a small smile, "Thanks Peggy." He said gently. He felt Peggy wipe his tears from his cheeks. He smiled, "I just wish he could've been here you know? To meet and know you. To be the best man at my wedding." Many people believed that Captain America escaped the war without any psychological scars. They were all wrong. He left the war with as many scars as every other service member during the war. He was just a little bit better at hiding it from people.

Peggy smiled, "I know darling. I know he's gone, and I don't want to sound like I'm telling you to forget your friend." She ran a hand gently against his cheek, "Live your life to the fullest because you have this chance. Don't dwell on the past darling, you won't be able to go forward to the future if you do." She took his hand in hers, "I'll be here with you always."

Steve smiled, "Thank you Peggy. For everything."

She gripped his hand in hers, "I sometimes catch myself remembering the Valkyrie. The time when I thought you died and I thought I would live on this world without ever experiencing a life with you."

"How do you get over it?" Asked Steve.

Peggy smiled at him, "I open my eyes and look at you" Steve smiles and leans in and captures her lips.

After a long kiss Steve broke it and stared into her eyes, "I know I might not ever solve this pain, but I'm willing to dedicate my days to you. I promise to love you for all of my days, and maybe, just maybe I can mitigate this pain."

Peggy kissed his lips, "This is a start." They held each other in an embrace for a long time.

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**Shorter Chapter than usual**

**Prelude to a very important chapter that's coming up. Hope you liked it!**

**Don't hate XD**
Hint, hint…some fluffy shit 'bout to go down

Took a quote from ABC’s Castle. That show is pretty dope. Well Seasons 1-7

Didn't want to go too much in detail with the dresses, surprise from the commandos, and other sorts because I want that to be shown in the next chapter!
Its been months since Steve and Peggy got engaged, and since their engagement the couple has experienced and done many things that could've easily destroyed their relationship. They went through the incredibly dangerous tasks of clearing Stark's name, surviving assassins, and battling through a Soviet facility. All these trials, tribulations, stress, and painful things they been through in their lives lead them to where they are now… Together. From the war to Steve's apparent death, to his "resurrection" to clearing Stark's name, all these events paved the way to their day. The day they finally get married. Steve and Peggy's perfect day is finally here, the marriage they wanted, planned, and waited so badly for is finally a reality. Everything is looking perfect.

Steve and Peggy did their best to keep the wedding a secret from the press so they could tie the knot in private. They knew that the press would go ballistic about the wedding, so hiding it from the press was paramount. Unfortunately their efforts went in vain when the press asked Stark what he would be doing now that his name had been cleared. Stark accidentally told the press that he has been invited to Captain America's wedding, and from there the press made it a unified goal to find more information on the wedding. But Stark sealed his lips immediately upon mentioning it though it was too late, the cat was already out of the bag. To say Peggy was upset with Stark was an extreme understatement… To prevent the press from following them around all the time, Steve and Peggy immediately disclosed information about the wedding. They both stressed the importance of privacy. Like that would help…

Since Stark's untimely burst about the wedding, the press was quick to frame Steve and Peggy as the perfect couple. A picture of the couple at the Stork Club during the VE Day celebrations accompanied the wedding announcement. It was rather funny how long it took the press to figure out who was the "mystery brunette" back then. Peggy didn't even try to hide that she was with Steve, and at times she even made it known to everyone. Especially to other women. She wasn't exactly comfortable of other women ogling Steve. But, it was good thing that Steve and Peggy did a good job at hiding her name from the press for a while. Though Steve and Peggy weren't the perfectly modeled couple everyone believed them to be. They lived together as an engaged couple, Peggy works as an active spy, and Steve is a super soldier. Nothing about them is ordinary. It didn't matter what the press or what anyone said about them, what matters is that they are together. They vowed to live their lives their own way and not what society tells them how to live.

The wedding is taking place in Howard Stark's newest building known as the Stark Industrial Venue built in 1945. Originally the building was build as a weapons factory for Stark to produce new weapons for the Americans during the war, but the war ended before the factory was able to produce its first weapon. Instead of selling or abandoning the building, Stark removed the machinery and renovated the building to be a luxurious and state of the art event venue. Thus the name Stark Industrial Venue. The building is located near the port so it had easy access to transport weapons to the ports to be shipped originally. The 16,000 square foot private Stark venue offers panoramic views of both the Statue of Liberty and the Brooklyn Bridge. The interior of the building on the top floor has a 1,500 square foot cherry wood dance floor with a 70-foot long industrial sky light that offers an abundance of natural light, beauty, and enhances the atmosphere inside. The large rooftop is a beautiful spacious roof deck with a garden, hard brown wood floor layered on top of the buildings frame, perfect for outside events as well. Guests of the building are greeted by a doorman at the street level entrance and then escorted to the event through the luxurious lobby. The Stark
The building has professional staffing and professional catering. From the rooftop to the dance floor under the sky light is a beautifully done lighted staircase that descends to the open space. Additionally to the staircase and dance floor, there is a wide mezzanine to overlook the dance floor. The exposed brick covers the walls around the large windows, which is the trending style of the day. An absolutely stunning and expensive venue. A venue that Steve and Peggy were able to get free of charge thanks to Stark. Definitely no shot gun wedding like many other couples at the end of the war.

This wedding is going to be their perfect day, and a variation of a military traditional wedding in a not so traditional setting. A military wedding combined with civilian atmosphere and taste. So Steve will be in his US Army dress uniform complete with his military decorations, guests in the military wore their uniforms with full military decorations, nonmilitary simply wore respective formal clothing, special cake cutting, and other traditions. Steve asked Colonel Phillips if the wedding can be done outside of a military chapel and the Colonel didn't mind it at all. Besides its Captain America getting married, America's golden boy, the Army won't say no to a wedding of this caliber. It was also Peggy's idea to have a military type wedding, Steve in fact didn't mind doing a civilian traditional wedding.

The sun began to set in the city of New York and the wedding is only a few hours away. The skies are clear and the radiant setting sun bloomed its beautiful colors across the sky. Its going to be a perfect night for the perfect couple. Steve in his full dress uniform complete with military decorations, sat in the backseat of a silver 1940 Pontiac Silver Streak 4-door sedan driven by Jarvis on the way to the wedding venue in Stark Industrial Venue. Steve stared out the window excitedly as he sat in the car heading to the venue. The typical New York traffic is the main reason why Jarvis and Steve left the house in Scarsdale hours before the wedding. He'd hate to be late on Peggy on their perfect day, its rude to keep a girl waiting. For the past couple of days, Steve and Peggy stayed separated due to the wedding traditions and superstition. Steve stayed in their house while Peggy roomed with Angie in her new penthouse. They will see each other again on the day of the wedding. It was pretty hard for them to stay away from each other when they are so close. Its not at all surprising in how attached they are to one another.

If a stranger looked at Steve in the car at this very second, they wouldn't expect him to be getting married that same day. He looked calm and collected, but in reality he was excited and really nervous at the same time. As he continued to watch the slow New York traffic crawl forward around the car, his heart was beating faster and faster and a million different thoughts were sailing into his head. He's most definitely nervous and its right for him to be. He obviously loves Peggy with all his heart and soul, but he couldn't help being in the state he is now. She is the first and only woman he ever felt this serious about. He wanted to be sure that he will be the perfect man and husband for her today, tomorrow, and forever. Steve was brought back to reality by Jarvis speaking to him.

Jarvis smiled at Steve through the rear view mirror, "Nervous are your sir?"

Steve chuckled, "Am I that easy to read Mr. Jarvis?"

"No sir. I just been around you and Ms. Carter enough to know when your nervous sir." He said courteously.

Steve laughed, "Well to answer your question, yes I am nervous." He shrugged, "I don't know why I'm so nervous. I mean I love her and for a while I have often thought about settling down." He shook his head, "I don't know why I'm so nervous."
Jarvis smiled, "It's okay Captain Rogers. It's perfectly natural to be nervous for a wedding. Its because everything will change after today but for the better. She'll have your name and she'll be with you for all the days of your life." He nodded, "I was most obviously nervous when I got married too." He shrugged, "No need to worry sir, you're just nervous in a good way sir."

Steve smiled, "I guess so." He fixed his uniform as he thought about their future. Steve and Peggy. Married and already living in a beautiful house, and they'll wake up every morning as Mr. and Mrs. Rogers. Steve laughed at the sound of that, Mr. & Mrs. Rogers does have a good feeling to it. He chuckled then about farther down the future they even might have kids. Now that's a pleasant thought to have, though that's not a step he feels they should take right away. He was again brought back to reality by Jarvis.

Jarvis looked through the rear view mirror, and saw a strange black car behind him with two men in grey suits wearing matching grey fedoras. He squinted his eyes, "Looks like we have a tail sir."

Steve turned around and instantly saw the car. He sighed, "I bet it's the press." He sighed, "Probably an ocean of Press when we get to the venue." He smiled, "You know what to do Mr. Jarvis."

Mr. Jarvis braced himself in his seat and smiled, "With pleasure sir." He slammed on the gas and weaved into the next lane and gunned a red light. The car tailing them stopped and got caught in traffic.

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**Stark Industrial Venue**

The sun was getting closer to the horizon which signaled the wedding was coming very soon. Outside of the venue there were cars parked all around the building and a large mass of people surrounded the entrance like it was Hollywood. The sidewalk was roped off creating a pathway for guests of the wedding to enter from the street. Doorman and bouncers of the building kept the press and the curious crowd from getting into the venue. Inside in a large private dressing room at the top floor attached to the large reception room, Peggy stood in front of a large mirror in her beautiful wedding dress. Her dress is an elegant pure white lace dress with lace bodice and embellishment, strapless dress, sweet heart neckline, open back, beautiful drape skirt, and sweep train. The dress entirely exaggerated everything physically beautiful about her. Her usual wavy shoulder length beautiful dark brown hair was now tied in a loose updo hairstyle with a white rose tucked in her hair. Her hair was now tied so it only went down to the top of her neck. Additionally she wore elegant make up with red lipstick, and she wore white heels. She looked extremely beautiful.

The only other person in the room with Peggy is the slightly older red head hairstylist named Barbara. The older hairstylist stood on a stool to do the final touches to Peggy's elegant hair. The stylist was way too short to do Peggy's hair, hence the stool. Barbara smiled as she adjusted the white rose, "You look extremely beautiful Ms. Carter. You look absolutely stunning." She laughed, "You are the definition of beauty. The most beautiful bride, and trust me…I'm a professional."

Peggy smiled at the mirror, "Thank you Barbara."

Barbara smiled, "Captain Rogers is a lucky man."

Peggy smiled, "And I'm a lucky woman."

"That you are." Barbara laughed, "Captain Rogers is quite the catch."

Peggy laughed, "Yes he is."
Barbara looked in the mirror at Peggy, "Absolutely perfect."

"Thank you Barbara." Peggy smiled at her, "Also thank you for not swarming me with questions about Steve." She chuckled, "There's already an army of press outside. For a simple wedding…"

Barbara smiled, "Every bride and groom deserve to have privacy."

Suddenly Peggy's overly excited maid of honor barged into the room with an excited grin. Angie wore her long silky white, sleeveless, strapped wavy maid of honor dress, she rushed excitedly next to Peggy, "Oh my goodness Peggy you look so beautiful!"

Peggy laughed, "Goodness Angie, I modeled the dress for you before."

Angie slapped her hands on her sides, "So? I swear you look way more pretty than before." She looked at the hairstylist, "Sorry. I'm just…" She jumped happily, "SO HAPPY THAT MY BEST FRIEND IS GETTING MARRIED TO CAPTAIN AMERICA!"

Barbara laughed, "I'm excited too." She looked up at Peggy and chuckled, "I'm surprised she didn't hit you with a million questions."

Peggy laughed, "Oh she did."

Angie smiled, "Oh my, Peggy. Steve is such a lucky man!"

Peggy laughed then looked in the mirror again, "It's like a fairy tale and a dream come true." She chuckled and shook her head, "Its so silly."

Angie ran a hand over her bare arm, "No its not. I'd be bouncing off the walls if I was you"

Barbara picked up a shoulder length white silk tulle wedding veil and smiled at Peggy, "One last thing Ms. Carter and you'll be all set."

The door opened again and Colonel Phillips walked in with gentle warm smile. He wore his full dress uniform complete with all his medals, ribbons, and decorations. He's going to be the one to escort Peggy down the aisle and the one to send her off to get married. He stood at the door way and smiled warmly at an angel on Earth. He saw the hairstylist clip the silk tulle veil to Peggy's hair then drape it over her had. The veil covered the back of her head and face, but you can still see her beauty through the veil along with her beautiful dark brown hair.

Peggy saw Colonel Phillips in the mirror, she turned around and smiled under her veil, "Colonel."

Colonel Phillips smiled a fatherly smile, "You look beautiful Margaret." He nodded, "Steve is a lucky man." Everyone will say that phrase or variations of that phrase all night. But Peggy didn't mind, because its true he is lucky and she is lucky to be with each other.

"Thank you Colonel." Peggy said with a warm smile while blushing under her veil.

Angie smiled at the sharply dressed Colonel, "What's the word?"

The Colonel smiled, "Everyone is here and taking their seats on the rooftop garden…" He paused then smiled a wide smile, "And Steve arrived with Mr. Jarvis just a few minutes ago. He should be on his way."

Angie looked excitedly at Peggy, "Oh my God Peggy! He's here!" She jumped excitedly, "are you ready Peggy? Are you ready to become Mrs. America and Mrs. Rogers."
Peggy smiled widely, "I'd wait a million years for Steve. I can't believe this day is finally here." She shook with excitement, "I'm getting married." She started to giggle with Angie. She laughed, "I used to think that I would never meet the right one. I never would've guessed a man like Steve would change that."

Colonel Phillips smiled, "He changed the world." He smiled then opened the door for her, "come on. This is your day." He smiled to Angie, "Ms. Martinelli you best be on your way to the top."

Angie nodded, "Oh right." She hugged Peggy, "I'm so excited!" She turned and hurried out of the door to get into position before Peggy could respond.

Colonel Phillips smiled and stuck out his arm for Peggy could take it, "Faith sure got you this far." He chuckled.

The sun was setting ever closer to the horizon as its radiant glow umbrella the evening sky. On the roof deck of the Stark Industrial Venue building, the wedding was all set, and had a beautiful evening view of the Brooklyn Bridge and the Statue of Liberty. Absolutely picture perfect. Elegant well cut green bushes spanned the perimeter of the rooftop, and at the corners are two benches side by side with potted pink roses at the ends of each bench. The rooftop was converted for this specific wedding by the order of Stark. The large two doors to the rooftop was at one side of the roof and it faced away from the Brooklyn Bridge. About ten feet from the door were two small but wide brown hard wood steps to a wide square raised patio. The same green bushes as the perimeter of the rooftop spanned the perimeter of the patio. The inner ring of bushes to the outer ring of bushes had enough space for two people to walk in between.

Immediately past the steps is the long white outdoor carpet for the wedding aisle. Flanking the aisle are the numerous white chairs for the wedding guest. At the end of each row of chairs were beautiful colorful flowers with white ribbons tied around the pots. At the end of the aisle stood a tall beautiful wedding arch with a white silky curtain draped over it and secured to the posts and colorful flowers attached to the top. The couple will kiss with the Statue of Liberty behind them. Absolutely perfect and not at all ordinary.

Steve stood just in front and to the right of center of the wedding arch in his dress uniform. The Army chaplain stood in the center and under the arch in his Army dress uniform and chaplain religious attire. To Steve right and closest to him stood his best man, Timothy "Dum-Dum" Dugan in his dress uniform with full military decorations. Next to Dugan stood the rest of the Howling Commandos and Howard Stark; Steve's groomsmen. The Commandos are in their dress uniforms and military decorations, and Stark is dressed sharply in a black tuxedo. Stark is surprisingly well behaved and looking very proper. Across from Steve stood Angie; Peggy's maid of honor. Behind Angie stood Rose Miller in the same dress as Angie, a long silky white, sleeveless, strapped wavy dress. Rose is one of Peggy's bridesmaids, the other is Alana Jones, Mary O'Connell, and Dorothy Harris. All wearing the same dresses. Rose Miller, Mary O'Connell, and Dorothy Harris are all Peggy's friends and phone operators of the New York Bell Company Office.

The guests are all friends of Steve and Peggy and no related family what so ever. Steve didn't have a family to invite because they were all passed away. If he hand uncles or cousins he didn't know them. Peggy mentioned her mother and sister once to him but refused to invite them to the wedding. There was obviously tension in her family that she refused to see or speak to them. So the wedding guests consisted of friends and colleagues. Many service members in the Army who are close to Steve and Peggy sat in their seats with their dress uniforms and military decorations. Women who were close to Peggy in the military during the war sat happily in formal dresses. A number of Agents from the SSR who come to respect and admire Peggy sat in the wedding as well.
appointed Chief Jack Thompson, Agent Daniel Sousa, Agent Ramirez, and Agent Li.

Although Thompson took the glory for himself for saving the city, he has come to greatly respect Peggy, and even more surprisingly he named her his top agent. He even apologized for his actions and Peggy responded by punching him in the face then said all was forgiven. Now the two are getting along with mutual respect. Due to saving his life in the Soviet Union and doing an outstanding job in saving the city, Thompson had no choice but to acknowledge her success. He became a believer in Peggy… Took long enough. He'd even consider her a friend, though Peggy was apprehensive for that. For the rest of the agents, after her efforts to save the city they all come to respect and admire her. Things were looking up for Peggy at the SSR.

Steve looked through the wedding arch to the Statue of Liberty as the sun made its final dip to the horizon. The beautiful glow from the setting sun framed the Statue of Liberty in such a way it captured Steve's attention. He had his hands crossed over his lap and he was slowly rocking himself back and forth on his heels. He appears as excited and nervous, which he is. He started to lose focus on the Statue of Liberty as he started to think about what the future has in store for him and Peggy. Whatever it is, it starts here… with a marriage in a fairy tale setting. He heard his best man Dugan speak to him, bringing him back to reality.

Dugan chuckled and whispered, "Relax Cap." Steve just nodded. Dugan smiled, "You're marrying the most beautiful and strongest woman in the world…"

Suddenly the door at the other end of the roof opened slowly which caught the attention of everyone in the wedding, especially Steve. The open door revealed Peggy in her beautiful wedding dress with her white silk tulle veil down over her face, with her arm linked with a sharply uniformed Colonel Phillips and her other hand held a beautiful bouquet of flowers. Everyone gazed at Peggy as she and the Colonel slowly walked to the raised patio, the train of her dress elegantly glided across the deck. The dress accented everything physically beautiful about her. Everyone admired her sheer beauty while she glowed in the evening sun.

Steve's heart began to race even more as if he sprinted six miles. A warm and loving smile appeared on his face as Peggy slowly walked the few steps up to the patio. He could see her gorgeous happy smile and her beautiful face through the veil covering her face. Dugan leaned forward to Steve, "And she's definitely worth waiting on."

Steve whispered to himself, "Worth waiting every second." He continued to watch Peggy slowly make her way down the aisle with Colonel Phillips. All eyes were upon her as she elegantly walked toward her soon to be husband. Steve is seeing a real life angel on Earth walking toward him. He smiled the biggest smile in the world. Just looking at her in this moment calmed every nerve in his body.

Peggy slowly walked down the aisle and looked at all the smiling guests, men and women, watching her with admiration and love. She then looked at the sharply dressed Howling Commandos and Howard Stark standing by Steve, all looking at her with big happy and even silly grins. As if they knew she was staring at them, they all gave a small smile and a nod. She giggled to herself then looked to the left of the wedding arch to see Angie and her bridesmaids smiling happily at her like everyone else. Angie looked like she was about to burst with happiness. Finally… she looked at the man of her dreams. Captain Steven Rogers or also known as Captain America, the most perfect and the most important person in her life. The once skinny man who became more than a soldier became a hero, and that hero started to capture her heart before he became battle tested. But he captured her heart in the midst of a chaotic war. A war of all things… Through the war and through his apparent death, they finally made it… right at this moment together. There is a bright future ahead of them. Her
reverie was cut short when she finally got to the end of the aisle. She is finally getting married…and to her RIGHT partner.

Colonel Phillips released her arm then slowly took his seat in the first row of seats. Angie smiled and did her best to not look so excited as she gently took the bouquet of flowers from Peggy. Peggy slowly stood in front of Steve, she couldn't help but slip a few tears of joy from her eyes and a wide happy smile across her face. Her heart was beating a million beats a second. Everyone watched the wedding continue with love, excitement, and admiration in their eyes.

The chaplain smiled, "Who presents this woman and man to be married?"

Colonel Phillips stood up and said in a loud military manner, "I do." Peggy and Steve shared a happy smile with each other and a small excited laugh. The Chaplain smiled and proceeded.

The Chaplain nodded to the crowd, "Love. Love has brought Margaret Carter and Captain Steven Rogers together." Everyone leaned forward and listened intently and happily. Peggy and Steve reached out and took each others hands. The Chaplain continued, "But what do we mean by love? When we love, we see things other people do not. We see beneath the surface to the qualities, which make our beloved special and unique. To see with loving eyes, is to know inner beauty, and to be loved is to be known, as we are known to no other…" The guests nodded and smiled as the words hit home. The gentle words of the Chaplain touched every soul in the wedding ceremony, no one was immune. Peggy and Steve squeezed each others hands affectionately as they listened. "We who love, can look at each other's life and say, 'I touched his life,' or, 'I touched her life'… 'I was part of this life, and it is a part of me'. The secret of love and marriage is to be in love and in trust, to know in your hearts that you want only the best for each other. It takes dedication, to stay open to one another, to learn, and to grow, even when its difficult to do so." The Chaplain looked at both Peggy and Steve, "It takes faith to go forward together without knowing what the future holds for you both." He smiled, "It is a mutual enrichment, a give and take between two personalities, a mingling of two endowments, which diminishes neither, but enhances both. This is not the destination, but a start of a new journey." He then spoke of religion from the bible and love in marriage. After that was done he turned to Peggy and nodded, "Margaret when you're ready."

Peggy smiled as her heart continued to race. She gripped Steve's hands lovingly, she spoke in her natural English accent, "When I met you, our first conversation you mentioned you would only dance with the right partner. I felt the same though I didn't realize at the time that you were the one… When we started the journey I started to see you more and more than just Captain America. Over time I fell for you and started to see you as the one. Then when I lost you…those were the worst days of my life. I feared that I would never be able to experience being with that 'right' one" Her voice shuttered, "But you found your way back. You taught me so much things about myself that I didn't know existed. I love you and you're MY right partner." She smiled, "I promise to be your lover, companion, and friend, your partner in life and in parenthood, your ally in conflict, your greatest fan and your toughest adversary, your partner in adventures, and your right partner. My equal in all things. ALL things." Peggy smiled she couldn't stop her tears of joy.

The Chaplain nodded at Steve. Steve smiled and said warmly and full of emotion, "In the past, I never thought I'd be more than a scrawny kid with all sorts of physical inabilities. I never thought I'd settle down or be anything more than what I was. When I met you, I saw someone different. The most beautiful woman I have ever seen, and the most compassionate I ever met. When I was suffering during my operation I heard your voice break through the pain. Turns out that you were always looking out for me. When I became Captain America, you believed in me before anyone else did. You stood up for me when everything was against me. You showed me my value. You told me I can do anything and that I'm better than what I am." He lowered his voice, "I'm sorry I died once. But it won't happen again." He gripped her hands with love, "I promise to be your lover, companion,
and friend, your partner in life and in parenthood, your ally in conflict, your greatest fan and your toughest adversary, your partner in adventures, your right partner. My equal in all things. ALL things..." They both smiled widely at each other. The guests, groomsmen, and bridesmaids all smiled with affection at the couple.

The Chaplain smiled at Peggy then nodded. Angie walked up to her and handed her the ring. Peggy smiled and gave a small giggle while she put the ring on Steve's ring finger. The Chaplain smiled, "Do you Margaret Carter take Steven Rogers to be your partner in life, to support and respect him in his success as well his failures, to care for him in sickness and in health, to nurture him, to love him, and to grow with him throughout the seasons of your life."

Peggy smiled and said with no hesitation, "I do."

The Chaplain then looked at Steve and nodded at him like he did to Peggy. Dugan handed Steve the ring with a happy grin. Steve smiled happily as he slipped the beautiful gold ring onto Peggy's small ring finger. The Chaplain then smiled, "Do you Steven Rogers take Margaret Carter to be your partner in life, to support and respect her in her success as well her failures, to care for her in sickness and in health, to nurture her, to love her, and to grow with her throughout the seasons of your life."

Like Peggy, Steve said without hesitation, "I do."

The Chaplain took a step back and smiled at the couple, "By the power invested in me, I now pronounce you husband and wife."

With that Peggy reached for Steve and rested her bare arms on his shoulders with a big smile. Steve slowly lifted her veil over her head, and saw the most beautiful woman in the world staring into his eyes. She had the biggest smile across her face, as did he. After a moment of staring deeply into each other's eyes, they slowly brought their lips together in a kiss. Their bodies got closer as they embraced each other tightly while they held the kiss. The guests, bridesmaids, and groomsmen boomed with applause and cheers.

The Howling Commandos smiled and cheered for their two great friends. The Commandos jumped and "Wahoo'd" with joy as the couple kissed. Howard Stark clapped happily and even he had tears of joy coming down his face. Jarvis who was watching from the side also clapped and cried with joy. He saw Stark crying, so he walked over to him and handed him a handkerchief. Stark shook his head, "I'm not crying Jarvis..." He simply said as he hid his face from everyone. Jarvis chuckled then wiped his own tears then continued to clap. Colonel Phillips had a proud smile across his face as he clapped.

Thompson had a big grin on his face as he clapped. He leaned to Sousa, "I never realized how pretty Carter was."

Sousa shook his head, "Yes you did. You checked her out as much as I did. If I'm being completely honest..."

"Fair point." They both laughed.

Sousa nodded to Thompson, "And its not Carter anymore. Its Rogers now."

Peggy and Steve held the kiss for what seemed like an eternity under the radiant setting sun. Everything that has happened lead them to this very moment. After an eternity they finally broke the kiss, and they rested their foreheads together. Steve lipped "I love you" To Peggy, who lipped the same thing in return. The Chaplain called over the crowd, "I present to you Mr. and Mrs. Rogers!" The crowd cheered even louder.
Steve and Peggy held hands and started to make their way down the aisle. As they walked, a couple of Stark hired wedding photographers snapped pictures of them as they went down the aisle. At the very end of the aisle, Peggy and Steve shared a kiss one more time as more photos were taken. The sky became darker as the sun finally started to disappear past the horizon.

**Reception, Top Floor of Stark Industrial Venue**

Everyone was gathered into the dim reception area on the top floor of the building under the magnificent skylight. The reception area was dimly lit giving a certain mood in the room, and gave the guests a good look to the clear night sky through the large skylight. The only brightly lit area was the dance floor for obvious reasons. Guests sat at a variety of circular tables or at the bar near the cherry wood dance floor enjoying cocktails and drinks while listening to the band perform by the dance floor. The band was perfect; it was a typical big band with the addition of a woman and a man singer.

The guests were all mingled together, there was not one dedicated table for soldiers or agents, they were all mixed together. Both Dugan and Angie made sure of that. Everyone was acting classy and respectable with one another so the reception wasn't too rowdy and crazy. Made the waiters walking up and down the tables delivering appetizers and drinks lives so much easier.

Thompson sat next to his plus one and Sousa. His date to the wedding is a young blonde girl named Molly Sawyer who is wearing an elegant silver formal long wavy dress and white heals. A very kind and gentle young woman, which surprised Sousa. Sousa in the other hand sat next to other agents, soldiers, and their dates. Molly smiled at Sousa, "You work with Tommy too? In the office?"

Sousa took a drink from his glass, "Yup. I work with old Thompson…” He smiled and sighed while he fiddled with his cane next to him.

Thompson chuckled, "You make it sound like a bad thing Sousa."

"Wouldn't necessarily call it a good thing." Sousa responded quickly.

Thompson chuckled, "I'm not that bad." Molly linked her arm with his and laughed.

Molly nodded to Sousa, "he isn't bad. He's quite the gentlemen."

Sousa took another drink and said under his breath, "Lady...you have no idea."

Molly looked around, "Sousa. Where's your date? I don't mean to pry if..."

Sousa smiled, "No, no its alright to ask."

Thompson nodded, "Yeah Sousa where is your date. Couldn't find a gal to go to Captain America's wedding?"

When Thompson said that Angie walked over and ran a hand over Sousa's shoulder. She said in a sweet tone, "Hey Daniel, Peggy and Steve are going to make their arrival soon. So if you don't want to dance I'm okay with it."

Sousa smiled up at her, "I'll dance. My leg hasn't stopped me from doing anything yet."

Angie smiled, "Alright. I'll get you when its our turn to dance." She walked off calmly. She was being extremely affectionate to Sousa, and wasn't her usual energetic self. She met Sousa through Peggy, and she took an instant liking to him. Peggy explained that Sousa is a good man and was
only doing his job when he arrested her a while back, so Angie didn't have to hold a grudge against Sousa for arresting her. Angie liked him, he's kind, calm, and gentle it balanced out her energetic self. They went on a few dates and got to know each other pretty well, so Sousa asked her to be his date to the wedding.

Sousa smiled, "Count on it." He nodded confidently.

Thompson's jaw dropped, "Holy crap… you, you…"

Molly interrupted him, "Your date is the maid of honor! Oh my goodness!" She laughed, "Why aren't you sitting at their table then."

Sousa chuckled, "I couldn't. I don't deserve to sit at that table. I got nothing compared to all them…"

Thompson couldn't speak. Molly rubbed his back, "Hey, its not that shocking come on. Sousa is a well dressed and handsome man. I can see the maid of honor with him." Thompson just twitched.

Before anything else can happen the well dressed male singer stopped the music and spoke into the microphone. "Ladies and Gentlemen. Let's give a warm welcome to our newlyweds, Mr. and Mrs. Rogers!" Everyone stood up and clapped a thunderous applause to welcome Steve and Peggy to the reception.

The thunderous applause got louder when Steve and Peggy appeared from the top of the mezzanine with their arms linked. Steve and Peggy shared a loving smile and glance as they took the first steps down the lighted stairs. The spot light was on them as the guests cheered and applauded for the beautiful couple. Peggy laughed happily as she walked down the steps with Steve. Steve couldn't hold back a wide smile across his face. When they walked off the steps the crowd in unison started to chant, "Dance! Dance! Dance! Dance!"

Steve and Peggy were standing on the dance floor with the spot light on them as they happily looked at the chanting crowd. Steve turned to Peggy and wrapped his arm around her and smiled at her, "Care for a dance Mrs. Rogers." He said under the chanting crowd.

Peggy smiled. She loved the sound of that, "I never thought you'd ask." Margaret Carter Rogers did have a good ring to it.

Steve kissed her on the lips briefly then turned to the band leader, "'Its been a long, long time'" The band leader smiled and started to direct his band. The trumpets started to play loudly over the cheering crowd. Peggy embraced Steve and they started to dance together happily and slowly to the smooth rhythm of the song. The crowd watched happily as the couple swayed side to side on the dance floor together. The tune caught everyone's ears and they couldn't help but swing themselves along with the beat. The woman singing the song had the voice of an angel. Peggy smiled up at Steve then rested her head against his chest as they slowly danced on the floor. Steve kissed the top of her head and gripped her hand lovingly.

After the first dance, the reception kicked off full power. Food was served, the bouquet was tossed, and the cake was cut, it was now full party time. The floor was busy with guests dancing to the wonderful music, and those not dancing were enjoying the wonderful food and drinks at their tables. The Commandos were going absolutely insane on the dance floor making pure fools of themselves. Together Steve and Peggy made their way around the reception greeting their guests and posing for countless amount of pictures.

After a while of partying Peggy made her way through the crowd while being greeted by her guests.
Flashes from the photographers kept her on her toes. There were so many photos being taken that she almost believed the press was inside the venue. She saw the Colonel standing by his chair sipping on a drink. Peggy walked to him and greeted him, "Colonel."

Colonel Phillips gave her a warm smile, "Mrs. Rogers what can I do for you."

Peggy smiled, "I'm already used to the name." She looked at the dance floor where she saw Sousa slowly dancing with Angie. She looked back up at the Colonel, "Enjoying the reception?"

Colonel shrugged, "Its alright." Peggy looked shocked but then realized he was joking when she saw a smile creep on his old face.

Peggy laughed. Then she asked, "Have you seen Steve?"

"Lost your husband already huh? That's got to be a record."

Peggy rolled her eyes, "he was probably doing the same thing I was doing."

"I still got youthfulness in me. Care for a little dance before you run off to get your husband." Said the Colonel with a fatherly smile.

Peggy nodded then took his arm and walked over to the dance floor. The two danced together happily to the song. When Peggy was first assigned to the Colonel, Phillips didn't respect her nor did he want her working with him. But as the war progressed and Captain Rogers completed mission after mission, he started to respect Peggy more and more. So much that he started to see her like family. He appeared as a father figure to both Steve and Peggy. The song ended and the two let go of each other.

Colonel Phillips smiled, "Your husband is on the rooftop. He has a surprise for you."

Peggy smiled, "Thank you Colonel." She didn't know what surprise Steve can give her. This whole day and night has been perfect, nothing can top it. She's married to Captain Steve Rogers for God's sake!

On the roof top deck, Steve, Jarvis, Stark, and Dugan were standing at the end of the deck looking out to the lit up Brooklyn Bridge in the New York City night. The bridge and the panoramic view of the city around it made for a beautiful view.

Stark nudged Steve and said, "Well. Peg is now Peggy Rogers."

Dugan nodded, "It does have a good ring to it." He chuckled.

Jarvis nodded, "Yes it does doesn't it? Peggy deserves a man like you, sir." He nodded to Steve.

Steve chuckled, "Thanks fellas."

Dugan laughed, "What's next? A house and a bunch of little Peggy's and Captain America's running around." Everyone laughed.

Steve smiled at Dugan, "We already got the house."

"WHAT! You already got a house and you didn't even tell us!" Dugan yelled in shock, "Man you guys never tell us anything."

Steve chuckled, "Sorry Dugan, it just slipped my mind."
"You're Captain America… nothing just slips your mind." Dugan said while sulking.

Steve shrugged, "Anyway…I'd like to have a family some day. But its up to her, and I don't really want to rush it." He laughed, "I just got married! Let me enjoy it first!"

Dugan shook his head, "Believe me Cap… she wants a family."

"How do you know?"

Stark replied, "Yeah how do you know?"

"A little bird told me." Replied Dugan.

Steve shook his head, "And you get on me about not telling you guys anything." Everyone laughed. Steve shrugged, "Whatever it is. We'll cross that bridge when we're ready."

Jarvis nodded, "Excellent decision sir."

Stark looked at Jarvis, "Your job is to kiss my butt Jarvis not his." Everyone laughed.

Dugan replied, "Someone is getting jealous."

They all turned at the sound of the door opening. Peggy walked out, even in the dimly lit rooftop she still glowed. She is that beautiful. Steve smiled, "Hey." He said affectionately.

Peggy smiled as she walked to the group, "Hey darling." Stark nodded at Dugan and Jarvis causing the group to disperse to the other side of the roof. Peggy saw them leave Steve and she said concerned, "Darling they don't have to leave." She stopped right in front of him.

Steve embraced her then kissed her lips gently, "They're giving us some privacy so I can give you my wedding gift."

Peggy smiled, "That's the surprise?" She said excitedly.

"Yes it is." He kissed her one last time before he quickly walked over to a bush, "How is my lovely wife doing."

Peggy intertwined her fingers and slowly twirled her dress, "Doing wonderful. Happiest women in the world." She giggled, "How is my handsome husband doing?"

Steve picked up a large paper wrapped flat square package from behind a bush. He smiled at Peggy as he carried the package with him, "Luckiest man alive." He stopped in front of Peggy, who wrapped her arms around his waist and brought his body closer to hers.

Peggy kissed his lips, "Is this it?" Steve nodded then handed it to her. He took a step back as she tore off the wrapping of the gift. When all the wrapping was gone her jaw dropped to the floor in shock. The gift is a framed hand drawn picture of her in her SSR uniform. In the corner of the frame is a black and white circular cut out of a picture of her, the same picture Steve had tucked away in his compass. She was utterly speechless. She turned the picture around and saw writing on the back of the frame. It said,

To my beautiful wife Margaret "Peggy" Carter Rogers,

You are the joy in my heart and my rock. You are my Right Partner and I will always love you. You're the last person I want to see at night and the first I want to see in the morning. I love you today, tomorrow, and forever. Love, Steve
Peggy put a hand over her mouth as she admired this perfect gift. Tears of joy began to form in her eyes while she continued to admire the gift. She put the picture down against the bushes and hurriedly embraced Steve. She then kissed him passionately and did her best to put all of her emotion into this kiss. Once the need for air was too great they finally broke the kiss. She rested her forehead against his, "I love you." She whispered. "I love you so much." She said again.

Steve smiled, "I love you too."

Peggy whispered, "It's perfect. I love it." After a moment of holding each other in silence, they heard someone clear his throat behind them. They continued to hold each other as they looked to see who it was.

Standing in a half circle around them is the Howling Commandos, Sousa, Thompson, Angie, Stark, and Mr. Jarvis. Dugan looked at the group, "Do you think they act like this all the time when we're not around?

Jarvis nodded, "They do something like that." Peggy glared at him.

Steve laughed, "What's up fellas."

Thompson stepped forward, "Well we have a wedding gift for you and…Rogers…"

Dugan stepped forward, "You messed up! Howling Commandos take over the reigns."

Jim stepped up next to Dugan, "The Howling Commandos have a present for the both of you."

James Montgomery Falsworth also stepped forward and said in a loud British manner, "A present fit for a king and queen!"

Jacques Dernier said something in French. Gabe stepped forward like everyone else, and put a fist to his chest, "A king and Queen like yourselves!"

Peggy looked up at Steve who was still looking at his commandos in astonishment. She smiled, "do you think they rehearsed this?"

Steve shrugged, "No idea…"

Happy Sam Sawyer sighed, "See. I told you this was stupid."

Junior Juniper said excitedly, "Come on Sam. This is exciting AND its their wedding day."

Thompson sighed, "Lets go fellas."

Dugan sighed, "Fine. We'll skip the singing number." He turned around, "Pinkerton, bring it out."

Sawyer sighed, "Thank god. No singing."

Peggy looked at Sawyer, "I really wanted to hear the singing."

Steve laughed, "Me too." Sawyer just groaned in defeat.

Pinkerton came from behind the half circle and held out a large photo album to the couple. He opened the album and showed Steve and Peggy a few pages of the photos causing them to gasp in shock. Dugan smiled, "This is the photo album from the beginning of the formation of the commandos till now." He chuckled, "We got as many pictures of us and you two in here. Including our Soviet raid."
Peggy smiled, "Oh my goodness this is…wonderful." She couldn't believe it. Pinkerton handed her the album and she quickly started to look at the pages. Although it was dim on the roof she could still see the pictures, "This is absolutely wonderful." There were pictures of Steve and Peggy before they were a couple. It's a picture book of the story of the commandos and of them.

Steve smiled. He was taken back from this, "This is great …absolutely great" His jaw dropped again. He shook his head, "this is…awesome…" he laughed.

Thompson stepped forward and was about to speak. Sousa hit him in the leg with his cane, "You screwed it up once already." He laughed as Thompson went silent. He spoke, "Steve and Margaret Rogers, the agents of the SSR present you two with this wedding gift." He went into his pocket and pulled out small flat grey box, at the same time Thompson pulled out an equally small flat grey box from his pocket. Thompson handed his to Steve and Sousa handed his to Peggy.

Peggy opened up her box and saw a gold necklace with a small gold wing. The wing was shaped like the Captain America white wings on his helmet. Peggy again gasped. Steve opened his and saw a wide solid sterling silver bracelet. He smiled when he took it out and saw what was engraved on it. It said, Captain Steven Rogers. Property of Margaret Rogers. He laughed. Peggy smiled, "This is beautiful."

Steve laughed, "Thanks fellas." Is all he said.

Stark smiled and joined the conversation, "My present for your wedding was the house. But since you saved my life and cleared my name, my other present is…to be at your service when ever you need me."

Jarvis smiled, "That's my job sir." He nodded to Peggy and Steve, "My present to you cannot be so easily transported. It is a fine set of China and luxurious silverware for your home Mr. and Mrs. Rogers."

Angie smiled widely, "To my favorite couple and my closest friends, my present to you is downstairs in the reception." She bounced excitedly on her heels, "but I'm going to tell you anyway! It's a white lace tablecloth for your dining room!"

Peggy smiled, "Goodness Angie that's wonderful!" She said excitedly. She quickly walked to Angie and gave her a tight hug, "I can't wait to see it!" She slowly let her go then spoke to the group, "Thank you." She laughed, "Thank you all."

Steve nodded, "This is great. Thank you for everything."

Dugan waved his hand, "Nah. We wanted to make sure this wedding between our two favorite people was memorable."

Jim laughed, "And we wanted to give our wedding gifts before everyone else because we're special."

Steve chuckled, "That you are."

Peggy returned to Steve's side then wrapped and arm around him and placed a gentle hand on his chest. They turned and faced each other and they kissed. They kissed under the night sky with the Brooklyn Bridge behind them.

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Finally Married!
I know, I know the wedding was probably not accurate to the time period. BUT SCREW IT :D

It was awesome

I wanted to give them an epic wedding regardless if it was time period accurate. I loved it lol.

Additionally Peggy's family, I have a vision and her family will be in a later chapter…also I don't know much about them. Nor do I know Steve Rogers. I know basic info on Steve's family

I don't know much about Army traditions, but I know Navy and Marine Corps Traditions. Oorah. So I didn't do much on the Army tradition other than the Chaplain and military uniforms.

Stark Industrial Venue is a take on New York City Tribeca Rooftop. I mean…shit looks pretty awesome if you ask me. Had to make something epic.

Thanks for reading.
Chapter 12 Mr. & Mrs. Rogers

I do not own Captain America

Sorry for the late updated chapter XD

As always thank you for reading and enjoy…

Immediately following the magical New York City rooftop wedding, Jarvis chauffeured Steve, Peggy, and their luggage to the airport for their TWA flights to a tropic island just off the coast of Northern South America for their honeymoon. The happily married couple started their life together with a nice flight on the brand new sleek and shiny Trans World Airlines Lockheed Constellation down to the Bahama islands. From there, they took a series of short sea plane ride to a large tropical island known as New Buckingham. The large tropical island is still an English colony but the native culture mixed with the European culture effortlessly. Their honeymoon in the beautiful tropical New Buckingham island is a literal paradise by the sea with white sands, clear water, palm trees, and perfect weather. A cliché picturesque romantic atmosphere perfect for Steve and Peggy to celebrate and to look forward to their future together. Since the wedding the couple have been flying high on cloud nine. Neither Peggy nor Steve could imagine a better life at this moment, everything is perfect. After what seemed to be forever and through it all they are now Mr. & Mrs. Rogers. In love and forever entwined, they're ready to travel the road to the future together. With peace in their eyes, they face the new morning. The sunlight shatters the shadowy pain, and gives light to a new beginning. A beginning together.

New Buckingham is a little larger than Nassau in the Caribbean, it is wide and relatively circular with a thick forest of tropical trees in the center. The island is known for its characteristically uniquely large circular clear blue bay that takes a big chunk from the island called Victoria Bay. Spanning from the bay to the middle of the island is the New Buckingham town where European culture intertwines with native culture to give an excellent mingling of two worlds. Scattered along the island are other small native villages that are also mixed with European culture that welcome tourists and outsiders. The island offers excellent food, shops, beaches, and other tropical activities. The newlywed’s destination is the world famous luxurious beach side Victoria Bay resort called Victoria Sands Resort. The resort contains a tropical theme mixed with European and native architecture. The resort hosts a number of activities, fine dining, and a stunning view of the sea. A perfect vacation get away and romantic atmosphere.

Its been two weeks since the magical rooftop wedding in New York City, and the newly married Mr. & Mrs. Rogers are now busy enjoying their honeymoon in the tropical island. Enjoying everyday and every second of their mandatory time off. Its impossible not to enjoy the tropical atmosphere, the stores, the people, the beach, the water, and of course…each other. Everything is perfect and to them being together forever seems about right.

Victoria Sands Resort, Steve & Margaret Rogers Room

The Rogers room has a gentle tropical beige color on the walls, two white armchairs facing the balcony, a circular light brown wood table between the chairs, a light brown wood dresser in front of the large bed, a nice small box radio on the dresser, and a light brown wood desk and desk chair right next to the dresser. The large soft bed has a light brown head board and has soft white pillows and sheets. The matching light brown end tables both have lamps on them for the night. The door to
the bathroom is located next to the closet near the front door. To complete this luxurious tropical resort room, there is a large back door with white curtains that led to the balcony and gave a beautiful panoramic view of the sea. A luxurious room for the newlywed Rogers to spend their honeymoon.

The bright early tropical sun lit up the rather spacious resort room through the open balcony door. The soothing sound of the calm tropical sea passed through the room in a calm relaxing sound. The open drapes slowly flutter from the gentle tropical breeze as it sailed into the room. Steve's sketch book on the desk slowly opened and closed from the gentle breeze. The room was relatively organized and clean, but the bed and the immediate area around the bed were not. Under the warm tropical sun, discarded clothes and undergarments lay messily on the floor next to the bed. The sheets are ruffled and tossed messily on the bed like a typhoon came and rampaged that area of the room last night. But partly under the messy sheets is a naked Peggy Rogers sleeping soundly from last nights' physical activities. The tropical sun shined on her exposed back and upper hips as she slept in the calm tropical morning.

Peggy rolled over to Steve's side and automatically lazily tried to cuddle to his frame. But this time she felt nothing when she rolled over. She slowly opened her eyes to the brightly lit hotel room and saw that Steve wasn't there. She propped herself up on an elbow and brought a thin bed sheet to cover her chest. Her brown elegant wavy hair beautifully draped to one side as she scanned the room for her husband. She noticed the messy bed she's in and smiled from the cause of such a mess. She quickly remembered in detail last nights' passion. She let out a pleasant sigh from being completely refreshed, satisfied, and happy from last night. She turned to Steve's pillow and saw a white envelope that said, "For You".

She smiled and took the envelope as she laid back down on the bed. She slowly opened it and took out a folded piece of white paper, then saw a glimpse of a beautiful black and white sketch of a tropical sunset. She smiled widely while she unfolded the sketch to see the best sketch she ever seen of a sunset. She noticed something on the bottom of the sketch, "To Peggy, love, Steve" Peggy couldn't stop smiling, she has to save this one in her precious folder of Steve's drawings she has at home. She noticed something written on the back and immediately flipped the paper to see a small letter. "Good Morning Beautiful. Went for a little run. Will be back soon. Love, Steve" She smiled warmly. He made a small letter to let her know where he is on the back of his own sketch, its quite sweet. He always manages to make her smile, no matter what mood she's in. She couldn't imagine a life with anyone different. He's the perfect one for her.

Peggy laughed, a little run is probably forty-five something miles. She rolled over to the end table on her side of the bed and placed the drawing and envelope on the top. She rolled over back to his side of the bed then took his pillow and hugged it tightly. She inhaled slightly to enjoy Steve's scent that was still fresh on the pillow while wonderful thoughts and memories flooded her mind. After a long moment she heard the door unlock and open. She propped herself up on her elbow again and smiled, "Good morning darling." She said while she let the bed sheet fall from her chest, fully comfortable with Steve seeing her naked no matter the context.

Steve entered in a white shirt, green PT running shorts, and running shoes, "Oh!" He said surprised, "Peggy, you're awake." He kicked off his shoes while Peggy held a loving gaze at him. He chuckled, "Good morning gorgeous." He walked over to the bed and sat down on the side in front of Peggy, "Sleep well?" he said with a warm smile.

Peggy adjusted her position on her elbow so she can rub Steve's back gently, "Of course I did." She giggled, "Missed your warmth earlier."

Steve turned and gazed at her beautiful face and naked body, "Sorry. Felt the need to run."
Peggy giggled, "What, Last night wasn't hard enough for you?"

Steve laughed, "Not like that." He chuckled, "Though...for this whole entire time I've been with you. I didn't know your legs could do that."

Peggy sat up and hugged his body from behind, then pressed her lips to his cheek in a passionate peck on the cheek, "Remember, I'm a woman of many talents."

"I look forward to experience every one of them." Steve replied. He turned slightly in her embrace so he can kiss her on the lips. Peggy shifted to a better angel so she could kiss her husband with equal fervor. As they held the kiss, Peggy ran a hand gently across his cheek while the kiss deepened. Once they broke the kiss for air, Steve couldn't help but gaze at her.

Peggy smiled, "What?"

"I tell you this all the time. I can't help it. You're so beautiful..." He kissed her again, "And I love you."

"I love you too." She replied happily while blushing. No one can make her blush as much as Steve can.

"So how is it so far? How is it being married to Captain America?" Steve laughed.

Peggy shrugged, "Its okay I guess."

"Ouch..." Steve said looking down as he faked being hurt.

Peggy laughed then kissed his cheek. Steve smiled then kissed her lips, "I love you." He extracted himself from her grasp and walked away from the bed.

Peggy looked at him confused, "Where you going?"

Steve took off his shirt then looked at her, "Going to take a shower." He nodded to the bathroom. Peggy smiled as it was her turn to admire her husband's body. To admire...everything.

Steve turned on the warm water and relished the feeling of the water hitting his bare body. He sighed in relief, feeling the warmth and pleasant feeling of the water on him. He ran a hand through his hair while we enjoyed the start of his post workout shower. He suddenly flinched in surprise when he felt a pair of gentle arms wrap around his body. He then felt a familiar body press against his back and lips gently placing kisses on his neck then to his back. He chuckled, "Come to join me?"

Peggy hummed, "Something like that." She turned him around and rested her arms on his shoulders while Steve placed his hands on her hips as they gazed into each others eyes. They both swayed naturally together before they crushed their lips together.

In a different but just as luxurious identical room down the hallway, a tall skinny pale man sat at the desk with a headset on. The man wore a light blue Bahamas button up collard shirt, tropical khakis, and brown dress shoes, and the headset is attached to a metallic box device on the desk that looked strikingly like a military radio. The man looked mid aged with his dark brown hair combed perfectly to one side. He sighed as he fiddled with a nob on the device as the door to the room opened. A rather shorter, tanner, and muscular looking man with combed light brown hair walked in wearing a tan button up collared shirt, white trousers, and brown shoes. Both men fitted the tropical atmosphere on the island to avoid suspicion of their true nature of being there. The muscular man nodded to his partner at the desk, "Anything new Anton?"
The tall pale man named Anton took off the headset and sighed, "They're having sex."

The muscular man laughed, "Again! Damn, at this rate there will be babies we need to take care of."

Anton sighed, "You're turn Dimitri. Try not to enjoy it too much. We still have a job to do. He stood up and made his way to his bed to lay down. He chuckled, "Ludmila would kill you if you were enjoying this."

Dimitri the muscular tan man chuckled, "Don't bring Ludmila in this." He sat down at the desk, "I can't blame Captain America. Margaret Rogers is pretty. Way prettier than Ludmila… she's quite the beautiful doll" He put the headset on then turned to Anton, "Don't you dare say anything to Ludmila about this."

Anton laughed, "Not a word." On the desk near the device were pictures of Steve ad Peggy. Two file pictures of them and a number of pictures of the couple together in a crowd. The picture of them in the crowd have them circled with a red map pen. The device on the desk is no other than a state of the art listening device that picks up the listening bugs in the Rogers room.

Anton sighed, "Do you know where they are going today?"

Dimitri shook his head, "Not a clue." He sighed, "Can I turn this off for a bit?"

Anton chuckled, "No. We have orders remember." Dimitri sighed. He sat up, "You think big boss will get us back up? This is Captain America we are talking about."

Dimitri shook his head, "Doubt it."

Anton sighed again, "If they see us, one or two things might happen."

Dimitri nodded, "And all of those things end up with us being dead or mortally wounded." He looked up, "We are only talking about Captain America here… but what about his wife."

Anton sighed, "Yeah…I'm calling big boss."

Back in the Rogers room, after a steamy romantic shower the Rogers began to dress for another day of their honeymoon. Steve sat on the bed while tying one of his grey casual shoes, he's wearing a plain green shirt and tan casual trousers with a brown belt. Peggy stood in the bathroom in a white robe while doing her make up in front of the mirror. She leaned back to check her reflection and called out to Steve, "So what are we doing today darling?" She asked curiously.

Steve finished tying his shoes, "Uh. I actually got no idea." He chuckled, "We've done everything."

Peggy liked what she saw in the mirror, balanced eye shadow and blush, and of course red lipstick. Her elegantly shoulder length wavy hair was all dry and rested beautifully on her shoulders. She walked out of the bathroom to get her attire of the day from the closet. She smiled, "I have an idea, hon?" Steve got momentarily distracted as he admired her figure, even though she's wearing a robe he can still see her curves. Peggy grabbed a white flared swing dress with pink flowers randomly patterned on the dress. She noticed the silence and turned to see Steve staring with his jaw partially open. She laughed, "Darling?"

Steve shook his head, "What? What honey?" He realized what happened, "Sorry. I was staring."

Peggy laughed, "I noticed. So there's this nice village and beech a short distance from the town. We can walk there; does that sound good?"
"Sounds like a plan." He responded happily. He cocked his head, "Should we bring swim suits then?"

Peggy smiled, "We don't have to swim darling. We can just enjoy the view" She walked into the bathroom.

Steve smiled, "Sounds good."

In the other room Dimitri lit up a large cigar and said in a slightly muffled tone, "They're heading for the town."

Anton sighed, "Yeah and big boss doesn't want to give us back up. Saying that you and me can take care of them."

Dimitri puffed a billowy cloud of smoke from his cigar, "Swell."

Anton stood up, "Lets go. We'll start tailing them at the lobby." He grabbed a white fedora on his bed and a brown satchel bag on the floor. Dimitri removed the headset and went to get his white fedora on his bed then joined Anton at the door. Before they left the room Anton nodded to Dimitri, "Remember. We must be discreet and at all times alert. Don't draw attention to ourselves"

Dimitri nodded, "Got it." Anton opened the door and they both rushed out of the room and collided into a young American woman in a rose dress carrying a tray of food to her room. There was a loud crash as the tray and the plates of food hit the floor. The two men and woman fell on top of each other tangled from the collision. Food and broken plate fragments were all over the floor.

Down the hall Steve opened the door at the loud sound of the crash in the hallway. He stuck his head out and saw two men and a woman getting up off the floor with broken plates and food spread all along the floor. He turned around and called to Peggy, "Hey honey I'll be right back. There was a little accident outside. I'm going to see if I can help."

Peggy called from the bathroom, "Alright darling. I'm almost done. I'll meet you out there."

Steve walked out and called to the group, "Need any help there?"

Anton jumped up and quickly helped the woman up before quickly walking out of the hallway to the stairs to avoid Captain America. Dimitri grabbed his cigar off the floor and quickly followed Anton out. Steve didn't know who those men were and they disappeared before he could say a thing. He walked over to the young woman and asked, "everything alright?"

The young woman patted her dress and said without looking, "Yes thank you." She looked down the hallway in the direction the two men left in such a hurry, "Those men seem to be in a rush."

Steve nodded, "I wonder what it is."

The woman shook her head, "When they saw you they seemed afraid of y…” She finally realized who she was talking to. She gasped, "You're…Captain America…” She started to jump up and down, "Its such an honor to be in the presence of such a hero. I hear a lot of your stories…"

Steve chuckled, "That radio show back in the states aren't real."

"I know. I hear stories from vets." The young woman gasped, "You're so…tall and more handsome in real life." She said excitedly.
Peggy walked up behind Steve and linked her arm with his, "Everything okay darling?" In addition to her swing dress, she wore white heels and had her favorite brown purse across her body.

Steve turned and smiled at her, "Hey hon. Everything is okay." He nodded to the young woman, "Two men were in a rush and collided with her." He chuckled, "They helped her out but quickly took off."

Peggy smiled at the other woman, "I hope you're okay?"

The woman smiled, "I am, thank you." She nodded at Steve, "I read on the paper that you got married. Is this her?"

Steve smiled and wrapped an arm around Peggy, "This is her, my beautiful wife Margaret."

Peggy stuck her hand out to shake the woman's hand, "Charmed." She said with a warm smile.

The young woman smiled and said nervously, "It's such an honor to meet you both. But I won't keep you." She nodded, "Have a nice day." She was quick to try to end the encounter.

Steve smiled, "Likewise, hope everything turns out better for you."

Peggy nodded, "Want us to tell the front desk to bring you food to your room?"

The woman shook her head, "I'm okay thank you." The woman smiled then walked off.

Steve looked at Peggy, "What was that all about? She seemed like she was suddenly in a rush too. Unlike earlier."

Peggy laughed and tightened her grip on his arm, "Darling, she was gushing over you before I arrived. I saw and heard it." She took his arm and took the lead to the stairs.

Steve cocked his head to one side, "You really think so?"

Peggy laughed, "You really still don't understand women, do you darling?"

Steve chuckled, "I said it once and I'll say it again. I don't." He shrugged, "But, I got married to you. You are the only one I want to truly understand."

Peggy smiled and kissed his cheek, "I'm okay with that."

In the lobby of the resort, Anton and Dimitri sat on one of the couches in the sitting area in front of concierge desk as they waited for their targets. Both of the men looked like they were on vacation and they fit right in...for the most part. Dimitri was still smoking a big cigar and puffing out billows of smoke that made him stand out. Anton nodded, "That hallway scene was close."

Dimitri puffed his cigar, "We know now that she isn't an enemy agent of some kind."

Anton looked at him with a weird grin, "How do you know that?"

"I checked her out, Anton."

"And?" Anton said with a confused grin.

"She's sensational. No one that pretty can be an agent." Dimitri said with confidence as he removed the cigar from his mouth.
Anton looked at him confused, "You saying Mrs. Rogers isn't pretty. Thought you said she was earlier."

Dimitri nodded, "Got me there." He took another puff.

Anton patted Dimitri's chest, "There they are." He said as he saw Steve ad Peggy walk into the lobby arm in arm.

Steve said to Peggy while keeping his eyes ahead of him, "Those are the two men who ran into that poor girl."

Peggy looked over her shoulder and saw the two men on the couch. She chuckled, "Oh those two men?" She tugged on his arm, "Those are Agents Anton and Dimitri from the SSR." She looked forward again as they walked, "Though I think they are in training."

Steve looked at her confused, "those are SSR agents?" He said dumbfounded. He shook his head, "How do you possibly know that."

Peggy chuckled, "I noticed them shadowing us on the first day of our honeymoon. It was pretty obvious." Steve looked confused. Peggy laughed, "Oh come off it darling. There has been a string of clumsy accidents everywhere we go. That doesn't seem strange to you?"

Steve shrugged, "I thought we were in the wrong place wrong time." Peggy gave him a funny grin. He shrugged again, "Come on. I'm enjoying my honeymoon! I don't want to be sleeping with one eye open when I'm with you." Peggy kissed his cheek.

Peggy tugged on his arm again, "Besides, I know their faces because their files crossed my desk multiple times in the past. They had to repeat training before they became active field agents."

They got to the door and Steve held it open for his wife. He asked confused, "Then why are they shadowing us?"

Peggy shrugged, "Probably the SSR or the government want at least two agents watching out for us on our honeymoon." She chuckled, "Though I think the reason they chose two inexperienced agents is because they trust you and me to protect ourselves." They started to walk out of the resort grounds to the town.

Steve chuckled, "That is true. You carry a gun and you sleep with a hidden knife."

"You know about the knife, darling?" Peggy asked in surprise.

"I found out a lot of new things when we were being exceptionally active last night." Steve chuckled.

Peggy blushed for some strange reason. She giggled, "Anyway… those two agents are probably here to learn how to shadow better."

Steve nodded, "Makes sense. Should we confront them?"

Peggy shook her head, "If they start really bothering us then yes."

"Now that you pointed them out to me…"

Peggy wrapped her arm around him and Steve automatically wrapped his around her. She leaned into him as they walked out of the resort and into the crowded and lively streets of the main town.
She smiled, "Relax darling, its not like they see or hear what we say or do." That being said, only a few yard behind the couple were the two rookie SSR agents.

After walking to the village the couple spent most of the day there. The couple walked along the beech in their bare feet, and even walked into the water for some time. They laughed and splashed water on each other while enjoying the warm tropical sun. As the sun began to set, they enjoyed the company of the villagers and other tourists with song, food, and dancing. Everyone there participated in songs, dancing, and food till they were fat and sore. Just another perfect day in the Rogers honeymoon in a tropical paradise. When it started to get dark Peggy made the decision to head back to the resort for some down time in the resort.

It was about 8 in the evening when Steve and Peggy made it back to town. The streets were still busy and crowded with tourists and citizens of the island going on with their business. Island life never stops. Steve and Peggy walked in the middle of the crowded street with their arms wrapped around each other, completely lost in the crowd. Peggy had her hand on Steve's strong chest as they said sweet nothings to one another with an occasional laugh and jokes. Steve kissed the top of his wife's head, "Did I tell you. That you look beautiful today?" He chuckled, "Well…everyday and this morning."

Peggy kissed his cheek, "Yes you have. But I don't mind hearing it again."

"You're beautiful." Steve smiled warmly at her, "And you picked up those dance steps at the village pretty fast."

Peggy chuckled, "You did too."

"True…” He laughed, "That was so much fun."

"It was." Peggy said happily. She gripped his body, "Though. I need everyone to know that your mine." She said with a mischievous grin.

"Always going to be yours. That goes without saying." Steve replied happily.

Suddenly he stopped in his tracks causing Peggy to jolt. She looked up at him confused, "What is it darling?" Steve started to breathe heavy and stare intensely in front of him. Peggy looked forward then back at Steve not understanding what he was staring at. She tapped his chest, "Darling? Honey?" She asked repeatedly.

Steve gritted his teeth, "The Winter Soldier…” With those words the crowd started to split about 50 yards away from him. The Winter Soldier's unique silver arm with a red star on the shoulder reflected in the dim lights of the street. The Winter Soldier like last time had a dark black mask hiding his facial features, his messy dark hair framed his face, and he wore black tactical gear. Suddenly the crowd split when he rose his metal arm that held a high powered pistol directed at Steve.

Peggy gasped, "Darling." She reached into her purse with one hand to quickly grab her pistol while she tugged on Steve's arm, "Darling!" Like Steve predicted the future, he grabbed Peggy and bent her down the moment the Winter Soldier pulled the trigger. The bullet sailed by and grazed the back of his shoulder. Steve was now using himself as a human shield to protect his wife. With that gun shot, the crowd started to quickly disperse chaotically out of the street to take cover.

Peggy dipped under Steve's strong arm and quickly aimed her pistol at the Winter Soldier. The trained Soviet Assassin quickly rolled to one side the moment Peggy fired off a few rounds. Steve turned around and quickly ran to a man hole cover a few feet from him and effortlessly picked up the
circular iron cover to use as his projectile. He knew Peggy was exposed on the street still, so he had to make sure the assassin couldn't get a good shot on her. Even though Steve is sure that he's the target.

Steve rolled forward and effortlessly threw the man hole cover at rocket speed like it was his shield. The Winter Soldier ducked and dodged the speeding projectile just in time. The man hole cover slammed and impaled itself into a door of a white car. The Winter Soldier rested on one knee as he turned around to observe the carnage of the throw. The entire car looked like it was bent out of shape from the impact of the man hole cover. He quickly turned back around to face forward when he realized a set of knuckles sailing straight for his face. He didn't have time to move, so he took the massive blow to the nose.

The Winter Soldier fell onto his back and dropped the gun as Steve followed through with his massive punch. Before Steve can make another move, the Winter Soldier quickly kicked him in the gut while still on his back. Steve shutters back and regained his footing as the assailant quickly got back up. The Winter Soldier quickly drew a knife with his bionic metal arm from one of his pockets and held it blade down.

Peggy got up and tried to rush to aid her husband, but Anton ran in front of her and stopped her. Peggy yelled angrily at Anton, "I have him!"

Dimitri stood right next to Anton and removed his cigar from his mouth, "We're out matched as it is Mrs. Rogers!"

Anton pushed her to the side toward a car, "You won't last a second against this guy!"

Peggy refused to be put behind a car for cover. She pushed Anton away forcibly, "You don't know that."

Dimitri grabbed her shoulders, "Agent Ca- Rogers! Captain Rogers is right now focused on beating this guy. If you go out there, his attention will be divided in protecting you! He needs to be focused!"

Anton nodded, "He's right. You're as much of a target as he is." Peggy didn't say a word and instead watched helplessly as her husband fought a bionic armed man with a knife. Anton continued, "We are agents from the S…"

Peggy looked coldly at him, "I know who you two are…"

With every slash, strike, and thrust the Winter Soldier committed, Steve was fast enough, strong enough, and flexible enough to block each strike. It looked like a stalemate as Steve and the Winter Soldier went at it. The Winter Soldier unable to gain any considerable offensive advantage as Steve was unable to get out of being on the defensive. Until The Winter Soldier attempted to thrust the knife down onto Steve, but Steve was able to catch the wrist. Almost instantaneously, the Winter Soldier switched hands and started trying to strike Steve with his non-bionic arm. He was just as fast and just as deadly even though he wasn't using the bionic arm. Like clock work Steve did his best to avoid the strikes. Steve ducked and blocked an overhead thrust of the knife, but the Winter Soldier flicked the knife up and caught it with his free bionic arm then continued his rapid deadly thrusts. Steve ducked side to side with each slash of the knife, then ducked under a knife swing which gave him an opportunity to punch the assailant under the jaw.

The Winter Soldier stumbled back and dropped his knife. Steve quickly made use of the momentum of the moment and kicked him square in the chest, sending him onto a hood of a car. Steve quickly approached to strike again but the Winter Soldier stood up and blocked Steve's punch with the bionic arm. The assassin proceeded to hit Steve in the ribs multiple times with his free hand causing Steve to
flinch and grunt in sharp pain. The Winter Soldier pushed Steve back into the street then tried to
punch him in the face, but Steve ducked to the right and hooked his arm under the armpit and threw
him over his shoulder. The Winter Soldier hit the concrete with a loud thud with Steve trying to take
control of the non-bionic wrist, but the Winter Soldier shot back up to his feet and quickly used his
bionic arm to grab Steve's neck. Steve started to feel his neck begin to crush from the metal arm as he
slowly got strangled. The Winter Soldier pushed Steve onto the ground then let go of his neck in
order to heavily strike down with his bionic fist. Steve reacted quickly and rolled when the Winter
Soldier hit the concrete where his face used to be. The impact was so great it nearly shattered the
concrete at the point of impact.

Steve rolled back and got to his feet, but the Winter Soldier didn't stop his onslaught. With every
punch the Winter Soldier threw, Steve ducked or blocked it to the best of his abilities. But suddenly,
Steve got struck in the ribs causing him to jolt forward in pain. Then the Winter Soldier hit him in the
face with the hard metal fist which sent him to the ground. Steve quickly regained his composure and
again dodged another massive bionic down strike. The missed strike left the Winter Soldier
temporarily exposed. Steve quickly capitalized on the moment and got behind him and suplex him
onto the ground.

The Winter Soldier rolled back and stood up at the same time as Steve. Another stand off between
the two. They stared intensely into each other's eyes, even in the dim light they could tell that there is
still fight left in each of them. Suddenly there were loud whistles and rapid footsteps coming from the
North end of the road. The local British police detachment arrived. Before the Winter Soldier can run
off to hide from the police, there was a loud snap like a gun shot in the distance. Almost
instantaneously the Winter Solider jolted forward from a bullet going straight through his right
shoulder. He quickly regained his composure and turned around to see Peggy standing in the middle
of the road with her pistol pointed right at him. He glared at her before quickly sprinting into the dark
alley. The Winter Soldier for the second time, has failed to kill Captain America.

A group of British Police officers came running down the road toward the ally, the lead officer
yelled, "Halt!" But the Winter Soldier already disappeared. He signaled his group to go down the
alley way and find him.

Peggy lowered her weapon and put it back in her purse. Steve groaned in pain as he started to feel
the bruises on his body. Although the Winter Soldier couldn't get the better of him, Steve still paid
the price. The British Police Officer walked up to Steve, "You okay sir?"

Steve nodded, "Yeah, I'm fine." He groaned, "If you need anything, let me know."

"Right." Suddenly there were more loud police whistles in the distance as the pursuit of the assailant
continued. The police officer tipped his hat toward Steve then ran off.

Steve slowly walked to Peggy who was waiting down the street. He felt the pain from the fight in his
ribs, legs, jaw, face, and joints with each step he took. Although a draw, Steve was sure he paid the
price more than his enemy. Peggy smiled worriedly at Steve as she began to walk slowly toward
him. The spectating crowd on the sides of the street and buildings watched in awe at Steve as he
walked slowly. The crowd saw the whole fight between Steve and the Winter Soldier, and there was
a continuous flow of whispers about the fight among the crowd. Once Steve and Peggy got to each
other they embraced in a tight hug. Without saying anything Peggy gently kissed Steve on the lips
passionately. She gently glided her hands across his cheek as Steve pulled her body into his tightly.
She had to make sure he was safe.

Peggy broke the kiss and looked at Steve in the eyes, "Darling…"

"I'm fine. Lets just get to the resort." Steve smiled reassuringly. Peggy knew he was hurt and simply
ran a gentle hand down his chest with a worried look. Steve saw the two SSR agents standing by the car, "Guess they helped out."

Peggy looked at him confused, "They took me to cover to stop me from getting involved in the fight."

Steve nodded, "Makes sense. I'd be more worried about you then actually fighting the Winter Soldier." Peggy hugged him. He continued, "I know you can take care of yourself, hell you're probably a better hand-to-hand fighter than me. But this is the Winter Soldier...he can rival me in almost every aspect it seems." Peggy took a deep breath and kissed his chest. He kissed the top of her head, "I'd walk to hell and back for you..."

Peggy took a deep breath, "I'd die if I'd lose you... can't do it again."

Steve smiled, "Lets go back to the resort." Peggy nodded as Steve wrapped an arm around her and started to walk back to the resort. The small contingent of police on the island were all running after the deadly assassin that was reported in the area. The crowd started to return back to their normal lives but making a way for Steve and Peggy. The street began to crowd again as the excitement slowly died down.

Anton and Dimitri looked at each other and nodded. Anton sighed, "We did our job..."

Dimitri smoked his cigar again, "If Captain America ate it, I'm sure we'd be out of the job."

"And they said this would be an easy task to do." Anton sighed as he started to walk back to the resort.

Back in Steve & Peggy's room, Steve sat on the edge of the bed facing the open back door without his shirt on. His body was covered with clear large bruises and the bullet graze was slowly bleeding from the back of his shoulder. Steve sighed as he looked out the glass back door to the dark tropical night. The moon was out and the weather was calm, looked like another peaceful night. Steve felt someone climb onto the bed, he turned around and saw Peggy in her white V-neck spaghetti strap lace edged full slip night gown, and she was holding a wet towel in her hand.

Peggy positioned herself onto her knees behind Steve and whispered gently, "This might sting." She placed the wet towel against the bullet graze on his shoulder to clean the wound. Steve shuttered from the sting and grunted. She continued to gently clean his shoulder calmly.

Steve sighed, "I hope this didn't ruin... the last days of our honeymoon."

Peggy removed the towel then gently kissed the clean part of his shoulder, "Darling, I'm with you and that's all I need." She said in a gentle tone. Once she was sure that his wound was clean she decided to wash his back with the wet towel.

Steve looked down, "You're so good to me." He grunted again as he felt Peggy running the towel over a bruise on his side.

Peggy let out a small laugh, "It's only fair. You're always so good to me darling."

Steve turned slightly to look at her, "I love you."

Peggy smiled and responded softly, "I love you too." She stood on her knees and wrapped her arms around his body and kissed his lips from behind him. Once they broke the kiss Steve held onto her arms as she rested her chin on his shoulder and they slowly rocked side to side. Peggy kissed his
neck and held onto him tightly.

Steve spoke calmly and confidently, "He'll be back. It's clear I'm his mission…next time I see him. I'll be ready." Peggy looked worried and hugged him tighter. He chuckled, "Hell of a honeymoon… and one way to start our life together"

Peggy let out a small laugh then kissed his cheek. She knew that if she ever went up against the Winter Soldier by herself, the odds would not be in her favor. The Winter Soldier was the Soviet counter to Steve, she would be outmatched no matter what. Peggy softly spoke, "I would not change the time with you for anything. You only made my life better, darling." The two fell into silence as they enjoyed the view from their room.

Steve spoke up, "Oh I almost forgot." He leaned over to Peggy's nigh stand and opened the drawer and took out a small black square metallic object. He sat straight again and held it up, "I found this thing. What is it?"

Peggy blushed and gasped, "Oh dear." She covered her face, "Oh no…"

"What?"

It was now late at night and the search for the assailant is still going on, but the police and locals have lost sight and track of him. But in the town and under their very noses is where the Winter Soldier is hiding. In a small dimly lit garage of a building, the Winter Soldier quietly hid from the police. The garage was relatively empty but have four body bags near the garage door. The previous tenants of the building now lie deceased in the body bags on the cold garage floor. The Winter Soldier, still wearing his mask and tactical gear, sat on the only wood chair under a single light bulb hanging from the ceiling. He breathed loudly but calmly as he waited patiently for a certain…eventuality.

The side door of the garage slowly opened and four men wearing black suits walked in. The men looked identical, they were all pale and all wore matching black suits, black tie, and white dress shirts. One man stepped into the light behind the Winter Soldier and spoke in a thick Russian accent, "You let him get away." The Winter Soldier said nothing. The man walked around him and stood in front of him, "You let Captain America get the better of you." The Winter Soldier looked up at him. The man was a pale bald man with a large red scar going across his face from the top of his left eye down to the right side of his lips. The man bent down in front of him, "Kill him…or he kills you." He looked coldly at the assassin, "He knows now that you are tracking him. He knows what you can do." He shook his head slowly, "He won't make the same mistake twice." He stood up, "Or you can always go after his wife. Margaret Carter Rogers." He chuckled, "She has become quite the star in the SSR. She has proven to be a headache for the Soviet Union…make the decision. Just finish the job."

The Winter Soldier nodded and breathed loudly again.

"With peace in their eyes, they face the new morning. The sunlight shatters the shadowy pain, and gives light to a new beginning." Cool Quote I heard. Forgot wear though.

Resort and Island are both fictional.

The brief instances of Anton and Dimitri are inspired by Get Smart For the most part.

More of the Winter Soldier is coming.
HAPPY THANKSGIVING

THANKS FOR READING
Chapter 13 Friday

I do not own Captain America

It has been an eventful and romantic couple of weeks for the still newly married Steve and Margaret Rogers, but sadly the wonderful honeymoon has come to an end. Their brush with The Winter Soldier did not stop Steve and Peggy from enjoying their last few days of their romantic getaway. A very romantic honeymoon that they wouldn't trade for anything. It has been three days since they returned home to their comfortable house in Scarsdale, and for the past few days they have been lounging around the house and enjoying each other's company while they got adjusted back to New York time. Upon returning home, the Rogers quickly organized their wedding gifts and bought more house hold items that they wanted to make their home feel more comfortable. Neither of them were expected to return back to work till Monday the following week.

Since encountering the Winter Soldier, Steve couldn't stop thinking about him and how close he was to killing Peggy. Never mind the direct threat the Winter Soldier possessed against Steve, losing Peggy wasn't an option. After everything they have been through to get to where they are now, losing Peggy would kill him. She possesses more than just his name; she possesses the key to his soul. They haven't even been married for a month yet, and the feeling of losing his wife already is slowly strangling him. He loves her with all of his being, and she brings out the very best in him. With that Steve vowed to make sure The Winter Soldier will never reach his beautiful wife, Peggy. He knew that Peggy could defend herself, but he would never just watch on the sidelines if she's in trouble... especially if it's the Winter Soldier.

For Peggy, she knew Steve was troubled since the encounter and she too has been thinking about the Winter Soldier. She already lost Steve once already, and she didn't plan on letting it happen again. Steve has come across the face of death multiple times and each time he managed to barely escape its grasp. Their marriage is still new, and she can't bear the thought of losing Steve again. Peggy plans to grow old and happy with Steve, so she damned the Soviets for sending their poor replication of a real super soldier. She has the key to his soul, and he has her heart and everything she is. With that Peggy promised that the Winter Soldier will never bring down Steve. Steve is only human after all, and he brings out the best in her. So as his wife and the love of his life, she will protect him no matter the price.

They haven't spoken to each other about their fears of losing one another or the private promises they made to each other. They didn't need to say it because in a way they felt it within themselves. But they do sometimes show their concerns with small loving gestures. Though, they wont let the Winter Soldier stop them from living their lives to the fullest. No one will get in between them.

Steve & Margaret Rogers Residence Scarsdale, NY

Another bright and early morning in the beautiful state of New York, United States, though this day wasn't just any other day. This day is a Friday. The peaceful suburbs of Scarsdale welcomed the early morning sun, the trees blew peacefully in the wind, the birds chirped, and the paperboys were making their rounds. Another calm day in Scarsdale which was a dramatic difference from the city. The bright and early warm sun pierced the night shadows left behind in Steve and Peggy's room and slowly liberated the room from the night. Under the comfortable violet bed sheets of the big bed lay Steve with his arm draped over Peggy as they slept and cuddled like they always did. Steve slept in a
white tank top and solid blue pajama pants while Peggy slept in a rose pink, knee height V-neck spaghetti strap full slip night gown with lace edges.

The sheets shifted followed by Steve unknowingly and gently tightening his grip on Peggy's stomach. Steve heard the faint sound of birds chirping outside the windows in the master bedroom causing him to slowly open his eyes. As he slowly woke up, he lifted his head off his pillow and silently stretched his legs under the sheets. He noticed Peggy's steady breathing as she slept, which made him smile a big grin at her sleeping form. He quite enjoyed watching her sleep, plus she's quite physically beautiful even in her sleep. No surprise there. Her shoulder length elegant wavy brown hair looked so perfect even through the night. Something Steve never managed to figure out how she was able to keep it that perfect when she slept. He gently ran a hand over her exposed shoulder while he admired her beautiful skin tone and her smooth skin. Her physical beauty was intoxicating, and her personality was equally wonderfully beautiful. Steve slipped out of his pleasant thought by Peggy's feet brushing against his legs. He propped himself up on an elbow and continued to gently run his hand over her shoulder as he smiled warmly at her.

Peggy slowly woke up, "Good morning darling." She said with her eyes closed. She then slowly opened her eyes as she laid on her back, "Like what you see?" She said while she gently caressed his chin with her hand.

Steve chuckled, "That easy to notice huh?"

Peggy began to run her hand down his cheek, "I know you like to watch me while I sleep in the morning darling." She said with a warm smile.

"Sorry." Steve chuckled again, "If I wake up first, you are the first thing I see."

Peggy smiled, "Believe me Steve, I watch you too when I wake up first."

They both laughed. Steve leaned down and kissed her on the lips gently, "Then we're even. Well I'm okay with whatever you do when I'm asleep."

Peggy giggled, "Darling, how do you know what I do to you while your sleeping?" She gently bit her lip when she said that.

Steve shook his head in surprise, "Woah… Wake me up for it next time." Peggy laughed then cupped his face and brought him down so she could kiss him.

After a moment they broke the kiss and Steve hovered over her while smiling, "I love you Peggy."

Peggy smiled, "I love you too." She kissed him briefly again. "So, what's the plan for today?"

Steve went back to his side and propped himself up with his elbow again, "Well, we got today and Saturday and Sunday to do whatever we want until we have to go back to work."

Peggy smiled, "Hm." Steve looked at her curiously. She smiled, "Tonight, want to go dancing? It is a Friday night after all."

Steve smiled, "I'll love to." He laughed, "We never go dancing enough."

Peggy ran a gentle hand along his cheek, "Oh darling. We danced a whole lot during our honeymoon." She chuckled.

Steve laughed, "This is true. But, lets just say I enjoy dancing with you." He shrugged, "lets not let it go that easily."
Peggy smiled, "Never darling. Never." She brought to kiss her again.

Suddenly the phone rang interrupting the moment. Steve sighed as he kicked the sheets off, "I got it." He rolled over to the night stand on his side of the bed and answered the phone, "This is Rogers." Peggy got onto her side and cuddled up closely to her husband. She propped herself up on her elbow and wrapped an arm around him to caress his defined torso. Steve nodded at what was being said on the phone, "uh-huh. Yes sir." Peggy kissed his neck while he was on the phone. Steve nodded again, "Right away sir." He sighed then hung up the phone.

Peggy looked at him curiously, "Who was it darling?"

Steve shook his head, "The Colonel." He laid back on the bed. Peggy shifted so she can rest her head on his chest and play with his torso. He sighed, "The Colonel wants me to check into the base since I'm home. So I don't have to do it Monday."

"Are we still going dancing tonight?" Peggy asked curiously.

Steve chuckled, "Of course. I doubt they'll hold me up all day, hon."

Peggy propped herself up on her elbow and held her hair back as she leaned down and kissed him. She smiled, "Give the Colonel my love for me."

Steve nodded, "You got it." He groaned, "I wish I can stay in bed with you all morning…"

Peggy smiled, "me too."

With that Steve extracted himself from his wife's grasp and got off the bed. Peggy smiled brightly at him as he stretched for a moment. Steve turned around and placed his hands on the bed, "I'll see you later, honey." He kissed her on the lips briefly before he went into the bathroom to change.

Peggy smiled and laid back down on the bed. After a moment, she called out, "I think I might just check into the office while you're away."

Steve popped out of the bathroom without a shirt on, "Just don't be late." He laughed then disappeared into the bathroom again. Peggy laughed too as she stretched her arms on the bed. She smiled and thought to herself, their lives weren't boring and they certainly loved what they do. It's a wonderful life.

New York City

Peggy parked the dark blue four door Chevrolet Style Master in a small parking lot a short distance away from the SSR New York City building. Its still early in the morning, but this is New York City, so the streets and sidewalks were already crowded with cars and people commuting to work. She leaned over to the front passenger seat and grabbed her favorite brown purse and her red tilt slouch hat before she stepped out of the car. She wore a blue women's business suit jacket with a white lapel over a white women's business blouse, blue high heels, silk stockings, her usual make up, and of course red lip stick. She closed the door then put her hat on and placed her purse over her shoulder. She smiled happily at being back in the city for work. Not that she wasn't happy at home in the quiet suburbs of Scarsdale, she just missed being in the city too.

She walked over to the sidewalk where an older white gentlemen stood with a warm smile. He wore a white dress shirt, suspenders supporting grey dress pants, and black dress shoes. The man noticed Peggy, "Ah Mrs.Rogers! Wonderful to see you again." He said with a big smile.
Peggy stopped by his side and nodded at him, "Good morning Phil. Its Good to be back." Peggy knew the press probably published stories about her and Steve after they got married. It's the price she paid for being in love with a super hero. She just hoped the rush of news concerning them was finally over…

Phil smiled, "How is being married? Just get back from your honeymoon?"

"Oh its wonderful and Steve is great. We got back a while ago in fact." Peggy said happily.

Phil nodded at her with his normal warm smile, "I always wondered what Captain America is like in private."

"Nothing like that horrendous radio program, I can tell you that." Peggy said with a bit of seriousness.

Phil laughed, "I know that much." He noticed Peggy reaching into her purse, "Parking is fifteen cents." He said in a cheerful tone. Peggy handed him the change with a warm smile. Phil nodded, "Well, I won't keep you Mrs. Rogers. I know you're a busy woman. Have a good morning." He said with a smile.

Peggy nodded, "You too Phil." She said then walked away into the crowded sidewalks with her heels clicking on the concrete. Hard to say it but… lots of people know her face now.

As Peggy left, Phil nodded and whispered, "Captain America is a lucky man."

**SSR New York City Branch "Bell Co. Office"**

Rose sat at the end of the switchboard line as she did her daily routine of operating the phone lines and operating the secret elevator to the SSR New York City head quarters. Like the dozens of other women in the same switchboard room as her, they all were busy with managing the phone lines as part of the SSR cover. Rose finished transferring a call when she heard a familiar pair of heels walking toward her. She heard the other women in the switchboard room stop what they were doing and started to whisper amongst themselves. Rose turned her head to see what the commotion was and saw a very familiar person walking her way. Her face lit up with a bright smile. Peggy has returned to the SSR.

Peggy smiled confidently as she strolled deeper into the switchboard room. She saw the smiles and heard the whispers about her, and many of the women in the room quietly welcomed her back. She saw Rose beaming with happiness at the end of the switchboard line. Once Peggy got to the end, Rose spoke happily, "Peggy, Welcome back!"

Peggy smiled at her friend, "Thank you Rose. Its good to be back."

Rose laughed, "How was your honeymoon?"

"It was very romantic. Best trip I have ever taken." Peggy said excitedly. She shook her head, "I'm going to stop myself before I get too excited and bore you with stories of my honeymoon."

Rose laughed, "I'm quite interested in the details Peggy." She nodded to the other women happily listening in to their conversation, "I'm sure many of the girls here are also interested in the details of your romantic getaway with the one and only Captain America."

Peggy laughed, "I'll tell you all about it next time." She was still riding high on cloud nine from the wedding and their honeymoon, but she wanted to keep the "specific" parts they shared as private as possible. Out of respect for her husband and her, she didn't want to tell everyone every detail about
their honeymoon.

Rose smiled, "Next time." She opened the elevator for Peggy, "Have a good day… Mrs. Rogers." She said cheekily. Peggy smiled at her friend then stepped into the elevator. Before the doors closed Rose nodded at her, "I love that hat." Peggy smiled happily at Rose just as the doors closed.

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**Camp Lehigh**

Steve arrived on base a little later in the morning. He arrived ready for work in his Stars and Stripes combat uniform with his shield strapped to his back and his helmet strapped to his war belt. He parked his motorcycle in his usual spot in the usual base parking lot closest to the base Head Quarters building. He started to make his way to the Head Quarters building as he thought to himself on how good it was to be back. Unlike his wife, he didn't get too many knowing looks, smiles, or whispers as he walked. Most of the other soldiers and servicemen knew he got married because it was all over the news. Since the news published pictures of him and Peggy, many of his fellow servicemen saw Peggy as another beautiful doll, though the GI crush still remained with Rita Hayworth and Lauren Bacall. So if anyone was whispering about Steve's return it would be the civilian men and women on base.

He entered the head quarters building and greeted the civilian secretary at the desk near the front door, "Good morning Lucy." He said with a smile.

Lucy in a grey business suit with a white women's business blouse, stopped what she was doing at her desk, "Captain Rogers!" She yelled in surprise. The other soldiers and staff inside the building stopped what they were doing in surprise.

Steve chuckled. "How are you doing Lucy?"

Suddenly there was a roar of congratulations from everyone in the room congratulating Steve on getting married. Everyone who wasn't at the wedding gave their congratulations and regards now since he's back. An Army Captain in his service uniform yelled above the crowd and smiled at Steve, "Congratulations sir! Welcome home!" Steve nodded in a silent thank you to everyone.

Lucy chuckled, "Welcome home Steve and congratulations."

"Thanks." Steve said modestly. Soon the applause and greetings died down and everyone returned back to their business to carry out their work. Steve nodded to the Colonel's door, "Is the Colonel in? He called earlier."

Lucy nodded, "Yeah, he's expecting you and I believe Howard Stark is in there as well."

Steve gently knocked on her desk, "Got it. Thanks." He then turned and walked down the hall to the Colonel's office.

Lucy watched him walk away and she whispered to herself, "That Margaret Carter is a lucky woman. That's a lot of man right there…" She hummed in content as she went back to her work. On her desk next to her type writer is an old newspaper from a few weeks ago with pictures of Steve and Peggy under the headlines, **CAPTAIN AMERICA MARRIES LONGTIME ALLY AND LOVER MARGARET CARTER.**

Steve knocked on the Colonel's door then heard the Colonel call out, "Enter!" Steve opened the door and stepped in. He saw Colonel Phillips sitting at his desk wearing his service uniform and Howard Stark in a grey fancy suit sitting at one of the chairs in front of the desk. Upon hearing the door open
the two men both looked to see who it was.

Phillips smiled upon seeing Steve, "Steve! Jesus, you look like hell." He said jokingly. He stood up to greet Steve.

Steve chuckled, "Thanks Colonel."

Howard stood up and greeted his friend, "Look what the cat dragged in." he said with a friendly smile.

Phillips walked up to Steve and shook his hand, "Welcome back. How's our Mrs. Margaret Rogers?"

Steve chuckled, "Oh, she's doing great!" He gave a happy sigh, "She's perfect." He nodded, "Oh, Peggy gives you her love."

Phillips laughed, "That's great!" He gave a warm smile, "Married life looks like its hell for you." He again said jokingly.

Howard laughed, "How was the honeymoon? Hope the resort and island lived up to your expectations."

Steve chuckled, "Stark, I'm not rich like you so I never experienced anything like that… but to answer your question the island was fantastic! The most perfect honeymoon anyone can ask for." He nodded, "You don't have to keep spending money on us anymore Stark. We're even."

Stark shook his head and said seriously, "We're far from even. You and her saved my life, and that's priceless." He nodded, "remember, if you need anything… let me know."

Steve smiled, "Peggy did all the work…” He nodded and spoke calmly, "but I got all I need. Thanks."

Phillips nodded, "Now, lets talk about why I had to call you while you are still on leave." He nodded at Howard, "Had to call you because Mr. Stark is leaving for West Berlin on Sunday. He's meeting up with cleared former Nazi scientists willing to work with us." He walked over to his desk and sat down at his chair, "Unfortunately we're not exactly in complete peace. Your brush with the Winter Soldier should be proof enough."

Steve stepped closer to the desk, "The SSR told you."

"Exactly. Believe it or not, we're still at war. No one wants to admit it, but our way of life is under attack from the communists. Specifically the Soviet Union. This is not being waged by simply controlling the battlefield but waged through an arms race. Who ever has the better atomic bomb and has more of it will control the fate of the world. Naturally we can't let it be the Soviets." Phillips sighed, "Since the end of the war, the Soviet Union has grown considerably in territory and military strength. They are spreading their influence around the world and we can't let that happen. The Soviets are no longer allies, and they made that very clear…they are now our undeclared enemies." He shook his head, "That being said, the SSR's focus will be information, weapon development, and the prevention of Soviet action… and Stark is now back in the fold."

Steve didn't like the sound of where this was going. But he's a soldier and this is his job, "What do you need from me?"

Phillips pulled out a large file and placed it on his desk, "I'm getting to that. Anyway, your commando team is either patriotic or bored because they all reenlisted to continue serving with you."
Steve nodded, "A little bit of both sir."

Phillips shrugged, "Though you probably won't see them today because they are on a ninety-six-hour liberty pass." He nodded, "Whatever the case, you're no longer attached to the regular Army… You and your team are now under direct authority of the Strategic Science Reserve for the time being. Your missions, when they come up, will include direct actions, counter intelligence, sabotage, and requisition." He leaned on his desk, "You're still in the Army, but your orders will come from the SSR."

Steve nodded, "Got it sir. But, what do you mean by 'for the time being'?"

"That's unfortunately need to know." Phillips sighed, "What I can tell you is that we're in the process of creating a new government security branch. But that will take some time…” He chuckled, "Now. To tell you why you're here…"

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**SSR New York City Branch "Bell Co. Office"**

Peggy stepped off the elevator and walked confidently in the familiar SSR office. Her high heels clicked with each step she took, and everyone she passed stopped and stared at her out of surprise and awe. She became very respected after her work and effort during the conclusion of the Stark case. No one saw her as second rate, now they saw her as equal though their acceptance wasn't her goal. Peggy was half way to her desk when she heard Thompson call her name, "Carter!"

Peggy turned around and smiled a genuine smile at Thompson, "It's Rogers now, Jack."

Thompson quickly walked to Peggy and stopped by her side, "Sorry my mistake." He chuckled, "Rogers then." He wore a grey suit with a black tie, a white collared dress shirt, and grey dress shoes.

Peggy smiled and nodded, "I should probably call you chief then right?"

Thompson shook his head, "Not anymore. I gave up that position shortly after you left for your honeymoon." Peggy realized he voluntarily gave up that position just by his tone of voice.

Peggy nodded, "Then I suppose you can get used to calling me Peggy now. No need to stand on formalities since we're even."

Thompson stuck his hands in his pocket, "Sounds good…Peggy. Don't slug me but…"

Peggy leaned on one hip and raised a single eyebrow, "You're not going to ask me why I'm not staying home and being a housewife are you?"

Thompson shook his head, "Didn't even cross my mind." He chuckled, "I wanted to know why you're here right now instead of Monday?"

"Aw did you miss me Jack? That's so sweet." Peggy said cheekily.

Thompson shook his head, "Don't get your hopes up kid."

Peggy nodded, "Truthfully. Steve was called back to base for something important, so I came here just to check in."

Thompson nodded, "Alright then. Probably check in with our new chief, he'd be happy to see you." He said then walked off to his desk.
Peggy turned to him, "Who's the new chief."

"You'll see, Peggy. You'll see." Thompson sat down at his chair.

Peggy shook her head then walked to her desk at the far side of the room just in front of the large SSR seal on the wall. She placed her purse and her red tilt hat on her desk then made her way to the chief's office. Right as she reached the office door the door swung open, and she was surprised at who the new Chief is. Daniel Sousa, wearing a beige suit with a matching beige vest, dark red tie, and beige shoes, greeted Peggy with a smile, "Peggy. I thought that was you." He signaled her to come in, "Come on in." He left the door open and limped his way back to his desk with his cane in one hand.

Peggy smiled then closed the door as she entered, "Hello, Chief."

Sousa slowly sat down at his desk then signaled for Peggy to sit, "Come, sit." He said generously. Peggy held her friendly smile as she sat down on one of the chairs in front of the desk. She's quite happy to see her good friend again and the other person who believed in her. Sousa nodded, "Welcome back. I wasn't expecting you to be back till Monday. Your honeymoon go okay?"

Peggy crossed one leg over the other and leaned forward, "It was perfect. Our getaway was so beautiful, and Steve is absolutely perfect. Nothing dull about it." She said excitedly.

Sousa nodded, "I heard you encountered the two rookie SSR agents tailing you."

Peggy leaned back, "Yes, I did. I saw them almost immediately… though I'd appreciate it if they didn't bug our room. They heard more than enough…"

"Sorry Peggy. The men on the hill wanted to be sure you two had proper security, super soldier or not. They see Captain Rogers as a very valuable asset." Sousa sighed, "Didn't make much of a difference since you two encountered the Winter Soldier."

Peggy nodded, "Yes, I was about to bring that up."

"I don't have much to go on other than the fact that his goal consists of eliminating Captain Rogers." Sousa shook his head, "We don't know where to find him or how to predict his movements. He disappears just as quickly as he appears…" He sighed, "Is that why you came in early?"

Peggy nodded, "Yeah it was…"

Sousa sighed, "I'm sorry Peggy, but we just don't know how to find him." He gave a friendly smile, "Hope you two still enjoyed your honeymoon even with all this interference."

Peggy smiled, "We did. Other than the tailing, listening devices, and the Soviet assassin, we still made the best of it. Perfect getaway still."

Sousa nodded, "That's good."

Peggy smiled, "How are you and Angie doing? I haven't spoken to her yet." Sousa shook his head and blushed brightly. Peggy laughed, "What is it Daniel?"

Sousa chuckled, "Nothing. We're doing great." He nodded, "I suppose I never said thank you for introducing us."

Peggy chuckled, "Don't worry about it. I'm happy for you two."
Sousa smiled nodded as he took out a large folder from his desk, "Since you're here. Got a new job for you."

"It isn't filing is it?" Peggy reflexively asked.

Sousa shook his head, "You deserve more than that Peggy. Come on." He placed the folder on his desk then leaned forward.

Peggy rose a brow, "What is it then?"

"This has never been done. I'm now naming you a senior field agent effective immediately." He slowly stood up and held out his hand, "Congratulations Agent…Rogers." He had to pause and remember the name change. Peggy was caught off guard with the promotion she just received. She looked up at Sousa and he simply smiled and nodded at her. She slowly stood up and shook his hand. Sousa smiled, "The SSR needs your expertise and you have the most experience in this line of work. Its right that this position goes to you… And in my experience I don't want to stand in your way for this." They both laughed.

Peggy nodded, "So what does my job entail?"

Sousa opened the folder and took out three files and placed them side by side at the end of his desk so Peggy can see, "First, this is your team. Agents Thompson, Ramirez, and Li. Your job is espionage and everything that goes with it. You don't have to always operate in a group, the team is here so you can broaden your reach during cases or missions." He sighed, "Its already clear that we're in a match with the Soviet Union. Our encounters with the Winder Soldier and Leviathan should be enough evidence. Your missions will be against them and to safe guard our country."

Peggy nodded, "You can count on me." She smiled, "Chief."

Sousa nodded, "I got nothing for you right now, but your team is in the office right now so don't forget to say hello before you go back home." Peggy nodded then turned for the door. Just as she was about to leave Sousa spoke, "Say hello to Captain Rogers for me."

Peggy nodded, "No problem, Daniel."

Peggy walked out of the office and was immediately greeted by her new team. Thompson had hands in his pockets, "Surprise." He said with a smile.

Ramirez wore a black suit and tie and Li wore a grey suit with a grey tie. Ramirez spoke first, "Welcome back Mrs. Rogers."

Li nodded, "Since we're a team…I'm glad you're leading us. I don't want to be standing in your way because I know what happens." He chuckled.

Peggy smiled, "Thank you gentlemen." She walked over to her desk with her new team following her.

Thompson chuckled, "We know you don't need a babysitter, so this..."

Peggy laughed, "I sure don't. I'm surprised you're going with this Jack."

"Lets just say I still owe you from our time in the Soviet Union. Someone needs to watch your back when Captain America isn't around."

Peggy smiled and sat down, "Good to know." She looked at Ramirez and Li, "You two okay with
this?"

Li nodded, "Perfectly."

Ramirez agreed, "Right behind you, Rogers" He said urgently. Peggy chuckled, she's still getting used to her new last name and she already knew Ramirez is a big fan of Captain America and the Howling Commandos. She was surprised he didn't ask for an autograph yet from Steve.

Thompson removed a hand from his pocket and dropped a congressional medal on Peggy's desk, "This is yours. I don't deserve it."

Peggy looked up, "Jack. This medal is yours." She picked it up and held it up to Thompson.

Thompson shook his head, "No its not. You were the one who solved the case and you were right all along." He spoke calmly, "Keep it. I insist… I shouldn't have taken the credit I'm sorry."

Peggy smiled, "Its quite alright Jack." She took his hand and placed the medal back in the palm of his hand, "I never wanted a medal in the first place." She nodded at him, "Just follow my lead."

Thompson nodded, "I'll follow you."

Li and Ramirez both responded at the same time, "Me too."

Peggy smiled up at Thompson, "Just don't be a total wanker all the time, Jack." Ramirez and Li did their best to suppress a laugh.

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**Camp Lehigh**

About two miles from the Head Quarters building, Colonel Phillips, Steve, and Stark got off their parked jeep on the side of a dirt road in front of the thick tree line to their right. Hidden in the tree line is a large concrete bunker under a large camouflage net. The trio started their walk toward the tree line. Phillips nodded to the trees, "The camouflaged bunker ahead of us houses top secret materials and weapons. Many of the weapons were designed by Stark."

Steve looked at Stark confused, "Peggy told me you destroyed all of your inventions."

Stark shook his head, "I destroyed the really bad ones. These are military grade weapons and toys for you and the commandos." He nodded confidently, "The important peace keeping stuff."

The Colonel nodded, "We need to stay ahead of the Soviets in every aspect. That's where you and the commandos combined with the SSR come in." He pointed to the bunker, "This is where we will give you and your team a little upgrade."

Steve nodded silently. He didn't quite know how to feel about the news he was told. The second world war is over and now suddenly he has to go fight an undeclared war. Its one thing to train like you are at war, and another to fight a war that has not been declared. He is unsure how this will unfold.

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**Steve & Margaret Rogers Residence, Scarsdale, NY**

Peggy returned home before Steve late in the afternoon. She spent most of the day getting better acquainted with her new team and when that was done she went to go grocery shopping. Once she arrived at home she immediately went to get ready for her Friday evening out with Steve. She went
up to their bedroom to get dressed and ready for a good evening with her husband. She got dressed in a beautiful form-fitting medium-sleeve red dress and red heels, the same red dress she wore in London when she first came to terms of being in love with Steve. She turned heads then and she will most likely turn heads now. She redid her make up and reapplied red lipstick to her lips then she made sure her brown elegant wavy hair rested perfectly on her shoulders. She was leaning against her vanity table in the bedroom when she heard the front door open and close. It had to be Steve. In fact it was when she heard Steve call out, "Honey, I'm home!"

Steve placed his shield by the door like he always did and walked slowly into his house. He heard a pair of heels clicking down the stairs causing him to look in the direction of the noise. He saw Peggy slowly walking down the steps while accenting the sway in her hips. His heart started to race. He has been with her for a while now and he still gets this way every time he sees her. Peggy stopped right in front of him and said with a gentle voice, "Hey darling."

Once Steve picked up his jaw off the ground he smiled, "Wow...Peggy...you look amazing..."

Peggy blushed, "Thank you darling." She gently yanked Steve toward her by his shield holster and planted a kiss on his lips. She broke the kiss and said with a heart melting smile, "Now get ready." She kissed him again, "So we can go dancing."

Steve smiled, "Yes ma'am." He kissed her briefly again then rushed up the stairs. He stopped halfway and turned around, "I love that dress." He said, then continued up the steps. Peggy blushed then went to go grab a few things from the console table.

In a black car parked on the side of the road a little ways from the house, sat two pale looking men wearing black suits and black ties. The man in the driver seat peered through his binoculars at the house and saw Steve in a nice black suit and tie walked out with Peggy to their car parked in front of their house. The driver put his binoculars down and looked to his partner, speaking in a Russian accent, "targets confirmed."

The man in the front passenger seat nodded, "Don't be hasty. Leave the man to him, we'll take care of Agent Margaret Carter when word arrives." After a moment of observing they saw the Rogers car pull away from the curb and drive past them. The man in the passenger seat nodded, "take us back. We'll report what we found."

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**Stork Club**

The sky is now the beginning of the night over the Eastern seaboard, and the sun has disappeared below the horizon. With that the city's nightlife now flourished colorfully and electrically. After parking the car in a close by parking lot to the club, Steve and Peggy walked arm in arm to the club. Peggy hand carried a small red wallet in her free hand as she had her arm linked with Steve's arm. As they neared the Stork Club awning which symbolized the entrance to the prestigious club, Peggy leaned into Steve, "You dress nicely in civilian attire, darling. Did I ever tell you that, darling?"

Steve smiled at his wife, "Not quite yet. But you did kiss me."

"Formal wear suits you very nice." Peggy tugged on his arm gently.

"If anyone looks at us tonight. I don't think its me they'll be lingering on, hon." Steve said softly. Peggy hummed in content.

They approached the well-dressed older gentleman doorman under the awning. The doorman smiled at the couples walking into the club then paused when he saw Steve and Peggy. He smiled and gave
a slight bow, "Ah. Mr. and Mrs. Rogers, welcome back to the Stork club. Hope you enjoy your evening."

Steve nodded, "Thank you." He and Peggy walked calmly into the high end club along with the other well dressed couples, and men and women. As they entered the energetic atmosphere struck them. The wonderful big band music playing resonated into their ears, smell of good food floated into their noses, and the beautiful cub décor pleased the sight. The club was busy as usual on another Friday night and the dance floor was as usual crowded with guests. Not even fully inside the club yet and Peggy was already turning heads as she walked with Steve. Both men and women stared at her, and some conversations stopped just to look at her. Her form fitting red dress made her stand out perfectly. In a way she wanted everyone to know who she's with. Steve smiled at his wife, "Turning heads again, Peggy. Can't say I blame them." He said as he walked to a table.

Peggy stopped him in his tracks and planted a gentle kiss on his lips. She chuckled, "Don't forget that there are people staring at you too." She smiled, "But they can't have you."

"That goes without saying." Steve leaned down and kissed her again. He tugged on her arm gently, "Come on. Let's get our table so we can dance."

Peggy smiled, "right behind you darling."

Once they got to their table, Peggy placed her wallet on her chair. They suddenly heard a very familiar song start playing from the band. Steve smiled, "Want to dance? They're playing our song."

Peggy smiled lovingly and made eye contact with Steve, "Don't have to ask darling." She took Steve's hand and they made the short walk to the dance floor without once breaking eye contact.

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Prelude to another encounter with the Winter Soldier hint, hint!

And introduction to Steve and Peggy's future in their line of work.
December 1946

It's now a very cold December and the entire country has shifted to holiday mode to celebrate the winter holidays. Thick but gentle snow fell on New York as the winter days progressed to the end of the year. The trees were naked with no leaves and covered with snow. Everything was blanketed with thick layers of snow and some layers of ice. Even the massive sprawling city was unable to escape the cold December weather. That is the winter everyone has come to expect. The air, day and night, is cold and frosty, but the holiday spirit makes everything cheerful in anticipation for the coming holidays. Although some days are gloomy and harsh, the holiday spirit for the most part makes everything less depressing.

It has been many loving and peaceful months of marriage for the Rogers, and although they haven't been married a year yet, they are looking forward to the rest of their days together. Together the couple has lightly decorated their beautiful home in Scarsdale, NY for Christmas. Long Christmas garlands wrapped around the railings on the porch, green Christmas reefs hung centered under the railings of the porch, and another green reef hung on the door. Inside the house they have a small Christmas tree lightly decorated in the family room near the windows. Steve and Peggy both ventured out early in late November and got a fresh cut Christmas tree into the house. After that they both decorated it as they ate cookies and listened to smooth music. Even though they both have very taxing and unique jobs, Steve and Peggy manage to keep romance alive and spend time together.

Since Steve and the Howling Commandos got attached to the SSR they now have the ability to operate domestically and overseas depending on what the SSR needs. This is the new clandestine post war National Security the Government sanctioned in order to effectively utilize Captain America. Steve and his Howling Commandos are now stationed in a SSR Field Office in the city ten blocks south of the SSR Bell Co. Offices. The new joint Army SSR venture is for the Commandos and Steve to be used as a domestic and oversees unit tasked with surveillance, secret direct action strikes, reconnaissance, and other dangerous combined military and espionage tasks. The US Government sanctioned this joint initiative to combat the growing concern of Soviet power and influence in the world. Since the wars' end, Communism has started to take a foot hold in many countries around the world. The fear of communism is starting to take a hold in many American minds, especially in the government. Peggy, her team, and the entire SSR's focus is on investigations, gathering intelligence, technology and weapons development, and anything to better the country against the new undeclared adversary.

Since the closure of the Stark case, the government and especially President Truman has started to fear Soviet agents entering the country to conduct espionage strikes like the one the SSR thwarted in New York City. With the limited information the SSR has on Leviathan, the President and congress fears a resurgence of Soviet agents. The SSR has been tasked to find more about the organization and see if they are still active in the United States. In New York City, Peggy and her team are taking the lead on the investigations.

December 24, 1946, Christmas Eve, New York City Warehouse District

Snow continued to gently fall in the cold New York City evening as the city still remained busy even
on Christmas Eve. The city was still crowded with hardworking men and women trying to get home to spend time with their families, or to buy that last minute gift for their significant other. But in the warehouse district the area was dark, quiet, empty, and gave out an eerie feeling. The streets were dimly lit with street lights vastly spaced from one another, and the sound of the cold breeze seemed to be the only sound one can hear in this area of the city.

A single plain grey open cargo bed 2.5 ton 6x6 truck slowly came down the road in the Warehouse district. The truck looked like a normal plain grey cargo truck driving down the road with no cargo in the dark. The truck turned its headlights off then slowly came to a stop on the side of the road across the street from a large warehouse. Suddenly three shadowy well armed men appeared out of the cargo bed and jumped off the sides and back onto the thin layer of snow covering the street and sidewalk. Then two men got out of the cab of the truck before quietly shutting the driver and passenger doors.

Dugan spoke up in his usual loud voice, "Holy shit it's freezing out here. Almost reminds me of winter in Europe…” He groaned, "Why are we doing this on Christmas Eve for God's sake.” He said as he hung by the engine of the truck. Joining him in the cold is Gabe Jones, James Montgomery Falsworth, Happy Sam Sawyer, and of course Captain Steve Rogers. Dugan was wearing all black like the rest of the commandos except he wore his favorite bowler hat instead of a black beanie everyone else wore. The commandos were well armed with Thompson submachine guns, but Dugan carried his favorite trench gun instead.

Sawyer sighed and whispered, "He's complaining and we had to ride in the back of the truck with the snow.”

From around the truck, Steve appeared in his Stars and Stripes combat uniform with his helmet on, his shield on his arm, and a pistol on his other free hand. He chuckled, "Noise discipline there Dugan. We have a job to do.”

James Montgomery Falsworth nodded, "It'll be a real shame if we get caught before we even enter the building again.”

Gabe sighed, "Yeah Dugan, you should just keep it down.”

Dugan groaned, "Fellas, admit that it's cold…”

Steve chuckled, "Make staying quiet a standing order, Dugan." Dugan sighed and nodded in defeat. Steve then quietly signaled his fire team of commandos to follow him quickly across the street. The team quickly dashed across the street then took their position against the wall of the target warehouse. Steve whispered, "Right. As you know Peggy and Thompson said that this crime syndicate led by..."

Gabe whispered, "Tom Dempsey, sir.”

"Thanks. Anyway, as you know Peggy and Thompson have discovered a paper trail of this crime syndicate being affiliated with Leviathan." Steve scanned the street their on then continued to speak softly, "The investigation they conducted shows that Dempsey and his thugs have been working with Leviathan since Stark went missing originally. But the previous four buildings we raided produced nothing solid." He nodded, "That's why we're here. Peggy and her team pinpointed this warehouse is their major hub, so we're going to raid this place and gather further intel on anything concerning Leviathan or the Soviets.”

James whispered, "What if Dempsey is in here?"
Steve looked at the large warehouse door next to them, "Take him alive for questioning."

Gabe nodded, "Got it."

James nodded as well, "Right."

Steve looked at Dugan who just nodded quietly in acknowledgement. Steve sighed, "Smart ass."
The team chuckled. Steve nodded, "Get ready." He moved to the large double warehouse door so he could smash the lock. The commandos moved and positioned themselves against the doors with two on each side of Steve, so they could open the doors once the lock was broken.

Once everyone was set, Steve smashed the lock and the commandos quickly pulled open the large doors. Steve put his shield up and pointed his pistol ahead of him as he began to slowly walk in. The commandos quickly took position around Steve in a V-shape with two on each side of him. The commandos were relatively protected by Steve's shield as they slowly entered the warehouse. The warehouse had a single large white truck with a trailer centered in front of the door, and it was surrounded by thousands of wood crates stacked on top of each other all the way to the other end of the warehouse. But as soon as the group took three steps into the warehouse, the building erupted with automatic weapons fire from in front of them. The commandos returned fire and hugged close to Steve so they could use his shield as mobile cover. Steve fired off his pistol at the thugs popping out around the white truck as the commandos fired on the thugs firing from the stacks of crates. Bullets dinged and ricocheted in every direction from the hundreds of rounds the thugs shot at Steve's shield.

Steve yelled, "Spread out and take cover! Teams of two!"

James, "Right!" He and Gabe broke off to the right as Dugan and Happy Sam broke to the left.

Steve ran ahead around the truck and holstered his pistol as he ran. He rapidly closed the distance with the thugs behind the truck. A thug in a white shirt and overalls with a submachine gun popped out from behind the truck to take a shot at Steve, but he was unaware at how close Steve actually was. Steve leaned forward as he sprinted with his shield covering his face when he collided with the thug. The thug went flying off his feet into a stack of crates behind him. The thugs near by quickly tried to retaliate, but Steve threw his shield at them before anything could happen. Immediately after throwing his shield, Steve got engaged in a hand-to-hand fight with four burly men. The shield rocketed into the jaw of a thug then ricocheted to hit one after another. The shield hit four thugs in the face before tumbling back to Steve. He caught his shield by the rim then quickly used it as a weapon once again against the thugs he was tangled with.

A thug yelled in an Irish accent, "Shit! That's Captain America!"

Another thug in a lighter Irish accent yelled back, "You think?"

Dugan reloaded his trench gun, "Lets get back in the fight! Cap is taking all the fun!"

Happy Sam Sawyer responded, "Thought Cap said being quiet was a standing order."

Gabe chuckled, "Lets go!" He stood up then charged around the crate to the truck where Steve was. James stood up and followed. Dugan and Happy Sam did the same thing on their end.

The Commandos returned by Steve's side and provided automatic weapons fire at the thugs around them and suppressed the ones behind crates. After a few moments, the thugs stopped shooting back as they started to run away to the far warehouse door.

Dugan chuckled as he lowered his weapon, "For a tough crime syndicate, they sure are running after
a few minutes of shooting."

Steve saw something strange under a dead body of a thug. He slowly kicked over the body and saw a Soviet made submachine gun, "These thugs have Soviet made PPSh-41s…"

James pointed down the large open path in front of them to the far side of the warehouse, "That's Tom Dempsey!" Steve turned and saw in the distance a very well dressed man in a black expensive suit holding a very shiny silver .45 pistol.

Tom Dempsey yelled in a thick Irish accent, "lets get outta here boys!" He turned and ran with his thugs.

Gabe brought his weapon up but Steve stopped him. Steve responded calmly, "let him go." He looked down at the Soviet made submachine gun at his feet, "We got what we need." He looked back up, "Spread out and find anything more that ties these guys to Leviathan. I have a gut feeling that we'll find something big here."

Dugan nodded, "You got it Cap." With that they broke apart and searched the warehouse.

After a long moment of searching, Gabe called out to the team, "Found something big! I'm in the main office" Steve strapped his shield to his back as he and the team converged to his location at main office on the far right corner of the warehouse.

Steve entered the office followed by Dugan, James, and Sawyer. He nodded, "What do you got?" The office looked like any other warehouse office. Two cluttered desks with office material on it, one facing the wall with a bulletin board with papers on it and the other facing the window of the office, and the office had four tall grey filing cabinets on the far corner next to the desk.

Gabe was sitting at the desk facing the wall, he held up a stack of papers, "Looks like documents from Leviathan but I think its in code... or the Russians have terrible English."

Dugan nodded, "Probably both." James chuckled.

Gabe stood up and revealed to everyone a fully assembled remote typewriter. The remote typewriter consisted of a black Royal KMM typewriter, a fake fountain pen as an antenna, and a fake pack of cigarettes as a receiver to hold the antenna. A different model from the one the SSR picked up a while back. Gabe nodded, "Does this look familiar."

Steve nodded, "Yeah… a remote typewriter used by Leviathan operatives." He nodded, "Good work Gabe. We got everything we need. Leviathan is back and they are operating in the United States… and it looks like they are using the criminal underworld to move around."

Gabe nodded, "This isn't all." He went over to the file cabinets and pulled out a black briefcase tucked between the wall and the far filing cabinet. He put it on the desk he was sitting at and opened it to reveal a large sum of money.

James nodded, "This could be from his other crime dealings."

Steve responded calmly, "Whatever it is, we got him aiding foreign agents in the country. The paper trail Peggy had wasn't enough, but now we got solid evidence here. Call it in Gabe."

Gabe nodded, "Right." He got on the phone to dial the SSR.

Steve looked at his watch and sighed. Its Christmas Eve and he's working late and not at home with his wife. Peggy did send him and the Commandos here, but he still felt guilty for being out so late on
Christmas Eve.

Dugan spoke softly, "Thinking of Peggy?" Steve nodded silently then lowered his hand.

James nudged Steve gently, "We got it from here Cap. We'll wait for the SSR to show up."

Steve chuckled, "Don't worry fellas. Peggy will understand, besides she sent us here in the first place."

Dugan shrugged, "I think she wanted us to do the raid in the afternoon though…"

Sawyer shook his head, "Why would we do the raid in the afternoon when the sun is still out and there are hundreds of people here…"

Steve chuckled, "Sawyer has a point."

Dugan shrugged again, "You got her a Christmas gift right?" Steve just looked at Dugan with a fake angry look. Sawyer wacked Dugan in the head, "Ow. What was that for?" Dugan replied.

Steve smiled, "Thanks Sam." Sawyer nodded in acknowledgement.

Gabe hung up the phone, "SSR Agents will be here in five minutes."

Steve nodded, "Good. Leave everything in place for the Agents to document it all." He looked at his team, "Another successful raid."

Dugan sighed, "And I thought we fought in Europe to prevent war from coming here."

Steve nodded, "We're doing things like this to ensure war will never come here." He couldn't help but feel a cold chill go down his spine when he said that. Something bad is coming, but he didn't know what it was.

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**Steve & Margaret Rogers Residence, Scarsdale, NY**

In the family room, the fire crackled softly in the fireplace while it warmed the dim interior of the house. The fire gave a pleasant feeling that one could almost forget the cold snowy atmosphere outside. The Christmas tree by the windows glowed elegantly from the flickering light the fire provided. A few wrapped gifts remained isolated under the tree, to only be disturbed on Christmas day. The dark and snowy outside was a distant place from the warm and beautifully decorated inside of the house.

Peggy had her elegant wavy brown hair down to her shoulders, and she wore her pink collared and cuffed, black robe over her pink V-neck knee height night gown. She sat quietly on the couch with one leg crossed over the other as she read a book while waiting patiently for Steve to come home. She had a small smile on her face from the book and the warmth the pleasant fire provided her. It was a very quiet evening in the house. After she got home from work, she changed to something more comfortable, put on some music, then went to cook dinner. Knowing Steve would be out late, she ate without him but left his food on the table for him. Suddenly she heard a very familiar motorcycle pull up by the house causing her to lower her book with a smile. Peggy marked her book with her bookmark then placed it on the end table next to the couch. She quickly stood up and walked to the kitchen to fetch something for Steve.

Steve slowly walked the snow covered path to the front door of his house. His shield hung on his back and his blue helmet hung on his right hip attached to his war belt. The light snow softly
crunched under his boots as he walked the path to his home. He sighed, he couldn't wait to be finally home with his wife. It was already late in the night and he hoped Peggy wasn't too mad at him for being late... let alone miss dinner. He chuckled, she shouldn't be because she was the one who sent them to the warehouse in the first place. He walked up the steps to the front porch then stomped his feet on the door mat before unlocking the door. He opened the door and smiled as he felt the warmth basking over him. Steve quickly closed the door and happily called out, "Honey, I'm home!" He chuckled to himself. He was still pretty astonished that he's married to Peggy and that he uses the word "honey" a lot toward her. Years before he got the super soldier serum he would dream of a life like this.

Steve removed his shield from his back then placed it down at its spot by the front door, then removed his helmet from his belt and placed it on the console table. He ran a hand through his hair and wondered if Peggy went to sleep. He walked into the family room and sighed in relief as he absorbed the warmth of the fireplace. Peggy appeared from the kitchen with a smile and a hand behind her back, "Hey darling."

Steve smiled at his wife, "Hey." He shook his head as he rubbed the back of his neck, "Sorry, I came home late."

Peggy smiled, "Don't apologize, Steve. It's for the greater good." She laughed lightly, "And, I was the one who sent you there in the first place."

Steve walked over to Peggy and wrapped his arms around her waist, "Yeah. And it was worth it. We got some good stuff there."

Peggy broke a wide smile as she shook her head, "I don't want to talk about work when we're home like this." She wrapped her free hand around Steve and brought each other closer. They both leaned forward and kissed each other tenderly on the lips.

After a moment Steve broke the kiss and nodded, "What's behind your back, Peggy?"

Peggy shrugged, "Oh it's a little something for you darling." She kissed his lips again, "Let's go to the couch."

Steve laughed, "Going to make me wait, aren't you?"

Peggy pushed him gently, "Let's go darling." They made their way to the couch then sat next to each other.

Steve patted her lap gently, "So, what's behind your back?"

Peggy smiled, "I know it's still Christmas Eve, but I got excited." She removed her hand from behind her back to show the small scarlet red box in her hand. She handed Steve the box with a loving smile, "Merry Christmas, my darling."

Steve smiled and gently took the box, "Wow. Thank you Peggy." He laughed lightly, "Want your special Christmas gift right now then?"

Peggy shrugged, "If you want." She chuckled, "Open it, Steve." She said excitedly.

Steve gasped, "Oh. I thought the present was the box. It's a very nice box by the way"

Peggy laughed, "Just open it darling." She said humorously.

Steve opened the box and saw a brilliant sterling silver bracelet. It was a little wider than other
bracelets of this nature but it looked absolutely stunning. He gently removed the bracelet and saw that it was engraved on the outside. The outside read, "Always and Forever with the Right Partner, My Darling." Steve smiled then looked at the inside and saw another engraving, "I love you-Margaret Carter Rogers" Steve looked at Peggy with a big smile and a loving look in his eyes, "This is...the best Christmas present I ever gotten in my life." He leaned into her and kissed her tenderly. He broke the kiss and whispered, "I love it." He kissed her again, "I love you." He hugged her tightly and she happily reciprocated the hug.

Peggy smiled, "I love you too." She leaned back then gently took the bracelet from him and gently slid it on his right wrist. She leaned forward and kissed him again, "Merry Christmas, darling."

Steve quickly decided on his next course of action. He smiled, "Hold that thought." He quickly got up and ran up stairs to get the single most important Christmas gift he bought her from their room. Peggy chuckled to herself as he left.

Peggy smiled while she quietly fiddled with her robe as she waited for her husband to return from their room. After a relatively long moment she heard Steve's heavy steps as he walked down the stairs. She turned to see him walk into the family room without the top of his uniform, so he was left wearing a tight white t-shirt and the bottom of his combat uniform and combat boots. She smiled affectionately while she admired Steve in his attire. His shirt gripped his torso in all the right places. Steve, being oblivious to her attention, chuckled as he walked to the couch, "So, I guess it's a Christmas of jewelry." He sat down next to Peggy and held out a small black flat box, "Merry Christmas, Mrs. Rogers." Peggy smiled as she gently took the box from his hand then gently opened the top. She gasped as she saw what it was. Steve smiled, "I know its simple and doesn't compare to this bracelet you gave me." He said as he held up his wrist with the silver bracelet attached.

Peggy put a hand over her open mouth as she admired the simple yet precious gift. In the box sat a miniature 1-inch in diameter metal Captain America shield on a US Army dog tag chain. The shield had the precise colors and even the look of wear and tear just like Steve's shield. She slowly took the necklace out and smiled, "Darling... I love it." She put it around her neck, "I don't care that its simple. Its precious."

Steve chuckled, "No one in the country has a necklace like this." He smiled, "Here's a little story why I'm giving this to you." He took her hand in his and looked deeply into her eyes, "Now you have my shield with you. Just a little something you can hold onto when we are away from each other." He laughed lightly, "I have the bracelet and now you have the shield."

Peggy smiled, "I'll wear it everyday." They smiled at each other for a quiet moment. Peggy whispered, "Come here." Steve leaned in closer, Peggy cupped his face as she gently brought Steve in a kiss. Steve leaned in and pressed her back against the arm rest as they deepened the kiss. Peggy broke the kiss and whispered, "Merry Christmas, Darling."

Steve smiled, "Merry Christmas, beautiful." He kissed her again as the fire crackled softly in the background.

This is the start of their first Christmas as a married couple, and it certainly won't be their last.

This is another chapter leading up to what is to come. Hope you enjoyed.

A little combat and a little fluff for this chapter.
1947

It's now early spring and the beginning of the month of March. Things have drastically changed since the victory of World War II. People earned more money, the economy was booming, and American industry was producing peacetime goods that made life great again without the feeling of war. But many Americans were not satisfied with the old ways of life since many people started to earn more pay, so they started to look for a better life. Millions of Americans started to move out of the big sprawling cities to buy newly built houses in the suburbs. With the end of the war and a bright future to look forward to, many families started to have babies. After many difficult years of economic struggle and war, people in all corners of the country felt the need for family and felt that security has finally come. But there was a dark shadow casted behind the bright progress of American Exceptionalism.

The Cold War started to heat up with the democratic United States and the Communist Soviet Union becoming more and more engaged in political, economic, and weapon development clashes. The increased rivalry started to take hold in the minds of some Americans, and with that fear started to anchor itself in a few people. Although the fear of Communism was still relatively minimal in citizens, the government took it differently and wanted more action to prevent Soviet espionage activities in country. For the past six or something months, Captain America and the Howling Commandos have been conducting raids on the criminal underworld throughout New York City and the Eastern Sea Board with almost no supervision and unlimited power. These raids are based off of intel the SSR gives them on crime rings that are suspected to be aiding Leviathan and other suspected Soviet agents. What Captain America does with the intel is up to him alone. The raids are far from secret and the press report each one and try to catch Captain America before he leaves the scene. Captain Steven Rogers has been getting more and more unneeded publicity…

Steve, in a white t-shirt and grey sweats, quietly leaned against the door frame of their bathroom with concerned eyes. He frowned with worry as he saw her take deep breaths while rubbing her stomach. "You okay, Peggy?" He slowly walked over to Peggy then squatted by her side and rubbed her back
Peggy opened her eyes and gave a reassuring smile to Steve, "I'm okay darling." She let out a small laugh, "Just some sort of stomach virus." She said reassuringly. She gently wiped the side of her mouth with her hand then said, "Can you get me water please?"

Steve gave a warm smile then stood up, grabbing a glass cup on the shelf and filling it with cold tap water. As he was about to squat beside her again, Peggy stood up and graciously took the cup from him to wash out her mouth several times. Then she walked around Steve so she could spit out the water in the sink. Steve started to rub her back gently once again, "You sure you're okay?"

Peggy spat out more water then nodded, "Yeah, I'm okay darling." She looked at him through the mirror with a loving smile, "Thank you for checking up on me. As always."

Steve smiled, "You've been puking your guts out for the past week. I'm worried." He chuckled, "Plus, I miss you in bed so…" he said jokingly.

Peggy giggled, "Thank you, darling. But, I think I'm okay."

Steve kissed her cheek, "You should probably see the doctor. Since it's been going on for this long."

Peggy shook her head, "I don't need to Steve."

"At least go to see if my cooking got you sick." He said with a smile.

Peggy laughed, "You cook way better than I do, Steve. I doubt it was your cooking. I'm sure it was mine." Leave it to Steve to always crack small jokes to make her feel better. It's the small things that matter.

Steve shook her head, "What if I said please?" He said with a raised eyebrow.

Peggy chuckled, "Fine. I'll go later in the morning." She shook her head.

"Great!" Steve said happily. "Want me to go with you?" He said courteously.

Peggy smiled, "I'm okay Ste…" She suddenly realized something, "Oh no…Oh bloody hell!" She yelled as she stomped her fist against the counter in frustration.

Steve started to rub her back again, "What's wrong, honey?"

Peggy shook her head, "My sister called last night before you came home."

"What's wrong?" Steve asked concerned. He knew of Peggy's family and her bad history with them. Needless to say, there was a reason why she didn't invite her family to their wedding, and the problem of distance from London to New York was not the main problem.

Peggy nodded, "She's in the city, and she wants me to meet up with her today." She sighed, "It's my day off and I'm supposed to meet up with Angie today." She groaned, "So I have to go to the doctors AND I have to meet my sister."

Steve nodded, "Well… I'm sure you can do all three." He chuckled, "You are a super woman with incredible abilities. I'm sure you can manage."

Peggy smiled and nudged him with her shoulder, "Charmer."

"I try." He smiled, "Wait, but I always thought you were in good terms with your sister. Why do you
not want to meet up with her?"

Peggy sighed, "Because, she's probably here to tell me that my parents are upset with me again, and
beg me to leave you and come home to London to work. You know…Because the war is over." She
smiled at him, "But they don't understand that my home is here. And my home is with you." She
scoffed at her statement, "Goodness…I sound like a teenage girl with a fling."

Steve smiled, "I never actually thought your parents would be like that…let alone hate me." He
shrugged, "Granted, I didn't ask them if I was allowed to marry you."

Peggy turned toward him and wrapped her arms around his neck, "Darling, were they the ones
getting married to you? No. So you didn't need their permission to marry me." She then kissed him
gently.

"You're still their little girl, Peggy." He sighed, "I don't want to argue… I just want to do what's
right, and mostly do right by you." He said softly.

Peggy kissed him again, "I know Steve. Always wanting to do the right thing…" She shook her
head with a smile, "that's one of the reasons why I love you."

"I do have my moments." Steve said causing them both to laugh.

Peggy then sighed and took a step back as she crossed her arms under her chest, "So, looks like I'm
going to head to the doctors, then meet with my sister, and then meet with Angie." She groaned in
frustration, "I should call and set all this up." She sighed again, "This was supposed to be my day
off." She complained again.

Steve smiled, "I tell you what. Since its so busy, how about you go to the doctors tomorrow instead,
so you can get this meeting with your sister out of the way so you can have some fun in the town
with Angie."

Peggy shook her head, "No darling, you're right that I should see a doctor. I don't want to get any
worse than I am right now."

Steve shrugged, "Then, how about I join you for that meeting with your sister? Since you're clearly
dreading it. Then when that's done, you can meet with Angie." He chuckled, "Its my day off too you
know."

Peggy smiled, "Really? Darling, I'm not going to force you to meet my family. I don't want to trouble
you with the Carter family problems." She shrugged, "I don't even know what we're going to talk
about."

Steve chuckled, "I don't mind. I never met your sister." He shrugged, "Plus if I go, I can give a good
first impression of us that she might like, then she'll tell your family back at home. Might clear the air
a bit."

Peggy smiled happily then hugged him tightly, "Then darling… I love it if you'll go. You can also
come with me to meet up with Angie. She loves seeing you."

Steve smiled and reciprocated the hug, "You sure?"

"I'm positive." Peggy said with a smile.

Steve smiled then swayed her side to side effortlessly. Suddenly the phone rang causing the couple to
shift and look out of the bathroom. Peggy sighed, "Please don't tell me it's the SSR line." Since Steve
and the commandos were attached to the SSR and Peggy got her team, the SSR given them a separate phone to be used for official government and agency business. The SSR phone is on Peggy's night stand while the normal phone is on Steve's.

Steve kissed her on the lips briefly then went to go check which phone it was, "I'll check." Peggy sighed briefly as she ran a hand through her wavy hair. She then turned on the sink to wash her face with a towel, her stomach calming down.

Steve found that the SSR phone was ringing so he quickly made his way to Peggy's night stand to answer it. "Rogers." He said the moment he picked up the phone.

Peggy leaned against the doorframe as she finished cleaning her face with a towel, "Darling?" She asked curiously.

Steve looked over at her, "It was Jim on the SSR line." He saw Peggy tense briefly. He continued plainly, "He intercepted a message from a recent target. I think its smart to swing by the Commandos really quick and check it out. Do you think you can drop me off on the way to the doctors?" He smiled and said reassuringly, "But I'm sure it'll be quick just to see the info they got, so I can still go with you to meet your sister and Angie." He saw Peggy relax in relief.

"No problem, darling." Peggy said with a smile and a little sigh of relief. She tossed the towel on the sink then looked back at her husband, "Then after I see the doctor, I'll pick you up at the Commando office?"

Steve smiled, "That's the plan."

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**Howling Commando, SSR Field Office New York City, New York**

The Howling Commando field office is hidden behind a SSR operated variety store under the name of "Downtown New York 5 &10". Much like the procedure room of Captain America, the field office is actually hidden behind an armored door disguised as a shelved wall in the supply room. Past the armored door is a long hall way, and at the start of the hallway are two desks facing inward on opposite sides of the door with two armed SSR agents keeping watch. Past the long hallway is a medium sized open room where the Commandos operate out of. The room has a long table at the center with chairs. Behind the head of the table is a chalk board next to a cork bulletin board. Against the left side of the room against the wall are three desks, one desk has two phones, the second desk has a military grade radio, and the third desk has a normal type writer and the recently captured Leviathan remote typewriter. On the right side of the room is the door to the armory and filing cabinets.

It was late in the morning when Peggy pulled the car over and stopped in front of the "Downtown New York 5 &10" store. She was dressed beautifully in a dark blue V-neck, short sleeve, knee length, flared skirt spring dress, matching heels, neutral make up with of course red lipstick, and her necklace of Steve's shield that she never takes off during the day. Peggy looked over at Steve who wore casual plain light blue long sleeve collared shirt, black dress pants, black shoes, and the silver bracelet that Peggy gave him and never comes off. Peggy smiled, "Pick you up when I'm done."

Steve smiled and looked over at her, "Thanks. You'll tell me whatever it is okay?"
Peggy smiled, "You know I will, darling." Steve smiled and leaned over and kissed her on the lips tenderly. Peggy smiled, "I love you."

"I love you too." With that Steve stepped out of the car and opened the rear passenger door. He grabbed his shield on the back seat then smiled at his wife, "See you later, Peggy."

Peggy smiled, "Bye, love." Right after Steve closed the door, Peggy slowly drove off down the busy road.

Steve smiled then made his way into the store. The small 5&10 cent store was dimly lit and the store was crowded with shelves of inexpensive household goods. The store was quiet and empty with no shoppers, so Steve made his way to the cashier to greet him. Steve nodded, "Good morning."

The middle aged male cashier in casual attire smiled at Steve, "Morning, sir. Say, do you know a gal named Sue?"

Steve nodded, "Yeah Mack, she said to meet around back."

The man nodded then pressed a button under the counter then said, "Good to see you, sir." He signaled Steve to go through the door way to the back room behind the counter. Steve nodded then calmly walked around the counter and entered the back room. In the back room, Steve walked over to the middle shelf where the secret door is located. After a brief moment of waiting the thick armored secret door slowly opened and revealed the Howling Commandos field office hallway. Steve smiled confidently then walked in.

The secret door slowly closed behind Steve as soon as he stepped all the way in. The two SSR agents in black suits stood up from their respective desks and greeted Steve with a nod, he responded with a courteous nod as he passed by. Steve then entered the main room, and saw Dugan behind the head of the table wearing a white long sleeve dress shirt, dark blue tie, black suit pants, and black dress shoes. He was staring at the leads on Leviathan on the cork bulletin board. Steve then noticed Jim at the table wearing a tan long sleeve dress shirt, dark green tie, brown dress pants, and matching brown dress shoes. He was sitting at the table hunched over dozens of papers. Steve smiled confidently at the two on duty commandos in the room, "Good morning, fellas" He leaned his shield against the wall by the entrance way.

Dugan turned around, "Morning, Cap. Sorry to interrupt your morning with Peggy."

Steve walked over to Dugan then shrugged, "No worries. She's feeling a little sick."

Dugan looked at Steve a little worried, "Everything okay?" He found the conversation about Peggy's health more important that the leads they had on Leviathan. All the commandos cared for Peggy, because of her history with them...that and because she's married to the Captain. She's unofficially part of the family.

Steve shrugged, "I hope so. She went to see the doctors after she dropped me off." He sighed, "So you said Jim intercepted a message?"

Jim called out to Steve while hunched over the table trying to decode an encrypted document, "Yeah I did, but I'm having decoding troubles."

Steve cocked his head confused, "Explain?"

Jim looked up and shrugged, "The magic thingy over there." He jerked his thumb toward the captured Leviathan remote typewriter, "Turned on and spat out this encrypted piece of paper."
Dugan nodded, "We called you the moment we got it, but we didn't know it was this heavily encrypted."

Jim shook his head, "I can't break it." He sighed, "We might need to get a cryptographer down here from the SSR."

Steve shook his head, "No, that's a waste of time, they won't know. But I know someone who does."

Jim looked confused, "Who?"

"Peggy."

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**Hospital**

Peggy sat on a chair in an examination room with her leg crossed over the other and her brown purse on her lap as she waited for her doctor to come in to tell her the news. She rubbed her belly unknowingly in a way to fight the nausea that seemed to be always popping up. She knew her body well, so she just got a feeling on what it was but she needed confirmation to be sure and she didn't want to rule out all the possibilities. The sound of her doctor coming into the room brought her back to reality.

The middle aged doctor with greying hair gave a warm smile to Peggy, "Okay, Mrs. Rogers I got my findings for you. Its safe to say that you don't have any intestinal problems, but I have a feeling that you already knew that."

Peggy stopped rubbing her belly then intertwined her fingers together and rested her hands on her lap. She gave a courteous nod with a warm smile, "Go ahead doctor."

The doctor nodded, "Based on what you told me and the tests I just ran." He took a deep breath, "You're pregnant Mrs. Rogers. Congratulations." He smiled warmly.

Peggy gasped and put a hand over her mouth. She surprised herself at how shocked she was, even though she had a gut feeling that she was pregnant. She leaned back in her chair and did her best to absorb what she just learned. She couldn't quite grasp it yet….

The doctor smiled happily again, "Congratulations, Mrs. Rogers." He repeated happily. He sensed that Peggy needed some time so he nodded to her, "Have a good day and give my regards to Captain Rogers for me and the kids. You know how much they admire him." He said with a friendly tone.

Peggy smiled nervously, "Thank you doctor." With that the doctor nodded again then left the room to see his other patients. Peggy put a hand over her lips again as she continued to absorb the news. She's pregnant… Even though she had a sneaking suspicion about it, she still couldn't exactly believe it. She's carrying her and Steve's child! She knew she wanted to start a family with Steve some day, but she didn't know it would happen this fast. They haven't even been married for a year yet. A million thoughts started to rush into her mind about this unplanned pregnancy and how it would affect her job. She works in the field of espionage and having a baby now might jeopardize her work. She just earned the respect of everyone in the SSR, what would being pregnant do to her job? Its true that she often thought about raising a family when she finally decides not to do field work somewhere down the line. She was worried that this was going to fast because both she and Steve haven't exactly settled down since Steve is still a soldier and she is an active spy. She started to think about Steve and what would he think about her being pregnant.
The thought of Steve soon calmed her down. Once she became calm, a small happy smile formed on her face as the news finally sunk in. She's going to me a mother and Steve is going to be a father, they are going to start a family together! Its a very happy thought. Her worries dissipated as happiness over took her. Yes, it wasn't planned and its very soon but she's rightfully happy about this. Her and Steve are starting a family! She had no doubt that Steve would be a good father and she will do her best to be a good mother. She chuckled, she was confident in her abilities to balance being a mother and a spy. She just hoped she won't be far from home… and she needed to show the men in the SSR that she can be a mother and a spy.

Howling Commando, SSR Field Office New York City, New York

Peggy stepped lively through the secret door and greeted the two SSR agents keeping post at the desks. When Peggy came by to brief the commandos on a new mission, the agents at the door would usually follow her with their eyes in places they shouldn't be staring at. She didn't like the behavior but she was kind of used to it. Look but don't touch, is the rule.

Peggy walked into the main Howling Commandos room and saw Steve, Dugan, and Jim standing in front of the cork board discussing something she couldn't quite hear. She noticed there were number of scattered papers all over the table. She raised an eyebrow, "Planning on going on a raid today, darling?"

Steve turned around the instant she spoke. Dugan turned and said energetically, "Oh, Hi Peggy!" He nodded at her, "You look nice today." He said mentioning her nice dress dark blue dress.

Peggy smiled, "Thank you, Timothy."

Jim burped, "Hey." He then smiled. Peggy chuckled and shook her head at their antics. The commandos minus Steve are like brothers she never had.

Steve smiled, "Hey honey." He rose a brow, "So, how did it go?"

Peggy waved her hand, "I'll tell you later, darling." She nervously smiled, "But I assure you… its nothing to worry about." She started to feel surprisingly nervous about telling him the news. She didn't quite know why she was feeling so nervous because Steve would be ecstatic about the news.

Steve nodded with a half smile. He was curious, but if she said its nothing to worry about then there's nothing to worry about. Dugan chirped, "We want to know!"

Peggy shook her head and laughed, "let Steve tell you when he finds out." Dugan looked at him with a begging glare causing Steve to shake his head. Peggy nodded to the table, "What is all this?"

Steve nodded to Jim, "Jim."

Jim walked over to the table and fumbled through the papers. Dugan chuckled, "Don't tell me you lost it there Jimbo."

After a minute of searching Jim found the encrypted piece of paper. He held it up, "The magic Leviathan thing over there spat out this encrypted piece of paper. We…meaning me, have been trying to decode it."

Dugan nodded to Steve, "Cap says you can decode it."
Peggy walked over to Jim and took the paper from him, "Let me give it a crack." She put the paper on the table then grabbed a pencil, "Got another clean piece of paper?" Jim took another second fumbling through the papers to find a clean one then handed it to Peggy. She nodded, "Thank you." Peggy started to diligently crack the encryption and wrote the non coded message on the clean piece of paper. Everyone including Steve walked over to her and looked over her shoulder to see what it was.

Dugan whispered, "What is it?"

Peggy chuckled, "It's a one time pad system with the original message written in Russian." This was pretty much déjà vu for her.

Jim sighed, "Great…its Russian. But at least we have the American super woman with the Russian Webster edition in her head." Peggy chuckled.

Steve asked, "What does it say?"

Peggy stopped writing, "It's a message to a man named Edward Martin detailing that the asset is in place and the time table is moved to 2:00pm…"

Dugan interrupted and looked at the clock on the wall, "That's in two hours."

Steve cocked his head to the side, "Where did I hear that name before?"

Jim nodded, "Edward Martin…is it the same Edward Martin who owns one of the richest banks in New York?"

Peggy continued to read the message, "Payment of $500,000 American will be delivered to Edward & Bell Financial." She nodded, "Looks pretty obvious that it's the Edward Martin."

Dugan looked at Steve, "Pick him up?"

Peggy stood straight, "I want to go." She said urgently.

Steve looked at her, "What about your sister and Angie later?"

"This is more important." Peggy said quickly. She nodded, "I'll call them and very least say we'll be late."

Steve nodded, "That it is." He nodded to the hallway, "We'll take the company car."

Jim looked to the phones, "Want me to recall the team?"

"It's too late for that." Steve said plainly. "Grab concealed weapons. Civilian attire will do. I'll bring the shield just in case."

Dugan smiled, "Great! We finally get to do a mission with Peggy!"

"Just don't blow it, you dumb ape." Peggy said humorously as she walked to the phones.

Dugan shook his head, "So obviously this is going to be a quiet snatch and grab. So… he obviously won't let us just go right up and talk to him. We need to get him alone."

Steve smiled, "I got a suggestion for that."

Jim cocked his head to the side, "What if this is a trap. We have their type writer thing, and our raid a
few months back was far from discrete."

Dugan nodded, "He's right, Cap."

Steve nodded, "I hear you. We should check it out anyway, we'll be careful." He changed the plan, "Bring extra ammo just in case."

Edward & Bell Financial Main Building Downtown New York City

Steve wore a dark pair of aviator sun glasses at an outdoor shaded café table with Jim and Dugan sitting beside him. The trio observed the target building that was across the busy street from their vantage point by a busy café. They could see the tall entrance of the luxurious building and see everyone who goes in and out of the building. Through the crowds of people on their side of the street and the opposite side of the street they could see Peggy waiting on the sidewalk for Edward Martin to come out of the building.

Dugan nodded at Peggy across the street, "She sure stands out in the crowd." He said complimenting her overall physical appearance.

Steve chuckled, "She sure does… she always does."

Jim looked at both of them, "Are we sure this will work?" He shrugged, "She's not much of a public figure but many people know what she looks like just because she's married to you Cap. She's not wearing a wig or anything else."

Steve chuckled, "Trust her Jim. She uses her looks as a weapon all the time…especially to me."

Dugan chuckled, "Agent Peggy Rogers. The one who can take down Captain America." The trio laughed to themselves.

Suddenly Jim sat straighter, "Show time, Cap." He said nodding toward the target building.

The trio spotted the well dressed Edward Martin walking out of the building with his entourage of body guards and aides. Edward Martin is a middle aged man with greying hair but walked with a sense of youthfulness and a warm smile. He dressed nicely in a fancy white suit, black tie, and shiny black shoes while his entourage wore all black suits and black ties. If it wasn't for his entourage of aides and body guards, he would look very approachable.

Steve stood up, "Lets go." Dugan and Jim followed suite.

Peggy smiled confidently as she fixed her focus on the target. Her job is to get him alone so they can transport him so they could question him in private. She walked toward Edward Martin confidently while accenting the sway in her hips as her heels clicked along the concrete sidewalk.

As she got closer to her target one of his body guards stepped in front of her and said in a deep voice, "Stand clear ma'am."

Edward Martin stopped and looked over at her and the body guard, "What is Hank?"

The tall body guard didn't take his eyes off of Peggy, "some woman, sir."

Martin got a better look at Peggy, and spoke sternly to the guard, "You dope! that's Mrs. Rogers!"
Captain America's wife." He looked at Peggy with a friendly gaze, "isn't it?" He noticed the Captain America shield necklace around her neck. It was a dead give away for who she is.

Peggy smiled, "Yes, I am."

"I must say, Captain America knows how to pick them. You look very radiant, Mrs. Rogers." Martin said confidently while ogling over physical appearance.

"Why thank you, Mr. Martin."

"Ed, please." He said with a cheeky smile. He put a hand in his pocket, "What can I do for you, Mrs. Rogers."

Peggy smiled, "May I speak to you in private? It's a rather embarrassing topic and the fewer ears the better."

Martin nodded, "Anything for a beautiful doll."

Peggy cocked her head to the side and smiled, "How sweet." Peggy turned and walked toward a distant tree by the edge sidewalk, accenting the sway in her hips as she walked. She knew right away that Ed thought of himself as a womanizer just by the tone of his voice and how he looked at her. She knew that his eyes were watching a very particular part of her body as she walked away.

Martin nodded to his guards and aides, "Stay here. She's fine."

One of the guards stepped forward, "Sir, we're on a time table." He said urgently.

Martin chuckled, "Relax, it'll be quick." He said with a pleased smile. He excitedly followed Peggy to the tree.

Once Edward Martin got to Peggy under the tree, Peggy rose a brow, "Could you stop staring at my butt."

He shook his head in confusion, "What are you talking about?"

"You play boys are all the same." Peggy chuckled, "You and Stark are so similar. I saw where you're eyes were."

"Don't compare me to Stark!" He said offended with the comment.

Peggy smirked and continued on with her task, "There's a black four door car about fifty yards behind me. We are going for a little ride."

"Hm. I think you need to buy me dinner first." Martin said confidently.

Peggy sighed, "There are three men who work with me walking toward you, and if you don't do as I say, they will be forced to ruin that very fancy suit."

Martin scoffed at her words, "Please, my body guards can take three men." He said confidently and not turning around to look.

"You should probably look because one of them is my husband." Peggy said confidently. "Just wait when I say you were staring at my chest and bum." She chuckled. He turned around slowly and saw Steve, Dugan, and Jim splitting the crowds of people as they walked toward him. Martin gulped. Peggy smiled, "Call for your guards and I'm going to castrate you with my high heel." Martin started to sweat bullets.
After a short drive to a random skyscraper in the city, the group took Edward Martin to the roof for a private conversation. On the roof Steve kicked Edward Martin through the door of the roof. Martin rolled on the floor and grunted from the intense pain in his gut from the kick. He slowly stood up as he continued to groan in pain. Steve spoke coldly, "We got a message from Leviathan with your name on it."

"What and who is Leviathan?" Martin said in pain as he tried lying.

Dugan sighed, "Why can't they ever come clean with us?"

Jim shook his head, "Rich people are surprisingly stupid…" He sighed, "Makes me wonder how they became rich in the first place."

Peggy chuckled, "Focus you, gorillas."

Steve picked up Martin by the suit jacket effortlessly, "Don't lie to me. Who's the asset and what's the time table about." Peggy looked away and enjoyed the view of the New York City skyline for a moment.

Martin smiled smugly, "Is this supposed to insinuate that you're going to torture me? Because this really isn't your style Captain."

Steve put him down and said plainly, "No its not. But, I know someone who will have fun with it." Martin gave a confused look as Steve stepped aside.

Before Martin knew it, Peggy's high heel smashed under his jaw and sent him falling onto his back with a thud. Jim leaned over to Dugan and whispered, "I hope to never piss off Peggy."

Dugan chuckled, "You just figured that out now?"

Peggy smiled back at them, "I can still hear you two."

Dugan cleared his throat, "Uh. I meant to say, for his sake I hope he didn't look up your skirt when you kicked him in the chin like that."

Peggy chuckled, "Speaking of!" She looked down at Martin who was slowly coming back to the world, "Mr. Edward Martin enjoyed staring at my chest and butt earlier."

Steve raised an eyebrow, "Really?" He said with a growing smile, "Have fun with him then, hon."

Dugan laughed, "This little guy is asking for it."

Peggy stepped closer and smashed her heel down on the concrete in between Martin's legs just barely missing his crotch. Martin flinched and sat up in pain, "Okay, okay! I'll talk!"

Dugan laughed, "Wow. That was easy."

Steve chuckled, "I sure hope so. Mrs. Rogers here will probably gut you if you don't." He said to Martin.

Martin waved his hand, "Okay! The asset is the Winter Soldier." He spoke quickly.

Peggy put her hands on her hips and glared at him, "What is he doing here?"
Martin laughed, "To complete his mission." Peggy put her heel on his crotch and pressed down once again. Martin screamed in pain, "Alright! Captain Rogers is the target!"

Peggy released her heel from his crotch, "What?" She said in shock. Everyone looked confused and shocked.

Martin grunted, "I'm a dead man." He sighed in defeat, "Captain Rogers is the target. The time table is at 2:00 because you two are supposed to be meeting your sister around that time."

Steve stepped forward to Peggy, "Leviathan bugged our house." Peggy clenched her fists angrily. "You, Captain Rogers are the main reason he's here. You have cost Leviathan a great number of assets and money…" He laughed evilly, "So killing you…will give the Soviet Union an upper hand… Because you're a symbol Captain Rogers." He focused on Steve and spoke in a low tone, "A symbol of freedom, protection, and morality. You're an idealist Captain Rogers, in a new world fighting over Communism and Capitalism." He chuckled, "The Great Captain America, killed by Communists… will send a stirring message of how far the Soviets can reach." He nodded to Peggy, "Your beautiful wife over there…once we get rid of you, we can get rid of her. What would you think will happen to her Captain once you die? Will she mourn? Will she give up on life?"

Steve glared at him angrily, "I wouldn't get your hopes up."

"No matter how much you thought you've done to stop us… Leviathan is already here and they will keep on coming. We will strike the United States from the shadows."

Jim sighed, "Jesus, this is like Hydra the Communist edition."

Dugan groaned, "At least Hydra wasn't corny…"

Steve nodded, "We need to move." He nodded to Martin, "He's going to help us find the Winter Soldier."

Martin smirked evilly, "I hope you're prepared Captain Rogers." Steve glared at him. Martin laughed, "Are you ready to leave your wife and unborn baby?"

Steve stepped back, "What?" He looked over at Peggy, "Peggy?" Peggy looked shocked. How did he know about that so fast…

Before Peggy said anything, she kicked Martin in the crotch causing him ball up and scream in pain. Peggy stepped closer to Steve, "Darling… I wanted to tell you later when we were in private" She paused and took a deep breath, "I'm pregnant." She said with a nervous look.

Steve gasped and stepped back away from her in silence causing her to feel uncomfortable. She waited with anticipation with what he was going to say. He rose both his brows, "You're pregnant?"

Peggy nodded, "Yes, Steve. I'm pregnant."

Steve suddenly beamed happily, "We're going to have a family?" Peggy gave a happy smile and nod.

She nodded with a smile, "Yes darling. You're going to be a daddy."

"This is great!" He scooped up Peggy and hugged her then kissed her briefly but happily, completely forgetting what was going on.
Dugan spoke up and interrupted the moment, "Uh…Captain? We're still in a situation." He said pointing to Martin rolling on the ground in pain.

Steve and Peggy broke the kiss, her arms were resting on his shoulders and he had his hands on her hips. Steve nodded, "Right." He whispered to Peggy, "We'll celebrate late. Don't worry, we'll be fine." He said reassuringly.

Peggy smiled worriedly, "I know, Steve."

Steve stepped away from Peggy, "Dugan, Jim grab him, he's coming with us."

Jim nodded, "With pleasure." He said as he walked toward Martin.

Dugan chuckled, "You know, this day is turning out to be an eventful day." He laughed, "Should've seen that coming."

Jim looked at him confused, "Seen what?"

"It was only a matter of time that they were going to have little Captain America's and Peggy's running around." Dugan said laughing as he picked up Martin with Jim.

Peggy sighed, "Just hurry up and grab him will you."

Jim drove the car through the busy New York City streets as fast as he could, trying to get everyone back to the Commando field office. Edward Martin sat in the back middle seat handcuffed in between Peggy and Dugan. Martin sighed, "Leviathan doesn't like leaks…"

Dugan sighed, "Then why don't you try sticking a cork in it."

Peggy leaned forward, "It's almost 2:00. The Winter Soldier might be onto us already. We need to hurry back to the office."

Steve nodded as he gripped his shield in the front seat with him, "I know. We'll take him back and have him detail everything he knows about Leviathan operations in country."

Martin spoke frantically, "What? You're taking me back to the SSR? That's a terrible, terrible idea!"

Jim shook his head, "Not quite the SSR."

"Leviathan will know I've been grabbed. We need somewhere else…” Martin paused when there was a loud thud on top of their car. Suddenly the rear window shattered and a metallic arm quickly reaching in and grabbing Martin by the back of the neck. The metallic arm effortlessly through him out of the car onto the road where a large truck ran him over.

Peggy and Dugan watched in shock at what just happened. They heard the sound of a gun being cocked above them and another series of heavy thuds on the roof of the car. Peggy quickly rolled forward to the front passenger seat and ended up on Steve's lap while Dugan ducked to the left and hugged the door as gun fire quickly ripped into the car. Steve hunched forward covering Peggy's body as bullets punched holes all over the car interior. Jim quickly slammed the brakes on the car screeching it to a halt and sending the assailant flying forward off the car.

The silver armed assailant skillfully landed, hunched forward on his feet while he used his metallic arm to stop himself. He left a three-foot-long indentation on the concrete from metal his fingers being
used as a brake. Everyone in the car stared at the man… it was the Winter Soldier. The Winter Soldier stood up slowly, his long dark hair brushed to the side revealing a dark mask covering his entire face. He wore black utility pants, black combat boots, thick dark leather vest, a black sleeve over his non metal arm, and a single black glove on the metal hand. The Winter Soldier stood in his place silently with an evil presence surrounding him. Other cars quickly drove around the scene not caring for what is going on.

Suddenly a large green 2.5 ton 6x6 cargo truck with a covered cargo bed, slammed into the team's car and sending them straight to the Winter Soldier. Jim thrust his foot down on the brakes trying to stop the car from approaching the metallic enemy but it was no use, they were heading straight for him. The Winter Soldier skillfully jumped over the hood of the car, grabbed the top with his metal hand, and slammed his body down onto the car.

Peggy desperately reached into her purse to grab her .45 pistol. The Winter Soldier stood up and punched a hole through the wind shield and forcefully yanked the steering wheel out of its column. Jim yelled in shock, "Crap!"

Peggy got her weapon out and started to fire through the roof of the car. Dugan sat up and did the same with his .45 pistol. The Winter Soldier ran off the car and hopped onto the hood of the truck as the car swerved out of control on the road. Dugan yelled, "This would never have happened if Jim wasn't driving!"

Jim slammed on the brakes again causing the truck behind them to collide into them again. The truck forced them toward the side of the road where a long line of cars are parked. Steve quickly brought his shield up in between the dash and Peggy, "Hold on!" Peggy gripped his shirt as the car slammed into the line of parked cars. The truck drove ahead of the wreckage then stopped in the middle of the road about fifty yards from the car. The team's car ended up spinning around from the collision and ended with the passenger side facing the truck.

The Winter Soldier hopped off the hood of the truck as two men got out of the cab and three got out of the cargo bed, totaling five hostiles not including the Winter Soldier. As the Winter Soldier made his way around the truck, one of the men handed him an M9A1 Bazooka. The Winter Soldier calmly took a knee and waited for one of the men to load the weapon.

Inside the wrecked car, Steve kicked the passenger door off its hinges, "Everyone alright?" he called. Peggy nodded, "I'm alright." She said as she grabbed extra pistol magazines from her purse then dropped the bag on the ground.

Dugan yelled, "Lets get this son of a bitch!"

Jim shook his head as he slowly came back to reality. He started to focus his vision and was surprised to see the Winter Soldier with a bazooka pointed right at them, "We have to go!"

Peggy hopped out of the car and reloaded her pistol as Steve put his shield on his arm then hopped out of the car to join her. Steve focused ahead of him and saw a man behind the Winter Soldier tapping his shoulder twice signaling him that the bazooka is loaded. Steve quickly pushed Peggy out of the way and brought his shield up the moment the Winter Soldier fired the rocket. The rocket impacted Steve's shield with a large blast sending him and his shield flying backward and ricocheting off the car. He let go of his shield as he sailed across the intersection into the side of a driving city bus. He blasted through the windows of the bus making the bus driver to swerve into a truck causing the bus to tip onto its side. The heavily armed men around the Winter Soldier pulled out Thompson submachine guns except one man grabbed an M1919a6 browning .30 cal. machine gun. People in the area screamed and ran for their lives as gun fire started to erupt in the block.
Peggy squatted behind a parked car for cover as bullets snapped passed her. Dugan and Jim hid behind their wrecked car while the enemy poured a deadly hail of gunfire into the car. Peggy leaned out of her cover briefly to fire a few shots from her pistol. Peggy yelled, "I need to get to Steve!"

Dugan called back behind the destroyed SSR car, "We'll cover!"

Jim peered through the shattered windows of the car and saw the Winter Soldier pointing the bazooka at them. He pulled Dugan by his collar, "Incoming!"

The Winter Soldier fired off another rocket, but this time it impacted and exploded into the already wrecked SSR car. The car exploded in a fire ball with hot metal flying in every direction. Peggy put her arm up over her face in a way to protect herself from the blast. She frantically called, "Timothy, Jim!"

Jim and Dugan squatted behind another parked car on the side of the road a short distance from their burning vehicle. Jim shouted, "We're alright!"

Dugan reloaded his pistol, "Let's get this sucker."

Jim cleared his weapon, "Definitely."

The Winter Soldier traded the Bazooka for a Thompson submachine gun with one of the other armed men he's with. He spoke in a perfect American voice, "Focus on the other two. I'll take care of him and the woman." The armed men nodded and proceeded to slowly advance while firing their weapons. Automatic weapons fire drowned out the police sirens ringing in the distance.

Peggy looked at the tipped bus and sighed worriedly. She then saw Steve's shield laying on the ground near the bus, "I need cover!"

Dugan and Jim nodded to each other then quickly got up and fired toward the approaching enemy. Dugan yelled, "Go!"

Peggy got up and fired a few shots as she ran for the shield. She couldn't get very far so she had to seek cover behind an abandoned car in the middle of the road. She frantically looked back at the shield laying idly on the ground. She needed to get to Steve and fast. Suddenly Jim yelled, "Peggy, watch out!"

Peggy heard a thud to her right and saw the Winter Soldier on top of a car pointing his submachine gun at her. Suddenly Steve dove out of the driver's window of the tipped bus and grabbed his shield and sprinted toward them. The Winter Soldier saw Steve fast approaching in the corner of his eye, he quickly turned and threw hard punch with his bionic arm. Steve brought up his shield and it met with the bionic arm with such force that the echo of metal striking metal rang in everyone's ears. Peggy quickly relocated while the Winter Soldier was distracted. She wasn't abandoning Steve; she just didn't want to be in the way of the fight. She knew she was an easier target for the Winter Soldier so she knew she didn't stand a chance…

The Winter Soldier quickly forced Steve's shield aside and double leg kicked him in the chest sending Steve tumbling down onto his back. He then tried to quickly shoot Steve with his Thompson but Steve brought his shield up and blocked all the bullets. The Soviet soldier immediately dropped his weapon then rolled off the car to bring the fight to his American counter. Steve jumped up and ran toward his enemy, using his shield as an additional weapon, he swung and stabbed with his shield at lighting fast speeds, but his Soviet enemy blocked his strikes. Steve tried striking the Winter Soldier once more with the rim of his shield, but the Soviet caught the strike in his hands and forced the shield down at an angle that made Steve's arm hurt. Steve jumped and did a backflip, using the
momentum of the flip to free his shield from the Winter Soldier's grasp. But the Winter Soldier regained his grasp and yanked the shield from Steve's hands then punched him in the chest with his bionic arm, sending Steve flying to the ground. Steve rolled on the ground to dissipate the impact. Once he got his bearings he looked up and saw a very disconcerting sight. The Soviet Winter Soldier had Steve's shield on the non bionic arm.

Peggy quietly maneuvered herself around on the opposite side of the street from Dugan and Jim, deciding to engage the five gunmen to relieve the pressure off of her friends. Her friends were clearly outgunned. She got into position behind a milk truck and peered around it and saw Jim and Dugan pinned down by the five gun men firing automatic weapons at them. The gunmen were walking slowly while firing their weapons so their backs were to her. Peggy quietly stood up and trained her weapon at the the deadliest gunman. The machine gunner in the middle of the pack. She fired a single shot, and the round hit home in the back of the man's skull causing him to drop his weapon and fall forward. Peggy quietly moved forward, weaving through the abandoned cars toward the other gunmen. At the same moment the other four gunmen stopped shooting for a second as they realized their machine gunner was killed. Suddenly Peggy appeared so close they could tell how red her lipstick was. She got in between two of them grabbed the chin of one and shot the other. She pulled the other guy in front of her and used him as a shield as the other two opened fire on her. She kicked the bullet hole riddled man toward the two gunmen then dove for cover. Jim and Dugan quickly got up and fired on the remaining two gunmen. The other two hostiles fanned out and took cover behind cars to return fire. The tables have turned.

The fight between the American and the Soviet was still a stalemate. The Winter Soldier rocketed Captain America's shield at Steve with such velocity that Steve was barely able to dodge it. The shield impaled the trunk of a car as Steve charged toward the Soviet. The Winter Soldier drew a knife with his non metallic arm and started to become engaged in a fierce hand-to-hand fight. Steve, trying to get the upper hand, ducked, dodged, and blocked each strike of the knife, while the Winter Soldier continued to press on with his assault. Steve ducked under a fierce metal punch then quickly retaliated with a heavy blow to his chin. The Winter Soldier tumbled backwards, then Steve quickly jumped and kicked him in the chest sending him into a car and dropping his knife. Steve then charged again and thrust his knee into the Soviet's chest with such force that the impact on the Winter Soldier dented the side of the car.

The Winter Soldier recovered and blocked another punch and in turn he punched Steve in the ribs then shoved Steve away from him. Steve caught a punch from the Winter Soldier's non metallic arm then quickly took control of the wrist and threw him onto the ground. The Winter Soldier quickly got back up and grabbed Steve by the throat with his bionic arm and slowly choked him. Steve gasped for air and tried breaking free from the grasp, but after a few more deadly seconds the Winter Soldier threw him onto the ground. Steve instinctively rolled away in time to avoid a heavy bionic arm punch to the ground that cracked the concrete from the massive impact of the bionic punch. Steve quickly got up and yanked his shield from the car's trunk then dodged another strike from the Winter Soldier.

They continued their fierce hand-to-hand fight with no sight of anyone grabbing the upper hand. Suddenly Steve ducked away from a punch of the bionic arm, grabbed his metal wrist, then thrust his shield into the back of the metallic shoulder, jamming the arm in its place. He then let go of the wrist then punched him in the face then grabbed his chin and tossed him backwards. The mask fell off as the Winter Soldier tumbled.

After a moment the Winter Soldier slowly stood up and revealed his face to Steve. Steve looked
confused, "Bucky?" He said as he registered his face without the mask.

The Winter Soldier spoke in a familiar voice and perfect English, "Who the hell is Bucky?"

Steve and Bucky stared at each other for an intense second, and got a very good look at each other. Bucky quickly drew a pistol from his side and pointed it at Steve. Steve stood silently and didn't move an inch. Bucky hesitated shooting him when suddenly a rocket sailed past Steve causing Bucky to duck, letting the rocket blow up another car behind him. Steve turned around and saw Dugan holding the Bazooka with Jim and Peggy by his side. Steve turned back to look for Bucky, but saw nothing. He vanished. He stood there quietly with a look of shock on his face.

Peggy spoke up, "Steve?" She said in a worried tone.

Steve slowly returned to his group and into Peggy's arms. They quietly hugged tightly for a moment. They broke the hug and Peggy rested her arms on his shoulders, "Are you okay?"

Steve nodded, "I was going to ask you that." He spoke softly. He looked down at her stomach with a worried look.

Peggy smiled reassuringly, "We're okay, darling." Steve quietly rested his forehead against hers and closed his eyes as he breathed deeply. Peggy closed her eyes too and did the same. Police sirens got louder and louder.

After a moment Steve turned to Dugan, "That was Bucky… the Winter Soldier… is Bucky…" He said softly. He frowned, "He looked right at me… didn't even know me."

Dugan shook his head, "That's impossible. He fell off the train in the mountains. There's no way he survived that."

Jim nodded, "Yeah… how can that be?"

Peggy looked at her husband silently. Steve whispered, "Zola… Doctor Zola. You remember." He nodded to his fellow commandos, "Your unit was captured… and Zola experimented on him. Whatever he did helped Bucky survive the fall." He sighed, "The Soviets must've found him." He frowned, "Even when I had nothing, I had Bucky…"

Peggy looked at her husband with sympathy in her eyes. She gripped his arm in understanding. Suddenly a large number of Police Cars pulled up to them with Police Officers pouring out of each one. One of the officers saw Steve and his shield, "Captain America!" The officers around him all looked surprised and shock to see the hero standing there.

Steve nodded, "Officers."

The officer spoke, "What happened here, sir?"

Steve sighed uncomfortably, "That's hard to explain." He didn't want to lie.

Dugan spoke up instantly knowing that Steve hates to lie, "Gunmen. Organized crime came by and wrecked our car and tried killing us. They had access to some military weapons." Dugan was probably right that the gunmen belonged to some sort of mob or gang in the city. American criminal underworld thugs using American weapons to attack them. The attack would just look like a hit rather than an espionage act or terrorism.

The officer nodded, "Understood. They must be upset on the raids Captain America does on them." He chuckled, "Hey, I'm not mad. He makes our job easier and I'm a huge fan of his." Steve remained
silent with a blank stare.

Peggy smiled at the officer while she rubbed Steve's chest, "Pardon my husband, he's quite modest." Steve was still thinking about what he just saw, and he couldn't comprehend it.

As they spoke other officers started to canvass and search the area for anything they can use to investigate what happened there. The officer nodded at Steve, "Sir, do you need a ride anywhere? We can arrange it."

Peggy gave a friendly smile, "Yes, that'd be great."

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**Angela "Angie" Martinelli Residence, Penthouse**

It was about late afternoon when the officer brought Peggy and Steve to Angie's building after dropping off Jim and Dugan back to their respective homes. The officer was very kind and respectful to them, and he even was excited to be driving Captain America around. But, the main reason Peggy and Steve went to Angie's place is because they didn't trust the safety of being back home, since it's clear that Leviathan broke in and bugged their house. Plus… they were supposed to meet up with Angie in the first place. Might as well meet with her now.

Steve and Peggy made it to Angie's door on the top floor. Peggy buzzed the door and whispered to Steve, "Hope she's here and not at the Automat." She looked up at Steve and noticed how quiet he was. She put a gentle hand on his arm, "Darling?"

Steve shook his head, "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to ignore you."

Peggy smiled reassuringly, "Don't apologize, Steve. Are you okay?"

Suddenly the door opened revealing Angie with her hair curled dressed nicely in a light blue long sleeve button up blouse, dark swing skirt, and matching heels. She smiled unexpectedly, "Hey you two. I'm sorry, I know I was running late, but you didn't have to…"

Steve spoke up, "I'm sorry about this Angie, but we need a place to lay low." Angie looked confused at the couple.

Peggy spoke up, "Someone is trying to kill us."

Angie stepped aside, "Hurry, come on in." She said urgently.

Steve nodded silently. Peggy smiled at her friend, "Thank you, Angie." They stepped into the luxurious former Stark residence.

Angie closed the door and locked it, "Anytime, English. Anytime." She chuckled, "I think I should keep a tab of how many times I have to cover for you."

Peggy turned around, "This is the only the second time." Steve shrugged in silent agreement with his wife.

Angie put her hands on her hips and said with a disarming smile, "So, who is it that's trying to kill you now? Can't be the federal agents you and Daniel work for." Angie knew about Peggy being a federal agent from the time she had to cover for her. Peggy told her everything as long as Angie could keep the secret. Which she has. She's also dating Daniel Sousa because of Peggy so she knows
and understands the secrecy of the federal agents.

Steve shook his head. Peggy spoke up, "There's a soviet assassin hunting us, who could match Steve physically."

Angie gasped and put a hand over her mouth, "Oh my goodness."

Steve nodded, "Yeah. I faced him three times already…"

Angie spoke up confidently, "I know one thing." She smiled, "Who ever it is, isn't better than you. Because you're still here. You faced him three times and he still couldn't take you?" She chuckled, "That means you're better."

Peggy nodded, "She right, Steve."

Steve smiled, "Thanks guys."

Angie gave a friendly smile, "You two look dirty and tired. Let me show you to your room so you can clean up." She looked at Peggy, "I got spare robes for you two if you need it."

Peggy smiled, "Thank you Angie." She interlaced her fingers with Steve's free hand. She then spoke up again, "Can you call Daniel and have him come over here?"

"Sure thing English."

"Don't tell him what happened. Just tell him you want to see him and we'll take care of the rest." Peggy insisted.

Angie smiled, "No worries." She chuckled, "I'll get him for you."

In one of the large luxurious guest rooms, Steve sat silently on the floor with his back against the wall with his knees as close to his chest as possible and his toned arms rested on top of his knees. His shield leaned on the wall to his left as he silently fiddled with his hands. The room he's in is very spacious and elegant with what Jarvis would say is, "Neoclassical design". The furniture right down to the bed matches this style, and Steve felt like he was too poor to be in a place like this. He should get used to it. His mind quickly wandered to Bucky the moment after his mother's funeral.

A skinny short Steve in a raggedy suit walked up the outside rusted stairs with a tall muscular Bucky in a clean pressed black suit trailing behind him to the run down apartment building. Bucky spoke in a gentle voice, "We looked for you after… My folks wanted to give you a ride."

Steve put his hands in his pockets as he continued to walk up the stairs, "I know I'm sorry…I" He paused in grief, "I just wanted to be alone."

Bucky spoke gently, "How was it?"

"It was okay…she's next to dad." Steve said in a soft saddening tone.

Bucky frowned in sympathy for his best friend, "I was going to ask."
"I know what you're going to say, Buck. I just…" Steve got to the door and started to look for his apartment key in his pocket.

Bucky pressed, "We could put the couch cushions on the floor like when we're kids." Steve couldn't find his key. Bucky smiled, "It'll be fun and all you have to do is shine my shoes, maybe take out the trash." He said jokingly. He turned around and kicked aside a brick next to the door and picked up the spare key that was hidden underneath it. He picked it up and handed it to Steve.

Steve sighed, "Come on." He took the key then stood there silently looking at the floor. After a moment he looked up and nodded at Bucky, "Thank you, Buck, but I can get by on my own."

Bucky shook his head, "The thing is… you don't have to." He put his hand on his shoulder, "I'm with you till the end of the line, pal." Steve smiled at his friend.

In their guest room the bathroom door was open with Peggy cleaning up inside. She wore a white robe as she quietly dried her damp hair with a towel. She looked at the mirror and saw Steve sitting against the wall with a sad look on his face but looking like he was deep in thought. She frowned knowing that her husband was feeling the affects of seeing Bucky as the enemy. She placed the towel down on the sink then ran a hand through her damp hair. Lots of things happened today, they found out she's pregnant, Leviathan bugged their house, they got into a fire fight with the Winter Soldier, and they found out the Winter Soldier is Bucky. Peggy looked down and rubbed her belly knowing that there is a life growing inside her. The life that Steve and Peggy made. She smiled a loving smile then walked out of the bathroom.

Steve was brought back to reality by a familiar gentle female English voice calling to him, "Steve?"

Steve looked up and gave a warm smile trying to hide his pain, "Hey. You alright?"

Peggy slowly walked toward him with an equally warm smile, "What's going on?"

Steve looked at her confused, "Hm?"

She took a seat next to Steve against the wall on his right then wrapped her arm around his, "What's going on up there?" She said pointing to the top of his head. She saw the silver bracelet she gave him on his wrist. Already scratched and battered from conflict. It was clear to her that he never removed it, which warmed her heart.

Steve sighed and knew better to hide what he was feeling. "Bucky. He's…" He laughed nervously. He shook his head and frowned, "I know I should be happy that you and I are starting a family, but my mind is so crowded with Bucky being back…" He laughed nervously again, "I know its stupid…I'm sorry." He looked at his wife who was looking back at him with a sad stare, "I want you to know that I want to start a family with you and that I love you. Its just…"

Peggy gripped his arm, "I know, darling. I understand why and this does take precedence over my pregnancy." She smiled reassuringly, "We have months before our little one will join us, so we should take care of this Winter Soldier problem now." She leaned to him and guided his face to look at her then she kissed him gently. She broke the kiss, "You are the love of my life and the father of my child. Nothing is ever going to change that."

Steve smiled, "Thank you, Peggy." He whispered softly, just barely being heard, "I love you…"

Peggy rested her head on his shoulder, "He's going to come back you know?"
"I know."

"What happens if he doesn't know you, Steve?" Peggy pressed gently, knowing what Steve is planning to do.

Steve nodded, "He will."

There was a knock on their door. Peggy looked to her right, "Come in."

Angie opened the door, "Daniel is…" She took a moment to find them, then saw the couple sitting against the wall to her left. She smiled, "Daniel is here."

Peggy smiled, "Thank you, Angie."

"Anytime for you and your husband." Angie said with a smile then turned and left.

It was late in the evening in a warn down abandoned warehouse deep in the warehouse district of the city. In the dimly lit warehouse there was a single light shining down on Bucky who sat on a lone chair in the middle of the warehouse floor with a man in a white lab coat operating on his metallic arm. Ten pale men in black suits and black ties were spread out in a wide circle around him in the shadows.

Bucky started to get flashbacks of what happened to him. Everything was hazy, he heard a Russian scientist speaking that drowned out the voice of a German. He saw Soviet soldiers dragging him through the snow then saw doctors and scientists operating on him. Bucky started to breathe heavily as he remembered waking up with the new bionic arm and strangling the doctor attending to him. He suddenly saw Steve in his memory, from when he was short and skinny to when he became Captain America. His breathing intensified then he elbowed the man working on his bionic arm with such force, it sent him falling to the ground ten feet away. The ring of shadowy men turned around and pointed their side arms at him simultaneously. Bucky stared at the floor while he continued to breathe heavily.

A pale bald man with a large red scar going across his face from the top of his left eye down to the right side of his lips in a black suit and tie stepped out of the shadows and silently approached Bucky. He spoke English in a deep Russian accent, "I thought I told you to kill Captain America." He spoke angrily, "Instead we lost five assets and you let Captain America and Agent Rogers escape." He walked around Bucky slowly while staring coldly at him.

Bucky stared at the floor and spoke softly, "I couldn't…" He looked up from the floor, "I knew him…"

The scarred Russian man spoke, "You don't know him." He stopped in front of Bucky, "You. Do not. Know. Him…" He repeated slowly. "He, Is the target. He's the enemy."

Bucky cringed, "I've met him before." He looked up at his handler, "From the car… I recognize him." He breathed heavily.

The handler stared angrily at Bucky, "You have never met him." He saw Bucky hesitate. He leaned down and whispered, "Do you want to go back on the chair?"

Bucky cringed, "No…I don't."
"Do you want to go back into indoctrination?" the Russian handler pressed even more.

"No..." Bucky said angrily.

"Then finish the job. We have a feeling where he's going to be tomorrow so you'll have another shot... but this is your last chance." The handler spoke deeply, "Finish the job or else you'll be back into indoctrination" Bucky stared at him with a cold stare. The Russian handler spoke coldly, "You are a weapon. Nothing more. Remember that."

Bucky stood up then quickly left without a second glance. A tall blonde female agent walked up to the handler in a black women's business suit and spoke in a perfect American accent, "His memory is coming back to him. I see it in his eyes. He does recognize, Captain Rogers."

The handler watched Bucky's silhouette disappear in the shadows, "I know. We cannot let his memory surface again. Can't let his past history with Captain Rogers affect his mission." He nodded, "Once he eliminates Captain America, we will put him back in indoctrination and start from scratch. We'll send him back to Siberia." He squinted, "Follow him with snipers. If he doesn't kill Captain America, then the snipers will kill them both."

"What about Peggy?" The woman asked.

"If the snipers have a window...eliminate her." The handler spoke coldly.

Bucky heard every word. He clenched his fists defensively as he walked away. Bucky started to struggle with his memories and the indoctrination the Soviets put him through. He struggled to remember who he was, but he refused to go back to indoctrination... He had a plan...

The handler turned to the woman, "You will continue to pose as an American citizen until I call for your activation."

The woman nodded, "I can no longer be Dottie. I need new papers..."

"You'll get them."

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Review XD

Here is the Winter Soldier Part 1

Hope you enjoyed

PS I have NO Idea if Peggy's parents are dead or alive, but I'm writing them alive so, yeah... my excuse is that this is a Fan Fiction. Changed her family also.

Peggy's sister will be around shortly

And STEGGY fluff involved with coming family.

Interesting note post WWII couples started families within seven months of marriage
Angela "Angie" Martinelli Residence, Penthouse, NYC

Sousa wore a grey suit, dark blue tie, and grey dress shoes as he leaned on the dining table smiling at Angie who stood next to him, "So you wanted to see me, Angie? Everything okay?"

Angie's hair was curled and dressed nicely in a light blue long sleeve button up blouse, dark swing skirt, and matching heels. She rubbed Sousa's back affectionately, "I'm fine, Daniel."

Sousa spoke calmly, "So nothing is…"

Peggy's voice rang through the room, "We told Angie to call you because we have a problem."

Sousa looked up and saw Peggy and Steve walking into the room. Peggy only wore a white robe and kept her arms crossed over her stomach, and Steve wore a white undershirt tucked under the same black dress pants he wore all day. Sousa cocked his head to the side confused, "Peggy? Captain?" He said with a little bit of shock.

Steve nodded, "Its good to see you, Sousa." He said courteously.

Sousa nodded back, "Like wise, Captain. What's this all about and why the secrecy?"

"We saw the Winter Solider." Steve said plainly as he and Peggy took a seat at the table next to each other.

"He attacked us on the streets." Peggy said.

Sousa sat down opposite of the couple, "The Winter Soldier…” He said nervously. He turned to Angie, "Its probably best if you leave the room, Angie."

Angie understood, "I understand completely." She said calmly.

Peggy spoke calmly, "We can trust her, Daniel. She knows a lot already and we mentioned the Winter Soldier to her earlier…” She said mentioning her trust for Angie.

Angie smiled at her friends, "Its okay, English. I don't need to know everything." She said reassuringly. She kissed Sousa on the head then left the room.

Sousa nodded and responded nervously, "I know we can trust her…But the less she knows about Leviathan and what we know, the better off she is… Its safer this way." Both Steve and Peggy understood completely. He spoke calmly, "What happened?"

Steve nodded at Peggy to signal her to tell the story. Peggy spoke up, "We obtained a message from the electronic type writer the commandos picked up a while back. The message detailed that $500,000 will be delivered to Edward & Bell Financial. Edward Martin was the subject of the message."
"THE Edward Martin?" Sousa asked shocked.

Steve nodded, "Yeah. The Edward Martin who owns one of the richest banks in New York."

Peggy continued, "Steve, Jim Morita, Timothy Dugan, and I went to pick him up for questioning. Then when we questioned him, we found out that the Winter Soldier is active and his mission is to kill Steve." She paused, "Leviathan... knew me and Steve's movements. The only way they could've known is if they bugged our house... and they're most likely watching it as well..." She turned to Steve then back at Sousa, "Then on our way back to the Commando field office, we were jumped by the Winter Soldier... and Edward Martin was killed."

Sousa spoke softly, "This isn't good. The Winter Soldier is priority but I'm curious what Edward Martin had to do with all this."

Steve spoke up, "He's with Leviathan. That's all I know..."

Sousa nodded, "Yes, but... He's a millionaire. You said Leviathan will deliver $500,000 to Edward & Bell, but Edward Martin makes that much money in his sleep."

Sousa rubbed his chin, "What does he and his financial firm have for Leviathan...?" He shook his head, "Whatever it is, we'll investigate later... Winter Soldier is priority." Sousa tapped his fingers on the table, "I don't know if Dooley ever gave you the file, but there's something important you need to know about him. The Winter Soldier has only been active for little over a year, and the British Intelligence branch doesn't even believe he exists. In his short time active with the Soviets, he has been credited with over two dozen assassinations of political opponents of Stalin, former Nazi's, and the list goes on."

Peggy continued, "There's one other thing."

Steve spoke softly, "The Winter Soldier is... Sergeant James Buchanan Barnes..."

Sousa paused, "Isn't he the only Howling Commando to give his life... your best friend?"

Steve nodded, "Yeah, but it turns out he didn't give his life. He got recovered by the Soviets."

Sousa couldn't believe it, "Didn't you see him die? Maybe you're mistaken..."

Peggy defended her husband, "If Steve saw him then it's him. It has to be Sergeant Barnes."

Sousa didn't know what to say, "How did he survive?"

Steve responded calmly, "When I rescued the 107th from Hydra, I found Bucky in some sort of operating room. Zola must've done something to him." He shook his head, "There's no other explanation that I can think of."

Sousa connected the dots, "Then the Soviets found him and did things to him in order to make him into a Soviet weapon."

Steve nodded, "I unmasked him. That's how I know its Bucky..."

Sousa leaned forward, "What we need to do is stop Leviathan. I suggest we start by..."

Steve shook his head, "We aren't killing Sergeant Barnes."

"Captain..."

Steve shook his head again, "I can't kill him... Bucky is in there somewhere. I know it. I just need to get him out. We can turn him back to our side." Peggy watched Steve with concerned eyes.
Sousa frowned apologetically, "What happens if you can't bring him back? He might not give you a choice." He paused, "The man you used to know might be gone forever."

Steve insisted, "I can bring him back."

"You fought him three times, Captain. What…"

Steve interrupted him, "I have to get to him, and I can bring him back." He paused, "I have to do this…I have a chance to bring him back, so I'm going to take it." He insisted. Sousa nodded conceding to Steve. Steve leaned forward, "I know what we need to do. We can stall Leviathan's operations in New York…starting with the Winter Soldier." He spoke with conviction, "I'm going to find the Winter Soldier, and from there I'm hoping he can lead me to a major Leviathan target." Peggy gripped Steve's arm worriedly.

Sousa asked the hard question, "What if the Winter Soldier doesn't know you? This is a big risk you're taking."

"He will." Steve said confidently.

"What if you're wrong?" Sousa asked. Peggy looked at Steve with concern.

Steve shrugged, "If I am then I'm in deep."

Sousa sighed and leaned back, "What do you want from the SSR?" He said fully knowing that Steve is calling the shots.

"Keep following any leads you got on Leviathan. I suggest we start with Edward & Bell Financial. They are the best lead we got." Steve nodded, "We have enough evidence for you to get a search warrant, so utilize that." He started to tap his fingers on the table, "I'm putting Dugan in charge of the commandos for the time being. Get the commandos to assemble at the SSR Bell Office then have them stand by. Then Tomorrow, Peggy and I need a ride to pick us up just before sunrise. Get me to my house then get Peggy to the SSR and wait for my call. When I succeed in getting Bucky, I'll to report the location on any Leviathan sites. From there… do what you need to do."

Sousa nodded, "Looks like you're giving the orders now, Captain." Peggy wrapped her arm around Steve. Sousa spoke calmly, "When do we start."

"We just did." Steve said plainly. He then looked at Peggy and realized how worried she looked.

Peggy nodded, "I know." She said quietly. Steve wrapped his arm around her, held her tight, and kissed the top of her head reassuringly.

Sousa understood the worry because he too was worried for Captain Rogers. He knew how deadly the Winter Soldier is, but he also knew how deadly Captain Rogers is as well. Unfortunately, he didn't believe that the Winter Soldier can be saved. A man brainwashed to believe he's somebody else and seemingly programmed to kill, might be too far gone to save. Sousa slowly stood up, grabbing his cane, "I'll head back to the office, and get everything started." He nodded at Steve, "Good luck, Captain." Steve nodded in response.

Steve stared at his hands as he sat quietly alone on the bed in the dim guest room of Angie's penthouse. He quietly thought of what he needed to do in the morning and how he's going to talk to Bucky. There was no other option for him, he had to bring Bucky back alive. He won't kill his best friend, and there is no way he'll lose him a second time. His mind started to wonder about Bucky for a moment, but suddenly he started to think about Peggy and their unborn baby. He slouched on the
bed and started to feel the jitters etching its way back into his mind. He's going to be a father in the middle of all this… He and Peggy are starting a family together. He hasn't even gotten a chance to actually think about it or even celebrate it at all because of what has happened today. He didn't even let it sink in yet. Suddenly the sound of the bedroom door opening brought him back to reality. He looked up and saw Peggy leaning against the doorframe with her arms crossed over her stomach with a worried look on her face.

Peggy spoke softly, "Steve."

Steve knew what she was going to say, "I know what you're going to say. But, I have to do this alone."

Peggy stepped into the room and closed the door behind her, "What if I insist…"

"Then I'll insist back." Steve replied quickly. Peggy frowned in anger and worry then turned her back to Steve as a wave of emotions fully swept over her. Steve stood up and slowly walked to Peggy, "I have to do this… He's my friend…"

Peggy turned around quickly, "And I'm your wife!" She yelled angrily. "I can't just watch and wait on the sidelines powerless to help you! Like I have done the multiple times you faced him!" She calmed down for a moment as she breathed heavily. Steve stood in front of her silently, understanding why his wife is upset. Peggy put her hands on her hips and shook her head, "I can't lose you again… I can't keep thinking I'm going to lose you." She watched Steve and the Winter Soldier fight all three times with neither of them getting an upper hand. The only conclusion she can see is one she didn't want to think about. The only outcome is one of them making a mistake and one of them ending up killing the other. But she knew Steve wouldn't be able to kill his friend… She didn't want to continue thinking on this line of thought.

Steve closed the distance between them, but she looked down and away from him when he spoke, "I understand why you're upset… and I'm sorry for putting you through this." He said softly. He frowned, "But, I have to do this alone. I can't let you go. Its not that I'm not confident in your abilities… Its that…" He had to hold back his emotions for a little longer, "I'm not confident in my ability to live without you…" Peggy looked up into his eyes and saw him fighting his own tears. She knew right away that she was wrong for being mad because he was only trying to do his job and keep her safe. Steve spoke in a shaky voice, "if you go… and something goes wrong, and…" He couldn't say it, "I would never forgive myself…and you're carrying our child, so I can't lose both of you." He put his hands on her hips, "You've always been the strong one. Not me." He looked down, "I know you lost me once and you're afraid to lose me again…But I guess… I guess I'm just being selfish, because I can't live without you. I'm not strong enough to live in this world without you… I…" Tears started to roll down his cheeks.

Peggy placed her finger on his lips gently, "Shh." She said gently silencing him. "I understand. I understand, darling. I'm sorry for being angry with you." She smiled, "I guess, I'm being selfish too."

Steve spoke softly, "Don't apologize. I understand why you were upset…" Peggy grabbed his shirt and brought him in for a long lasting kiss. Steve broke the kiss and whispered, "I love you, Peggy."

Peggy gave a small smile, "I love you too, Steve." She whispered, "You're the love of my life and first in my heart, and nothing will ever change that. I'm just concerned."

Steve whispered with a smile, "I guess… this could be our first fight."

Peggy shook her head gently, "Technically wasn't a fight." She gave a light chuckle, "It was kind of one sided." She kissed him briefly, "I never want to have a fight with you."
"Me neither." Steve said plainly as he hugged her tightly with Peggy resting her head against his chest.

Peggy whispered, "Look what you did to me." She chuckled, "I've become so emotional since we came together."

Steve smiled, "Love is weird." He kissed the top of her head.

Peggy hugged him tight, "But, I wouldn't change it for anything." She took a deep breath, "You better come back, Steve."

"Always coming back." Steve said gently.

Peggy leaned back to look up at Steve, "How are you going to find him?" She asked curiously.

"Leviathan keeps an eye on our home, and I have to go back and get my uniform. So I assure you… he'll find me." Steve said plainly.

Peggy smiled, "Please try to keep our place in one piece. I honestly don't want to move again."

Peggy said calmly.

Steve chuckled, "I'll do my best."

Peggy tugged on his shirt, "Come. Let's get some sleep. Got a long day tomorrow."

Steve nodded, "Yeah." He took a step back and removed his shirt, revealing his toned but heavily bruised torso. The bruises on his body still felt fresh from the fight with the Soviet Winter Soldier. He noticed Peggy looking at his bruises, "They aren't that bad."

Peggy closed the distance again and ran a gentle hand over a large bruise on his ribs. She felt him shudder at her touch. She looked up at him, "You sure?"

Steve smiled, "I'm sure."

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Early the next morning just before sunrise, Agent Ramirez picked up Steve and Peggy from Angie's penthouse in a black SSR car. The couple wore the same clothes as the day before because that's all they had. But, Steve wouldn't be in his dirty clothes for long because he going to be in his uniform very soon...

**Scarsdale, NY**

Ramirez drove the car slowly down the dimly lit neighborhood nearing the Rogers house. Steve who sat in the back with Peggy, leaned forward in his seat, "Pull over here."

Ramirez nodded, "You got it." He gently pulled the car over on the side of the road about five blocks down from the house.

Peggy understood why Steve wanted the car to stop here. She leaned toward him, "Be careful."

Steve nodded, "I will." He said as he grabbed his shield.

Peggy cupped his face gently then kissed him briefly. Once that was done, Steve quietly opened the passenger door and stepped out, then gently closed the door and made sure it was fully closed. As he started to cross the street, Ramirez drove the car slowly away.
Steve calmly strolled to his house with his shield in his hand. The neighborhood was dark with no signs of anyone awake because of how early it was in the morning. But Steve had a feeling some of the parked cars on the sides of the street had Leviathan agents inside watching the house for him to return. He didn't make any moves to try and hide because he needed to be seen so he can attract the Winter Soldier to his location. Once he got to his dark house, he calmly walked up the few steps to the front porch to unlock the door.

He opened his front door and stepped in quietly then closed the door slowly and quietly behind him. He gripped his shield as he started to walk slowly into his house, not turning on any lights. He needed to make sure the house didn't have any intruders to ambush him while he suited up. The dark didn't bother him because his vision was so enhanced from the serum that he could practically see in detail in the dark with little limitations. He walked slowly through the family room toward the eat in kitchen, but with each step he took made the floor creak loudly. He cautiously entered the kitchen and saw a dark figure sitting at the head of the dinner table with a pistol resting in front of the individual.

Steve gripped his shield and stepped in as he flipped the lights on in the kitchen. He got a clear view of the table and saw a pile of wires and devices in front of the pistol, and saw Bucky without the mask with his long hair framing his face. Bucky wore black utility pants, black combat boots, a dark thick leather vest, a black shirt under the vest with only one sleeve over his right non metal arm, and a single black glove on the metal hand. He stared at Steve with cold but confused looking eyes with an emotionless expression. Steve spoke softly, "Buck…" He said cautiously. Bucky didn't move or say a word. Steve breathed easy, "Bucky…"

The Winter Soldier stood up slowly, grabbing his pistol at the same time, and pointed it directly at Steve's chest. Steve gripped his shield tighter at his side on the defensive, but he didn't move. He didn't want to make any sudden moves to prompt Bucky in shooting him. Bucky held his weapon silently and motionless at Steve for a long intense moment with neither of them flinching. Finally, after what felt like an eternity, Bucky finally spoke, "…Who are you?" He said cautiously. He repositioned the pistol in his hand but kept it trained at Steve's chest, "What are you to me? Why do you call me, Bucky?"

Steve slowly stepped closer, "I'm Steve Rogers… and you and I are best friends…" Bucky kept his weapon on Steve. "We known each other since we were kids…and I called you Bucky for as long as I could remember." He said softly as he continued to slowly close the distance.

Bucky started to blink as suppressed memories started to quickly flash through his mind. He breathed heavier, "Who am I?"

Steve spoke softly as he continued to walk toward Bucky, "Your name is James Buchanan Barnes. You're a Sergeant in the United States Army…" He continued slowly, "You love sports and beautiful girls. You're the oldest of four…and your mother and father miss you so much." He spoke truthfully, but at this time Steve's chest was pressed against Bucky's pistol. Steve continued softly, "Your brother, Pete, returned home from the war safe. Your two sisters Rebecca and Marie have gotten married but live close by…" Bucky started to shake with each word Steve said. "They all miss you." Steve paused, "I know the Soviets made you do bad things. Made you into a weapon and made you forget who you are. But you're a good man…an honorable man." Steve spoke softly, "You're my best friend…and I'm with you 'til the end of the line…"

With those last words, Bucky's life started to flash through his mind. His fragmented memories finally overcoming the strenuous torture, indoctrination, and brain washing the Soviets made him go through. Even through all that he saw his memories but he only thought them to be dreams. Now, his memories are pouring into his mind too quick for him to fully comprehend. He only briefly saw his
family, but he saw in detail Steve when he was skinny then when he became tall and muscular. Then he started to briefly remember the experiments of Hydra and the Soviets, and how he became a weapon. Everything came back to him in a flood of fragmented memories, he remembered everything but at the same time he remembered nothing because of how fast everything seemed pour into him. But one memory stuck out for him...

1943

It was the night before Bucky shipped out for England, and he and Steve were supposed to be on a double date with two beautiful girls at the World Exposition of Tomorrow hosted by Howard Stark. But, instead of fully enjoying the company of the two girls, he caught Steve trying to reenlist again. He failed to talk his short skinny best friend down from attempting to reenlist for the 100th time. He sighed, "Don't do anything stupid until I get back." He said as he stepped back to return to his dates.

Steve chuckled, "How can I? You're taking all the stupid with you."

He chuckled, "you're a punk." He said as he walked up and hugged his friend goodbye.

Steve whispered, "Jerk." As Bucky stepped away, he whispered, "Be careful."

Bucky smiled then turned around and started to make his way back to his dates. Then he heard Steve call, "Don't win the war 'til I get there." Bucky smiled and turned around and saluted him goodbye.

Bucky finally returned to reality after a long moment. He lowered his weapon slowly to his side, "I remember… I remember…" He shook his head, "I'm no longer the Winter Soldier…” He blinked rapidly as he tried to compose himself. He breathed heavily, "You know…I was supposed to kill you."

Steve nodded, "I know… And I was supposed to kill you."

Bucky looked down, "If you couldn't talk to me… and we had to fight. Would you be able to?"

"No." Steve said instantly and honestly.

Bucky shook his head, "I've been so conflicted… headaches and dreams…dreams that were actually memories." He rambled. "I can't do this anymore..." He slowly holstered his pistol

Steve put a hand on his nonmetal shoulder, "Then don't. You have a choice now. This is your life…" Bucky nodded quietly as he tried taking everything in.

Steve nodded, "I have to go after them. You know that right? But I need a place to start. Can you show me?"

Bucky spoke quietly, "I'm going with you. I know where to go..." He held out his right hand,

Steve shook his hand, "Welcome back, Bucky." Bucky nodded silently. "I need to suit up." Before he left to grab his gear he turned to his old friend, "Those wires on the table…are those all the bugs and listening devices in the house?" Bucky nodded silently.

The sun began to rise and shined its dim morning light into the master bedroom. Steve stood alone in front of the open closet fully dressed in his Stars and Stripes combat uniform with no helmet. He turned around and picked up his shield that was leaning against the side of the bed then hung it on
his back. He took a deep breath and thought about what happened earlier. It was an intense few minutes when he faced Bucky in the kitchen, but he's glad that he was able to reach out to him and stand him down without getting into a drawn out fight. Bucky seemed to regain his memories, but Steve knew that he might not ever be his 100% old self again. The best thing Steve can do is help him recover one step at a time. Bucky is back…sort of.

Bucky silently walked into the room, and spoke softly, "Steve…"

Steve looked at Bucky, "yeah?"

"You got married…" Bucky said as more of a statement than a question.

Steve gave a small smile and nodded, "Yeah, I did."

Bucky nodded silently. "To… Margaret Carter. The SSR Agent we worked with before."

"That's her." He said while nodding to a row of pictures under the mirror on the dark brown wood dresser in front of the bed.

Bucky turned around and saw the pictures on the dresser. He slowly approached the dresser then gently picked up the center picture frame which held Steve's and Peggy's wedding photo. He stared at the picture for a moment and took in what he saw. In the picture, Steve and Peggy held each other tight in their arms with wide happily smiles on their faces. Steve was in his dress uniform complete with military decorations and Peggy was beautifully dressed in her wedding gown. Bucky spoke calmly, "Peggy…that's what everyone called her."

Steve smiled, "That's her."

Bucky gently put the picture back in its place, "She's beautiful. Congratulations…"

"Thanks." Steve replied softly, knowing that Bucky is trying to get a grip on his old life. But this is all sudden for him, so its going to take time and be a little awkward.

Bucky let out a small nervous chuckle as he remembered a fragment of a memory, "I remember when we were all at the pub in England. We were getting together to form a squad…Then Peggy walked in wearing a red dress." He chuckled lightly, "When she walked in…everyone stared at her, and every guy including myself became instantly attracted to her. But we knew by just the way she looked at you and how she focused on only you that she was attracted to you. No one had a chance."

Steve chuckled, "Honestly, I didn't even know for the longest time."

Bucky returned to Steve's side, "Not surprised." He said remembering how Steve had trouble with girls.

Steve placed his hand on Bucky's shoulder and gave it a friendly squeeze. He smiled at his friend, "Welcome back." He said again.

Bucky gave a small smile and a nod. He frowned and began to speak softly, "I've done so many bad things…"

Steve nodded, "Its not too late to do the right thing." Bucky looked at him. "Leviathan has already killed hundreds of innocent people. They need to be stopped…" He said plainly. "There's no better place to start…"

Bucky nodded, "let's do this."
Steve reached into the closet and pulled out a Winchester Model 12 12-guage pump action shotgun and handed it to Bucky, "Use this." Bucky took it quietly. "It's Peggy's." He said as he walked to Peggy's nightstand. He opened the drawer of her nightstand and pulled out a canvas shotgun shell pouch that had "U.S." printed in black on the center of the flap. He tossed the pouch to Bucky, "here is 12 shotgun shells."

Bucky nodded calmly thanks to Steve. He then said, "I need a map."

"We need a car." Steve replied plainly. Knowing that he and Peggy left their car at the Commando field office.

Bucky nodded, "I know where to get one."

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**SSR New York City Branch "Bell Co. Office"**

The rising sun beamed its bright light into the already busy SSR office. Peggy walked out of the elevator, still in her dark blue ¾ sleeve spring dress with her brown purse across her body. She was annoyed that her morning sickness came back even after her bounce in the bathroom earlier in the morning. She really hoped it wouldn't return if she got into a stressful situation. She also wanted to keep her pregnancy a secret from the SSR for as long as possible until she can figure a way to tell Sousa and still keep her job. She remained calm as she made her way into the busy office toward her desk. Other Agents greeted her good morning but she replied with a calm and courteous nod. Jack Thompson, wearing a dark blue suit, white dress shirt, black dress shoes, and a dark blue tie, approached Peggy, "Peggy." He said briskly.

Peggy unslung her purse, "Jack."

Thompson put his hands in his pockets, "Chief got everything set up. The Commandos are standing by downstairs in the garage, and he's preparing to get teams of Agents to search Edward & Bell Financial."

Peggy got to her desk and placed her purse on her chair, "Did he get a search warrant?"

Thompson nodded, "Yeah. He woke up the judge for it and hounded him into he got one."

Peggy looked at her watch, "What time are they executing the warrant?"

Thompson looked up at the clock, "About thirty or forty minutes." He nodded, "We also been updated on the Winter Soldier and his identity." Peggy was about to speak when she spotted Li and Ramirez approaching them.

Li and Ramirez, both wearing plain black suits and different colored striped ties, approached the duo. Li nodded, "We're ready to roll."

Ramirez spoke calmly, "We're just waiting for Captain Rogers to give us the word."

Li shook his head, "Is he going to come through? We're talking about the Winter Soldier; he might not want to be taken alive." He shrugged, "And the he might not even remember who he is..."

Thompson chimed in, "Captain Rogers will come through."

Peggy nodded, "Have faith in Steve..."

In the Chief's office, Chief Daniel Sousa, wearing a grey suit and tie, was preparing to send teams of
Agents to search Edward & Bell Financial when his office phone rang. He quickly answered it, "Sousa." He said crisply.

Steve spoke calmly on the phone, "Sousa. Address is 415 East 71st Street, an office building in downtown Manhattan."

Sousa quickly wrote the address and details down, "415 East 71st Street, got it."

"Leviathan operates primarily out of the top two floors and use all that space as a headquarters for their operations in New York. Leviathan's cover business is called New York Broadcasting Service which is supposed to be, as the name tells us, a radio and broadcasting company. The lower floors are offices for an American motor company, unaware of Leviathan's presence at the top." Steve said quickly. "They use the cover of a broadcasting company in order to spread secret encoded messages to their operatives more freely and in greater distances without anyone noticing.

Sousa nodded, "That's clever. Anything else?"

"There's only one entrance to the building and there is a special room on the top floor that requires a key which Barnes has." He said using Bucky's last name instead of his nickname.

"That room is got to be holding something important." Sousa replied calmly.

"My thoughts exactly." Steve paused, "We need to move fast. I don't know if we have the element of surprise. Nonetheless Barnes and I will meet you there."

"One last thing, Captain." Sousa paused, "Can we trust him?"

"I do." Steve emphasized before hanging up the phone.

Sousa hung up the phone then grabbed his cane, and limped slowly out of his office. Sousa called above the commotion of the office, "Listen up!" Everyone stopped what they're doing and paid attention to the chief. "We got what we needed. Agents Davis and Hall get your teams going to Edward & Bell Financial. Peggy's team wait for me at Peggy's desk. Everyone else, find me more leads on Leviathan!" Once he stopped talking, everyone went to work on their assigned tasks. The agents who are assigned to search Edward & Bell Financial quickly grabbed their side arms and headed for the exit.

Sousa slowly approached Peggy's team by her desk. Peggy looked at Sousa, "What do we got?"

Sousa nodded, "Captain Rogers made it. He was able to turn the Winter Soldier." Peggy breathed a sigh of relief, placing a hand on her stomach. Sousa continued, "The target building is 415 East 71st Street, an office building in Downtown Manhattan. Leviathan headquarters for New York operations is located on the top two floors. Barnes and Captain Rogers will meet us there, but we need to move fast."

Peggy nodded, "Got it."

Sousa spoke calmly, "Before you say anything. We can trust Barnes. If Captain Rogers trusts him then so can we."

Thompson nodded, "Didn't say a word, Chief." Everyone nodded.

Sousa nodded, "Good. Let's brief the commandos."

Peggy nodded, "You coming with us, Daniel?"
"Of course. This is my mission too." Sousa said calmly.

**Subterranean Garage under the SSR**

The Howling Commandos stood by four black SSR cars while they waited for word about the mission. The Howling Commandos all wore their standard combat uniforms and are fully equipped with Thompson Submachine guns and ammunition. All their heads turned when they heard the sound of the elevator doors opening. Sousa stepped out first, followed by Peggy and her team. Dugan approached the group, "What's the word?"

Peggy spoke up, "We got the location of a major Leviathan site."

Dugan nodded, "Looks like Cap came through. Got Bucky back."

Happy Sam Sawyer sighed, "Can we even trust him? He's the Winter Soldier remember? He sure was dead set on killing us in the Soviet Union, and lets not forget he tried killing all of you."

James Montgomery Falsworth adjusted his red beret, "Bucky is still one of us."

The original Commandos all nodded in agreement with James. Junior Juniper shrugged, "I don't know. We…"

Peggy interrupted him, "If Steve can trust him then so can we." She emphasized.

Jim nodded, "She's right."

Dugan clenched his fists, "Those Reds must've really messed with his mind to make him into a super assassin capable of fighting his best friends."

"Focus you, apes." Peggy said sternly, instantly getting their attention. "Go ahead, Daniel."

Sousa stepped forward and briefed the Commandos about the task at hand, specifically the target building, situation, and any other details about the building and potential threats posed by Leviathan. Once he finished briefing everyone, Dugan nodded, "Lets go tell the Reds that its rude to trespass."

**415 East 71st Street, Downtown Manhattan**

The morning sun shined bright on New York City as the streets started to crowd with people and cars commuting to work. Steve who sat in the front passenger seat and Bucky in the drivers seat, waited patiently in a beige four door sedan. Bucky and Steve acquired the car by getting the jump on two Leviathan operatives staking out the Rogers house. Both Steve and Bucky kept a close eye on the target building as they waited for the SSR to arrive. The building of interest is a tall and wide 20-story building with a tall black radio tower on the roof that had NYBS in big letters going down the tower. Steve turned to Bucky, "What do you plan on doing after we take down them down?"

Bucky didn't answer right away, but instead just breathed easy. After a moment he finally spoke, "I don't know…" He sighed, "I doubt my own people will just take me back." He said referring to the United States.

Steve looked at him, "I can get you a pardon. Because you weren't yourself when you did those things."

"It was still me. It was still by my own hand." Bucky said plainly. He looked down, "I need my own
way to redeem myself. I need to make peace my way." He sighed, "But I know, if I turn myself in they'll lock me up and throw away the key." He said plainly.

"I won't let that happen." Steve said sternly. "I can help you."

"You already have," Bucky said honestly. "But…" Suddenly they heard a high pitched alarm going off in the target building which instantly got their attention. Soon hundreds of people started to pour out of the building.

Steve opened the door, "This doesn't look good." He said as he put his helmet on. He quickly opened his door and stepped out. Bucky followed, he opened his door and stepped out then reached back into the car and grabbed the shotgun. The street was now crowded with people leaving the building causing a dense chaotic mess in the street. The duo quickly pushed their way through the crowd to the building like a fish swimming against a heavy current. Although it was chaotic, people recognized Steve pushing through the crowd toward the entrance of the building. Once they got just in front of the entrance, Steve stopped and asked a man, "Sir, what's going on?"

"Captain America?" The man gasped nervously. He regained his composure, "There's a gas leak inside!" The man said nervously. He gasped again when he saw the metal armed Bucky holding a shotgun.

Bucky looked up at the building, "That doesn't seem likely." He said instinctively.

Steve grabbed his shield from his back, "lets go." He said coolly.

They both pushed through the crowd into the large luxurious lobby, and made their way toward the elevators on the right side. As soon as they got into an empty elevator, Steve pushed the button to the top floor, "Lets hope the SSR gets here quick."

As the doors closed Bucky cocked the shotgun, "Leviathan knows we're coming."

Steve drew his pistol from its holster, "I don't doubt it." He said as he cocked his pistol.

After a long elevator ride to the top floor, the elevator doors slowly opened as a bell dinged signaling that they arrived to their floor. Steve and Bucky quickly exited the elevator with their weapons up, and Steve's shield was up covering the side of his face. The top floor looked like any other floor in a typical office building except it was fitted for radio broadcasting purposes. On the left of the elevators are dozens of desks organized in three lines stretching from the end of the room to just in front of the elevators, at the very end of the room is a private office with glass walls and brown window blinds hiding the interior, and on the right are a series of rooms for broadcasting. The only thing off was the fact that there were no people on this floor and it had no lights on like Bucky and Steve expected.

Steve spoke calmly, "This doesn't feel right." He looked at Bucky. Bucky held a calm expression. Steve didn't doubt Bucky, "Lets go. Tread carefully." He said as he began to slowly walk deeper into the room.

Bucky and Steve spread out with Bucky taking the left side of the room and Steve taking the right side. Steve slowly opened the door to one of the studio rooms and saw it was just a typical studio booth with a microphone, table, chairs, and a window to see the adjacent room that held the recording and broadcasting equipment. He took a step back and continued down the room.

Bucky on the other hand stopped by a desk and opened one of the drawers and saw nothing was inside it. Confused, he looked through another drawer then another, and found that the desk was completely empty. He walked to another desk and searched it, and discovered it was empty like the
last one. "The desks are empty." He said evenly.

Steve paused, "This whole place is empty." He looked at Bucky, "They must've cleared everything out. I have a bad feeling about this."

Suddenly a loud male voice coming from hidden speakers spoke loudly, "Captain America! Welcome to the New York Broadcasting Service! Its so good for you to visit." There was a laugh. "Come by my office and have a chat with me. Why don't you." Steve and Bucky looked at each other calmly. "I'll be waiting…" Said the voice quietly.

Steve looked at Bucky, "What is this?"

Bucky shook his head, "I don't know."

They both calmly converged to the office at the end of the room then waited for a moment. Steve nodded, "Be ready." Bucky nodded quietly in response with a stoic expression on his face. Steve quietly opened the door and was surprised at what he saw. The room was barren for an office, but it had the furniture for like a wood desk, chairs, bookshelves, and a couch on one end of the room with a wood coffee table in front of it. But there was nothing on the book shelf, nothing on the coffee table, and nothing on the desk except a lone microphone. Steve and Bucky entered slowly and cautiously.

The voice spoke up, "Expecting to see someone, Captain?"

Steve walked toward the desk with Bucky following close behind. Steve leaned on the desk, "Are you Leviathan?"

"I think the question you want to ask is, 'Are you the head of Leviathan?"' The voice chuckled, "To answer that, no I'm not. But I do work for them."

"I know this broadcasting service is actually a cover for you to operate secretly in the United States." Steve said plainly. "Although no one is in here, we still forced you to flee. Setting you back once again."

The voice chuckled, "You think this is a victory, do you Captain?" He paused, "Its true, you and your wife have set us back multiple times. But you have to know that you can't stop everything... and you can't stop what's soon to come. You're only one and we are many." Steve cringed. "Don't look so frustrated, Captain. Can't beat everyone." The voice laughed once again causing Steve to scan the room, "you can't stop it all."

Steve spoke calmly, "I'll stop you believe me…and I got friends who wouldn't mind joining me."

"I applaud your efforts, Captain." The voice laughed again, "Your enemy is a lot closer than you think..." Steve tensed. The voice spoke softly in a foreboding tone, "You're a kite dancing in a hurricane, Captain Rogers..."

"What are you talking about?"

"I'm afraid you're out of time…" The voice changed his tone, "Good work in bringing me Captain America…"

Steve quickly looked at Bucky in shock, but Bucky also had a shocked expression on his face like Steve. The voice laughed evilly, "shame we have to lose such a valuable asset. Goodbye…Captain Rogers…"
Bucky and Steve briefly shared a shocked gaze.

The group of four SSR cars initially approached the building quickly but they soon had to slow down just short of the building at the sight of the chaos in the street in front. The SSR cars stopped in their place on the road as the chaos and commotion in the street refused to yield to the cars on the road. In the lead car Dugan sat in the drivers seat with Peggy riding in the passenger seat, and Jim, Gabe, and Jacques in the back. Dugan gripped the wheel, "This doesn't look good."

Jim leaned forward, "Where's the Captain?"

Peggy spoke calmly, "I'm guessing this has to do with him." Suddenly there was a loud honk and fire truck sirens booming behind them.

Dugan looked through the rear view mirror and saw two red New York City fire trucks trying to inch their way past them on the left, "Peggy?" He asked awaiting orders.

Peggy took her pistol out of her purse, "Give them space and pull over to the right. We're going in."

Dugan nodded, "Got it." He quickly pulled over as much as he could to the right side of the road, carefully trying not to hit the parked cars on the curb. The fire trucks slowly past the small column of SSR cars toward the chaotic building.

Peggy gripped her Thompson submachine gun and opened her door, "Let's go." Everyone piled out of the car with their weapons in hand, causing the rest of the commandos and Agents in the following cars to do the same.

Jim cocked his Thompson Submachine gun, "That bell sure is loud." Jim said over the incredibly loud alarming bell inside their target building.

Peggy's team, Sousa, and the rest of the commandos quickly gathered by Peggy. Thompson looked up at the building, "What's the plan?"

Peggy nodded, "We have to assume Steve and..." Suddenly there was a massive concussive explosion from the top building causing them to instinctively duck. The already chaotic crowd in front of the building instantly became even more chaotic as everyone screamed in fear, and ran for cover in every direction.

Jim yelled instantly, "Holy shit!" After the initial blast, the top two floors instantly caught aflame.

Seconds after the explosion Peggy quickly looked up at the building and gasped when she saw that the top two floors were engulfed in an uncontrollable fire. Then suddenly she heard a loud metallic crash and glass shattering from about six cars in front of the SSR column followed by screams from frightened people.

Steve grunted in pain as he lay curled up on his shield on top of a mangled and smashed roof of a sedan. His jump from the 20th floor of the building sent him falling like rock into a parked car in front of the building. He smashed into the roof with a tremendous metallic thud, shattering all the car windows, and almost entirely crushed the car. The serum and landing on his shield kept him alive and in one piece from such a high fall. His shield, being made of vibranium, was able to absorb all the kinetic energy and transferring very little to him, so it was a key element in helping him survive such a fall from that great of a height.

Steve uncurled himself and groaned again as he recovered from the fall. As he tried to get up from
the crushed car roof, he saw the fire department quickly working to evacuate everyone from the area away from the building. He turned his head and saw the top two floors burning out of control in a ferocious flame. Suddenly he heard a familiar woman's English voice calling him, "Steve!" Steve sat up and turned and saw his wife being trailed by the commandos and her team of Agents.

Steve grunted and waved his hand, "I'll be alright…"

Peggy slung her weapon over her shoulder as she rushed over to Steve, "Steve! Oh my God!" She hugged him tightly for a moment which he reciprocated slowly. After a moment Peggy let go and ran her hands over his torso, "Are you alright? Did you…"

Steve nodded and ran a gentle hand along her cheek, "I'm alright, I promise." He gave a reassuring smile. "Yeah, I jumped off the top floor." He said softly.

Dugan shook his head, "Peggy… your husband…Cap…just, just…fell over 200 feet onto a car… and is still alive…" He said in broken English in shock as he connected the dots of what Steve just said.

Peggy smiled at Steve, "He's Captain America, Timothy…He can survive anything." She said surprised and shocked that he fell from that great height and lived.

Gabe couldn't believe it, "We know…its just…"

Thompson nodded at Steve, "Captain, was that you? Did you blow the two floors?"

Steve shook his head, "No, Leviathan blew it and I barely got out by jumping out the window."

Peggy looked at Steve with concern.

The fire department finished clearing the area of innocent bystanders and have quickly began to get ready to fight the burning building before it got out of hand. The Police have finally arrived on the scene and have began setting up a road block on both sides of the road in order to keep the area clear of any people. Sousa spoke calmly to the group, "This isn't good. Whatever evidence or tracks Leviathan left behind up there is gone."

Steve spoke, "They didn't have anything up there. They cleared it out even before Barnes and I went up there."

Sousa was about to respond when a group of three Police officers and a fire chief approached them. The lead Police officer spoke, "Gentlemen…" He noticed Peggy, "Ma'am…"

Thompson stepped in front of the officer and showed them their badges, "Federal agents."

The officer nodded, "We figured you're all agents since you're with him." He said mentioning Steve. "We need you all to clear the area, now."

The fire chief stepped forward, "The building fire looks like it might go out of control really quick. We need the area clear." He looked at the surrounding buildings, "Looks like we're going to have to evacuate the neighboring buildings…" He said to himself.

Sousa nodded, "I understand."

Thompson looked at him and whispered, "Chief, we need whatever is in that building."

Sousa nodded, "I know. But look at it. The top two floors are engulfed in flame, whatever is up there is going to be ash by the time the fire department is done. We'll salvage what we can later."
Thompson conceded, "Got it, Chief."

Falsworth walked up to Steve, "Captain, where's Bucky?"

Steve shook his head, "I don't know." Peggy stepped to his side and rubbed his back gently. The commandos all looked up at the burning building.

Jim whispered negatively, "Bucky is gone again."

Steve shook his head, "No he's not." The commandos all turned to him with surprise in their eyes. "Believe me, he's not up there."

Junior Juniper spoke up in his youthful voice, "Where did he go?" Before Steve could respond, Sousa walked up to them.

Sousa spoke calmly, "We have to go. The fire department needs to put out the fire. We're only getting in their way." He sighed, "Whatever is up there, is probably all ash by now. We'll salvage what we can later."

Peggy nodded in acknowledgement then turned to Steve. Steve nodded at her, "I'm alright." He said as he hopped off the car effortlessly then turned to grab his shield.

Dugan chuckled, "It's alright, Peggy. Captain isn't a princess so you don't have to worry." The commandos all chuckled while Steve shook his head.

Peggy smiled, "Just get in the cars." She said as she walked with Steve around her arm.

Dugan nodded, "Yes ma'am, Mrs. Captain Rogers, Ma'am." He said as he followed Peggy and Steve.

Peggy sighed, "Can you hit him for me, James." Falsworth whacked him on the back of the head with a loud thud as he passed him. Peggy smiled, "Thank you."

Falsworth nodded, "anytime."

Steve spoke up evenly, "This isn't much of a victory for us. We only slowed them down, but they still got away… and they're planning something big, but I don't know what..."

Sousa nodded, "The Captain is right." He paused, "We'll head back to the SSR and debrief."

Steve stopped suddenly, "Oh wait. Forgot about those operatives."

Peggy looked at her husband with surprise, "What operatives?"

"Bucky and I stole a car from two Leviathan operatives staking out our place." Steve pointed to a beige sedan across the street that was partially behind a fire truck.

Dugan called out, "I'll get 'em!" He started to run across the street.

As the SSR cars left with Steve and two additional passengers, the building continued to ferociously burn. The fire department looked powerless to stop the raging inferno that was now burning down the building.

SSR New York City Branch "Bell Co. Office"
The Commandos and Peggy's team returned to the SSR and immediately turned in their automatic weapons then went to one of the large conference rooms in the office while Sousa split off from the group, so he could deliver the two Leviathan operatives to separate holding cells. In the conference room, Peggy sat next to Steve on one side of the conference table, Thompson, Ramirez, and Li sat on the opposite side, and the Commandos stood at the back of the room surprisingly patient.

Eventually Sousa opened the conference room door and walked in, "Part of the team sent to investigate Edward & Bell Financial just returned."

Peggy looked up at Sousa, "What did they find?"

"While the team interviewed the staff, one of secretaries said that Edward Martin has been attending off hour meetings regularly." Sousa said as he took his place in front of the table next to the chalk board.

Thompson leaned back on his chair, "That screams suspicious. He's obviously with Leviathan. We're on the right track."

Li nodded, "What else did they get?"

"Part of the team just brought back a load of files from Edward & Bell. The rest of the team is still over there interviewing the staff and gathering more information." He leaned on the table, "Its going to be slow work."

Ramirez spoke up, "Anything from those two Leviathan operatives?"

Dugan spoke up, "Yeah, they're definitely Leviathan. They even look Russian…"

Sousa shook his head, "Nothing. They remained quiet when I put them in different holding cells. The guards will let me know if they talk." He looked at Steve then nodded, "So, Captain. What happened at the New York Broadcasting Service? Did Barnes betray you?"

Steve shook his head, "No. He didn't betray me. It was a trap set for both of us." He leaned forward, "Barnes and I arrived at the building thinking we'll meet you there."

Peggy spoke up, "We ran into heavy traffic in the city." She said plainly

Steve smiled at her, "Don't worry about it. You're alive because of this. If you all were up there with me, you've all been killed" He said honestly earning a nod of agreement from everyone. "Anyway, while we were staking out the place, an alarm went off in the building causing everyone to evacuate in a chaotic mess. Apparently there was a gas leak inside the building causing everyone to evacuate. We both didn't think it was likely so we went in to investigate before you got there. When we got to the top floor the floor was empty." Steve shook his head, "No one was in there. They probably used the alarm to cover their escape. The other peculiar thing was that they cleared everything out of every desk and every shelf."

Sousa nodded, "What happened next?"

"I spoke to someone who is part Leviathan on the radio? Who ever he was drew us in and kept us in place." He paused, "The voice was sure hell bent to letting me know that they can't be stopped. Then the voice said that my enemies are closer than I think. After that…well you seen what happened."

Jim mumbled, "This is a real pleasant talk…"

Sousa repeated, "Closer than you think…" He sighed, "That doesn't sound good…"
Ramirez asked curiously, "What's our next step?"

"Captain Rogers is right. Leviathan is planning something big with all that movement we've been seeing. Also they'll most likely be laying low and probably disappear for a bit so it'll be harder for us to hunt them." Sousa said plainly mentioning what Steve said earlier.

Junior spoke up, "Is it me…or does it seem a little easy for us to track down all those targets." Everyone looked at him. "Think about it. They cleared out that fast before the Captain and Bucky showed up… and Bucky was supposed to kill the Captain yesterday. But they already knew the Captain was coming, and were able to clear out their whole area before he showed up. Plus, Leviathan could've easily covered their tracks and make it harder for us to track them."

Ramirez spoke up, "It's already hard to track them."

"But we raided over a dozen targets in the past few months. Also they probably know we have at least one of their magic typewriter thingy's. The raid we did on Christmas Eve was pretty obvious that we captured one, but they still use it. This seems really easy. Almost like they are trying to draw us in for something." Emphasized Junior.

Dugan arrived at the same conclusion, "the kid's right. For a secret organization, they are leaving a lot of tracks." He looked at Peggy, "When you SSR agents were investigating Stark, Leviathan hid their tracks extremely well making you believe Stark turned traitor. If it wasn't for Peggy, you would've lost the nation's most valuable engineer."

Steve finally connected the dots, "I have to agree. This doesn't seem right at all. Leviathan is planning something for us... another trap or…" Peggy started to look concerned and instantly started to slowly rub her belly idly.

Dugan sighed, "This is bad, bad business…"

Sousa sighed, "I wouldn't tense up just yet. We don't know what we're dealing with right now. But...we'll keep digging." He looked at Steve, "Any idea what happened to your friend Sergeant Barnes?"

Steve shook his head, "No idea. But I can tell you that he isn't dead."

"How do you know for sure?"

Steve chuckled, "Call it a gut feeling."

Sousa sighed, "If I don't tell the higher ups that he's dead. They would want me to go find him."

Steve nodded, "He just wants to disappear from this whole thing. He wants to figure out who he was without being watched by anyone…"

Sousa nodded, "I guess I can understand..." He sighed, "I need to do a full write up on this." He turned for the door then instantly paused in his tracks and turned to Peggy, "Peggy...go on home. Its been a hell of a few days for you. Go ahead and take the rest of the day off." He turned to Thompson, "I want you to take over the head of the investigation on Edward & Bell Financial. Dig deeper and find out more on Leviathan, and try to figure out what their next move is and where they're hiding. Ramirez and Li question our new guests."

Thompson nodded, "You got it chief." He said under his breath, "Easier said than done."

Sousa turned back to Peggy, "One more thing. Before we left for the New York Broadcasting
Service building, I sent a scrub team to your house to search for any listening devices and bugs inside. They told me just recently that all the bugs and listening devices were already removed.

Peggy let out a sigh of relief, "That's good…"

"I'm also tasking two agents to watch over your house for the next couple of days to see if any more Leviathan Operatives come by again. Don't argue about it…"

Steve nodded at Sousa, "Thanks, Chief." Peggy just nodded quietly in understanding.

"You got it. Have a good day you two." Sousa said as he walked out.

Thompson stood up from the table, "Have a good day off, love birds." He said with a chuckle as he left the room.

Li laughed, "Someone has to work around here."

Peggy smiled and shook her head, "What ever you say." She said as Li and Ramirez left.

As soon as the agents left, Dugan stepped forward, "Can we tell them?" He asked excitedly.

Peggy looked at Steve confused then back at Dugan, "Tell them what?" Dugan raised his eyebrows with a big grin. Peggy finally realized what he meant. She nodded with a smile, "Go ahead, Timothy." She placed her hand on Steve's lap causing Steve to smile at her warmly.

Dugan turned to the commandos, "Our very own, Peggy is pregnant." The commandos all instantly cheered loudly for Peggy and Steve. The instant loud cheering and excitement caused the people in the office to look in at the conference room with confused looks.

Steve wrapped his arm around Peggy and quickly brought her in to kiss her on the cheek. She laughed excitedly as the commandos gathered around her to congratulate her. Even the usually depressed and cynical looking Happy Sam Sawyer was literally happy for the couple. Pinkerton smiled, "We're going to have little Captain Rogers' running around."

Peggy chuckled, "You mean little Peggy Carter's running around." Jacques Dernier spoke in French to everyone.

Gabe translated, "He said, 'don't you mean Peggy Rogers' running around?''"

Peggy laughed and nodded, "Yes, that's what I meant."

Jim looked at a grinning Steve, "So Cap, do you want a boy or a girl."

Steve tried so hard to contain his excitement, "I..." He chuckled and let out the biggest smile anyone has ever seen, "I'm just happy I'm having a baby." He laughed. Peggy kissed him on the cheek then smiled happily at him.

Dugan laughed, "Can't wait 'till the little one gets to meet his Howling Uncles…"

Sawyer frowned again, "Really? Howling Uncles? That sounds terrible."

Peggy laughed, "I quite like the sound of that."

Steve nodded, "Me too. But Dugan will have limited exposure to our baby."

"I agree." Replied Peggy with a smile.
Dugan sighed, "Why do you two always do that?" Everyone laughed.

Steve & Margaret Rogers Residence, Scarsdale, NY

Before returning home, Peggy and Steve needed to drop by the Commando field office to pick up their car they left there yesterday. It felt like it has been a month since they last been there because of everything that has happened the past few days. Once they returned home, the couple instantly went through the house to double check for listening devices and bugs just in case Bucky or the SSR scrub team missed any of them. They essentially spent most of the day together checking the whole house. After a long search that turned up nothing, they had a good rest of the day. They talked, laughed, danced, listened to music, and made food together like they were living a normal life. They both expressed their excitement for the baby, but Steve seemed more excited than she was. Peggy loved the fact that he was excited because all of his excitement strengthened her feeling to start a family now even with her job and everything going on. The good vibes made them almost forget what happened today…

That night, Steve, dressed in a white t-shirt and grey sweats, sat on the side of the bed and looked out of the open window to the night sky while he waited for Peggy to finish washing up in the bathroom. The thought about the baby took over all other thoughts in his head. Every time he thought about Bucky, his head would quickly go to the baby, and every time he tried to think about Leviathan, his head would go back to thinking about Peggy and the baby. He couldn't complain, he didn't want to sulk about Leviathan and lose his mind wondering about Bucky when he should be happy about the baby and spending time with his wife. The feeling of having a baby finally sunk in. He smiled widely, he's super excited but at the same time really nervous to start a family. He knew right off the bat that Peggy would be a great mother, but he hoped that he would be a good father. He also knew that Peggy would find the time to be with their son or daughter even though she will be busy with the SSR. But he wasn't so sure if he would be able to spend as much time with their kid as he liked, because he's still technically in the Army. Because he's Captain America, the Army might send him on a moments notice to far away lands far from home. He's the hero that everyone expects so much from. To be honest he started to think about living a normal simple life like he often thought about a long time ago.

It's funny when the war started, all he could think about was serving in the Army overseas to fight like everyone else. But now with the war over, he returned back to his old mindset for wanting to settle down and live a simple life. Unfortunately, he didn't know when or how to stop being Captain America. The threat of Leviathan is keeping him busy and always keeping him neck deep in the fold. Plus, he doubts the Army, the SSR, and the government will just let him retire. They expect so much from him that he's afraid that the lines between good and evil, and right and wrong will be blurred together. He knew eventually doing the right thing won't be black and white anymore… He just wants his own peace, but he knew he can't just slip away.

Peggy walked out of the master bathroom, wearing her pink collared and cuffed, black robe over her pink V-neck knee height night gown. She saw Steve sitting on the edge of the bed with his back to her, "Darling?" She asked curiously.

Steve turned around, "Hey." He smiled as he stared.

"What?" Peggy asked as she walked toward him.

Steve chuckled, "I'm just a lucky man to have you."

Peggy sat next to him and wrapped an arm around him and leaned into him, "And I'm such a lucky woman to have you. So, so lucky."
Steve hugged her tightly then kissed the top of her head. He leaned back with a worried look, "Uh. Peggy."

Peggy extracted herself from his grip, "Yes?" She said as she looked up at him noticing his worried look.

"So when I confronted Bucky in the kitchen earlier..."

Peggy nodded, "mhmm."

Steve nodded, "Yeah. He was. He was also the one who removed all the bugs and listening devices before the scrub team got here." He shrugged, "Anyways...Once I talked to him... uh." 

Peggy smiled, "Just spit it out, Darling."

"I gave him your shotgun to use so we could assault that Leviathan building...But uh. We obviously lost it." Steve said nervously, "I'm sorry. I know I should've asked you, but we needed the fire power because we didn't know what we'd might face."

Peggy laughed, "You were worried because you lost my shotgun!" Steve looked at her confused. She leaned into him again, "Captain America is afraid because he lost my shotgun..." She couldn't help but continue laughing.

Steve chuckled, "You bet I'm afraid. You're scary!"

Peggy controlled her laughter, "Oh, Darling. I can always get a new shotgun." She cupped his face and gently brought him in for a kiss. After they broke the kiss, she smiled at him, "But I love how you were concerned about it. Its very cute." Steve chuckled as she kissed him again. She nudged him gently, "What you need to do is be more careful." She chuckled.

Steve smiled, "I am careful."

"Darling please, you jumped out of a 20-story building." Peggy said while laughing.

"But I'm still walking." Steve chuckled, "I'm surprised you're laughing about it."

Peggy smiled, "Well I've come to terms with the fact that you have to do dangerous things, and put your life on the line because its your job." She chuckled, "I thought I came to terms with that a long time ago, but I guess once we got married I got concerned about it again." She kissed him on the cheek, "I'm sorry I got mad at you last night. That was unfair for me to do that. You were just doing your job and looking out for me and your friend."

"I can't forgive for what you didn't do wrong." Steve scooted over then took both of her hands gently. "You were right to be angry and concerned." He smiled, "I actually been thinking..."

"Hmm?" Peggy hummed in response.

"For the longest time I wanted family and stability. Even when I joined the Army, I often thought about it and wanted it." He gave a small smile, "I was hoping...that when the war ended I can finally have some measure of peace. Then when I was plunging that plane into the ice...I thought I'll never get there... Then I came back, and had a second chance...and here I am again being Captain America still in the fight..." He sighed and shook his head, "I don't know what I'm trying to say."

Peggy scooted closer to him, "Its okay. Take your time. I'm listening."
"I guess what I'm trying to say is that I'm going to eventually trade in my shield some day… and just live that simple life. Be your husband and be the father…" Steve chuckled nervously, "I don't think I'd want to do this forever." He said mentioning his position as Captain America.

Peggy looked confused, "Steve…"

"Its fine. This is my choice, Peggy." He smiled and gripped her hands, "I've been fighting all my life in one-way shape or form. I think its almost time for me to have some peace finally."

Peggy smiled, "Is everything okay, Steve?" She said with a hint of concern.

"Everything's fine, Peggy." Steve reassured. "Its just… I don't want to miss this. I don't want to miss our marriage and miss our family. This… this is my greatest adventure, and I'm happy to do it with you."

Peggy smiled and cupped his face and brought him in for a long kiss. After a long moment she let go, "I can leave the SSR too and we can both…"

Steve shook his head knowing what she will say, "You don't have to leave the SSR. You're doing good work in there, and you're making a real difference. You're hands down the most experienced and their best Agent…and I think you're just getting started." He said honestly.

Peggy smiled feeling reassured and motivated, "Thank you, darling. But what about you?"

"What about me?" Steve chuckled, "I'm just a kid from Brooklyn who doesn't know how to back out of a fight."

Peggy held her smile, "You know there is always someone to fight, Steve."

"Yes, but all fights do end. I hope I'm saving more live than I am taking them." Steve scooted toward her, wrapped an arm around her, and placed a hand on her belly, "When I finish the good fight… I'll be here." Peggy smiled and kissed him. Steve leaned back, "But I don't think I'll be turning in my shield for a while. Its just a thought for the future."

Peggy smiled, "Whenever it is, I'll be here with you, and we will raise our children together."

Steve smiled, "Wait…children? We don't even have one yet." He chuckled.

"No, but I wouldn't mind having more than one." Peggy said with a smile.

Steve laughed, "How many would you like?"

Peggy giggled, "No more than four and no less than two."

"Wow… we're going fast." Steve laughed.

"That didn't seem to bother you before, darling." Peggy said with a grin.

"No…I'm just. I'm just excited."

"I can tell." Peggy leaned forward and captured his lips gently. She pulled away and whispered, "I love you, Steve."

"I love you too."

Peggy smiled a wide smile, "I can't believe we're starting a family." She rested her forehead against
his, "Its going to be perfect…” Steve smiled.

HOPE YOU ENJOYED

I decided not to stick with the Bucky from the Comics, so he has a family back at home

I recovered his memory like Blood Diamond with the son, and Jason Bourne.

415 East 71st Street is from the Bourne Trilogy. Totally lacked imagination for addresses

Line from The Incredibles

Captain America said at the end of Age of Ultron, "Family, stability, guy who wanted all that went in the ice 75 years ago."

SO I figured Steve Rogers would eventually like to settle down.
Chapter 17 What's in a Name

I do not own Captain America

Going to keep the trend going of furthering a plot with a mixture of fluff

This won't follow Season 2 of Agent Carter as much.

Additionally, I'm altering the Marvel timeline a little and some character information

The incidents in New York City caused severe damage to part of the city's infrastructure, and already has a wide array of speculation from the public of what actually happened. The fire fight between Captain America and his team with a group of well armed unknown individuals left many people and press speculating and fearing what actually sparked such a fight. If it was just the fire fight, the public would've seen it as organized crime trying to seek revenge against him from all the raids he conducted against crime rings. But Captain America's presence at the explosion of the New York Broadcasting Service building made people think otherwise. The fact that he was seen at the building when it exploded convinced the public that there's most likely a bigger issue that they don't know about. The government and SSR quickly tried to cover up as much as they could, and stated that the building was destroyed by a gas leak that caught aflame. Even though the cover was really believable, the press and public still saw it differently. For a while now there were already rumors of Soviet agents entering the United States, so the public quickly saw it as Communist espionage. The incident with Captain America and the New York Broadcasting Service made many people take the rumors as fact. This is exactly what the SSR has been trying to avoid.

Fear of Communism was inevitable, but the recent incidents involving Captain America gave way to fear and doubt. The already intense rivalry between the United States and Soviet Union did not help the public still healing from World War II. The relations between the United States and her allies deteriorated with the Soviet Union immediately following the end of the war. With the wars end, the Soviet Union grew not only in power but in territory with the annexation of Soviet satellite states in Eastern Europe, causing Winston Churchill to coin the term "Iron Curtain" in 1946 to describe the tensions between the West and East. Joseph Stalin quickly responded that the coexistence of Capitalism and Communism would be impossible. Both U.S. and Soviet officials believed war between the United States and the Soviet Union was inevitable. The mounting threat of Soviet aggression in the world led the American people to quickly fear Communism spreading to the United States. News and rumors of Soviet spies and sympathizers penetrating the U.S. and the government quickly spread. Then in March 21, 1947, directly following Captain America's incident in New York City and other incidents in post war Europe, President Truman issued Executive Order 9835, known as the Loyalty Order, which mandated that all government employees be analyzed to determine that they were all loyal to the government. Truman's loyalty program showed the start of serious fear of communism…

The month following the incidents in New York City for the SSR and the Rogers was rocked with government investigations from the FBI under Executive Order 9835. Everyone in the SSR including Steve and Peggy were screened thoroughly to assure complete loyalty. But for Steve, he was screened longer and more extensively because of his presence during the New York City incident. A group of three FBI agents questioned Steve extensively on his position in politics, background, service in the war, and most importantly the Winter Soldier. Steve answered each question honestly and faithfully, even telling the FBI who the Winter Soldier actually was. Needless
to say, the FBI did not take it well when Steve told them that the Soviet Winter Soldier is an old friend of his. He did his best to explain what happened to Sergeant Buchanan "Bucky" Barnes and also defended the fact that Bucky defected from his Soviet captors and helped neutralize the Leviathan center at the New York Broadcasting Service building. The FBI regardless started to question Steve's loyalty, but ultimately let him slide due to endorsements from high ranking military officers and government officials. The FBI didn't much care for Steve's military record and his reputation of being a hero. Additionally, the FBI does not trust Bucky and will head a secret man hunt to find him because of how dangerous he could be to the security of the nation. The FBI was quick to show mistrust in him. Steve felt deep down in his gut that a terrible thing is going to happen in the immediate future. Luckily for both him, his wife wasn't questioned as harshly and passed with flying colors. Though she still has yet to tell her work that she's pregnant.

The main director of the SSR, US Army Colonel Chester Phillips is beginning the stages of change for the SSR to be replaced by a new government security branch with the help of the CIG, the Central Intelligence Group formed by President Truman in January of 1946 in part of the National Intelligence Authority. As the gradual change is being implemented and formed, the SSR will remain active until the formation of the new government agency in which the SSR will be absorbed. Until the time of the new formation, the SSR has branched out to Los Angeles, CA in order to cover both coasts more effectively. Chief Sousa of the New York SSR sent the highly experienced Senior Field Agent named John Flynn to run the Los Angeles branch, leaving Peggy as the only Senior Field Agent in the New York City Branch. Additionally, the Howling Commando Team is still active and remains stationed in the "Downtown New York 5&10" variety store in New York City.

After the incidents with the Winter Soldier things have returned to normal for the most part for the Rogers. Both Steve and Peggy Rogers embrace the life they live with all its ups and downs, and continue to live their life as a truly happy married couple that will soon have a little baby. Peggy is roughly a month and a half pregnant and both she and Steve are extremely happy and forever excited to be starting a family. But even with the love they share and the happiness of having a baby, Peggy felt a slight change in Steve since his screening with the FBI. She felt like he was becoming distant. She wasn’t upset with him, but merely concerned of why he was acting so strangely. Things were back to normal for the most part, but sometimes she would sees Steve randomly zone out and be lost in thought at times. It concerned her that something was extremely bothering the love of her life and the father of her unborn child.

April 1947, Steve & Margaret Rogers Residence, Scarsdale, NY

Its just a few hours before sunrise in the early hours of another peaceful Saturday morning in Scarsdale, NY. In the big comfortable bed in the dark master bedroom, Peggy slept soundly in her usual rose pink short nightgown, under the covers with her back against Steve's chest. Since she's only month and a half pregnant, her baby bump wasn't very noticeable, so sleeping wasn't so uncomfortable for her quite yet. Steve slept soundly in a white t-shirt and grey sweats, with his arm draped over Peggy's side under the covers. Steve slowly started to wake up as he gently tightened his grip on Peggy. After a moment of slight stirring, he finally started to slowly open his eyes to the dark bedroom. As his eyes quickly adjusted to the dark, his keen vision quickly landed on his sleeping wife. He smiled as he watched Peggy sleep soundly with her back pressed up against his body. In the dark bedroom, Steve decided to admire his beautiful wife for a few seconds before he got out of bed, as was his usual routine if he was up before her. Could anyone blame him? She's beautiful, kind, and tough when she needed to be. In all accounts, the love of his life. He smiled to himself as he got sentimental. Peggy did love that about him. He knew she loved that fact that under his rough and muscular exterior there is a very soft sentimental side that not many people know about. He was brought back to reality when he felt Peggy turn in his grasp and face him. Steve smiled widely.
Peggy softly spoke, surprising Steve, "Watching me sleep again, darling?"

Steve chuckled, "Could you blame me?"

Peggy smiled as she opened her eyes, "I suppose I can't." She said playfully as her eyes slowly adjusted to the dark. "I tend to do it too when you're asleep."

Steve brought her close and kissed her lips gently. He broke the kiss, "You're up early."

Peggy smiled, "Felt you stir a bit. Going for a run?"

Steve nodded, "Just a little one."

Peggy chuckled, "A little run to me is three miles. A little run to you is thirteen miles and you'll do it in half the time I'd run three."

Steve shrugged, "I've been getting slow."

Peggy chuckled again, "I find that hard to believe, darling."

Steve kissed her tenderly again, "Then I better get running." He rolled off the bed and stood up. He then leaned over and turned on the lamp on his night stand so he could see better. The lamp dimly lit up the room, but it was bright enough for the both of them to see everything.

Peggy propped herself up on her elbow, "Steve…"

Steve removed his shirt as he walked over to the dresser to get his running clothes, "Yeah?" He responded calmly.

Peggy had to shake the thought of admiring Steve's physique out of her head. Although she has seen it many, many times, she always has the urge to stop and admire him. But this time, she didn't want to. "Is everything okay?" She asked.

Steve stopped and turned around, "Yeah why?"

Peggy shrugged, "You seem distant recently."

Steve went back and sat down on the edge of the bed next to Peggy, "I don't mean to be." He said calmly.

Peggy scooted closer to him and rubbed his back affectionately, "What's going on, darling?" She paused, "Is it me?"

Steve turned and smiled at her, "Its not you. Nothing is wrong between us…"

Peggy relaxed a little, "I just had to ask. Are you nervous about the baby?"

Steve chuckled, "I am nervous about that." He sighed, "But its more about what happened with the FBI."

Peggy nodded, "I had figured that was it. I just wanted to be sure." She smiled reassuringly as she rubbed his back, "Want to talk about it?"

Steve chuckled lightly as he nodded slowly, "I can't keep anything from you can I?"

Peggy giggled back, "I'm your wife, Steve. I can read you like a book." She said humorously. "You
always do the right thing and you never lie." She said in praise of her husband.

Steve chuckled, "Thanks, Peggy." He looked up, "well... here it goes." Peggy pressed her body to his and wrapped her arm around his body to make him feel more comfortable. He took a deep breath, "The FBI questioning my loyalty and what they said to me made me wonder..."

"Wonder what?" Peggy asked curiously.

Steve sighed and looked down, "Maybe, I'm just yesterday's hero..." Peggy frowned at his statement. "I gave almost everything for my country, and they questioned me fearing that I am a communist agent or sympathizer." He sighed, "I know the Soviet Union is the bad guys...but after the FBI questioned all of us to see if we're loyal made the path that I walk a little hazy." He sighed again, "I'm worried that I'm walking into a no win situation where I can't determine what's right or what's not..."

Peggy nodded, "You're not yesterday's hero, darling. You're still my hero and the hero of thousands of soldiers you have served with. Not to mention the little kids around the country that look up to you." She rubbed his back, "I'm sure the FBI is just checking to see if none of us are Soviet agents."

Steve nodded, "You weren't there for my questioning, Peggy." He said gently.

Peggy nodded, "Is it because of your friend?"

"Yeah..." Steve said calmly. "They weren't exactly happy when I said I knew the Winter Soldier before he became a Soviet assassin. They also didn't take it well when I defended him when I said he recently defected from the Soviet Union." He sighed, "They kept questioning my loyalty to the government. The only reason why I'm still with the SSR and the Army is because of endorsements from ranking military officers and government officials. I don't think they much cared for what I had to say." He slouched, "I don't think Captain America is needed anymore."

Peggy hugged him tight with her arm, "Oh Steve. You're Captain America for God sakes, this country will always need you. I'm sure the government sees that." She smiled reassuringly at him, "Remember how you joined the Army to protect the little guys? Well, you're serving as Captain America to protect the innocent people of the United States from threats foreign and domestic." She smiled, "Now, I'm sure you can find a way to do the right thing. Like you always do."

Steve looked at his wife with loving eyes, "Did I ever tell you how lucky I am to be married to you?"

Peggy chuckled, "I know you said similar things."

"Well. I'm lucky to be married to you, Margaret Carter Rogers, and happy to be your husband." Steve said adoringly. He leaned over and captured her lips for a long moment. After a while he broke the kiss and smiled, "I love you."

"I love you too, Steve." Peggy said warmly.

"Thank you for being there."

"Always, Darling." Peggy kissed him again.

Steve broke the kiss and gave a sad smile, "Sorry for being distant. I didn't mean to." He said apologetically.

"It's okay, Darling. Nobody's perfect." Peggy said with a smile.
"You are." Steve said honestly. He stood up then turned around and kissed her lips again, "Get some sleep Mrs. Rogers. You're pregnant so you need to make sure you get full sleep." Peggy nodded with a smile.

Peggy then whispered, "I'll have breakfast ready when you get back." She chuckled, "I think its my turn."

Steve smiled, "That'd be great." He chuckled, "Though, I don't think we need to take turns."

"Well you always want to cook." Peggy said with a wide smile.

Steve chuckled then sat back down on the bed, "I'm just trying to make sure you're not swamped at home. Because you work too."

Peggy laughed, "Why do I feel like you do more of the house work than I do?"

Steve shrugged, "I'm just trying to help. You know do the right thing?" He responded with a laugh.

Peggy laughed, "I'm not complaining. Its just funny to think about it sometimes."

"Just trying to do the right thing." Steve repeated with the shrug of his shoulders.

Peggy smiled, "I know. That's one of the many reasons why I love you, Steve." She leaned into him and kissed his bare shoulder.

Steve smiled, "Well, we never were a traditional couple anyway."

"That's the truth…and I love it." Peggy said with a wide smile.

"Now I got to get running and you need your beauty sleep." Steve stood up again and kissed her lips tenderly one last time. "Get some sleep." He repeated again. "I'll turn off the light before I go."

Peggy laid back down, "Thank you, Steve." Steve just smiled as he went to the dresser and got his white Army SSR PT shirt and blue running shorts. He shortly disappeared into the bathroom to change.

Three hours later Peggy's alarm clock erupted with its loud obnoxious metallic ring. Peggy rolled over to her night stand and quietly groaned at the obnoxious sound. She was enjoying such a good dream, but the alarm clock had to destroy the moment. She opened her eyes and groaned at the obnoxious sound. The room was brightly lit with the natural early morning sunlight managing to peer through the closed drapes covering the windows. She sighed and reached over to her night stand and lazily placed her hand on her noisy alarm clock to stop it ringing. She then grabbed it to get a better look at the time, and saw that the clock read 7:00. Peggy sighed again, time to get up.

Peggy sat up in bed and stretched for a moment, then started to gently rub her growing baby bump as was her usual in the morning since she found out she was pregnant. She looked down at her belly with a smile on her face, "Good morning." She said to her small baby bump. She stretched briefly again before getting off the bed to get ready for the day. She walked a short distance over to one of the arm chairs by the windows to get her pink and black robe that was draped over one of the chairs. Once she put her robe on and tied it off, she proceeded to make the bed and get ready for the day.

As she finished making her bed, she started to feel a craving coming on. She sighed, as much as she
is excited for having a baby, she dreaded the cravings, the morning sickness when it happens, and soon the drastic increase in weight. Her stomach made a loud sound causing her to sigh, "We'll eat in a second, honey." She said to her little baby bump.

Moments later in the kitchen, Peggy, still in her robe, leaned against the sink counter with her back to the kitchen sink window as she patiently waited for the kettle to boil so she can make her tea. She stared idly at the kitchen table and inhaled the wonderful aroma of the breakfast she recently made. The wonderful smell of the large amount of eggs, bacon, and sausage she made filled her nose. The food choices, although a typical breakfast, was mostly due to her cravings for all three. She essentially made more than enough food for both her and Steve, so breakfast was more than ready for her husband when he got back home from his "little run".

Though her cravings are getting to her, she ultimately decided to wait for the kettle to boil first so she can enjoy both her tea and her breakfast at the same time. What she should have done was make tea at the same time, but she was thinking of her cravings first before anything else. But the sudden thought of Steve and his cooking made her stomach growl even more causing her to rub her belly idly again. The cravings started to really bother her, she turned around and put her hands against the sink counter as she waited for the water to boil. It felt like she was watching grass grow. Her mind went off track when she looked slightly to her right and saw the framed picture she put next to the sink. It's a picture of her and Steve in the Stork Club after their honeymoon. Steve was dressed nicely in a suit, and sat on a chair with a big happy grin across his face, while Peggy, in a form fitting dress, had her arms wrapped around him from behind with her chin resting on his shoulder while she had an equally happy grin across her face.

Peggy smiled at the picture as she remembered the fond memory. Suddenly the kettle finally started to whistle causing her to return back to reality.

As soon as she started to pour the boiling water into her teacup she heard the front door open followed by Steve's voice, "Peggy, I'm home."

Peggy smiled, "I'm in the kitchen, darling!" She stopped pouring water into her teacup and heard the front door close. She walked back over to the stove and placed the kettle down on the stove.

Steve walked into the kitchen sweaty but not looking physically tired. "Hey, good morning, beautiful." He said with a smile as he made his to his wife.

Peggy turned around and smiled, "Hey. How was your run?"

Steve stopped in front of her and wrapped an arm around her waist and gently brought her in for a tender kiss. He broke the kiss after a short moment and let go of her hip, "It was a little run. Nothing big." He said with a smile.

Peggy chuckled and shook her head, "Little run. What was it, like 50 miles?" She said as she placed a hand on her hip.

Steve chuckled, "I was going slow so it was a little over that." He said modestly.

Peggy rolled her eyes, "Goodness, Steve. I know you're a super soldier, but I always find your physical fitness impressive." She paused and eyed him up and down.

Steve laughed and stepped back, "Yeah, I'm sweaty, sorry."

Peggy chuckled, "Since when did that ever bother me." She said with a raised brow.
"True. You got me there." Steve chuckled realizing he had nothing to say to that. Peggy raised her eyebrows and hummed in response with a wide smile across her face. Steve leaned forward and kissed her again.

Peggy broke the kiss, "I made breakfast."

Steve turned around and saw the food on the table, "I could see and smell that." He laughed, "craving eggs and bacon, huh?"

Peggy rubbed her belly with one hand while keeping the other on her hip, "The craving been bothering me all morning."

Steve smiled, "Then what are we waiting for?"

Peggy chuckled, "I was waiting for my tea." She nodded to the table, "Though, nothing is stopping you."

Steve smiled, "then lets eat."

The two of them went to the table and sat down at their respective seats to eat their delicious smelling breakfast. Peggy started on her breakfast as she spoke, "So what do you want to do today after work? Since I'm getting off early today.

Steve nodded, "Hm." He chuckled, "Want to go to Coney Island? You and I haven't been there in…" He cringed, "wow…I don't think you and I actually been to Coney Island together yet."

Peggy swallowed her food then spoke with a smile, "then we have to go." She laughed, "Just as long as your friend doesn't reap havoc in New York City again?"

Steve shook his head with a smile, "That's not remotely funny."

Peggy chuckled and shrugged, "It's a little funny."

Steve laughed, "Fine, I'll give that to you." Both Peggy and Steve shared a good laugh while they enjoyed their breakfast. Steve calmed down, "So, Coney Island?"

Peggy nodded, "Coney Island."

Steve smiled, "Then it's a date."

After quickly eating their breakfast the couple quickly washed the dishes and got dressed for work. Steve got dressed in his stars and stripes combat uniform with his shield on his back and helmet strapped to his war belt. Peggy got dressed in a dark blue women's business suit jacket with a white lapel over a light purple women's business blouse, equally dark blue business skirt, red high heels, silk stockings, her normal neutral make up, red lip stick, and wore her dark brown elegantly wavy hair down.

As Steve and Peggy stepped out of the house together, Steve smiled at her, "See you later, Peggy." He kissed her on the cheek, "I love you." He said as he took out his motorcycle keys then turned and walked off the porch and down the path to his motorcycle parked behind Peggy's car in front of the house at the curb.

Peggy smiled and called back to him, "I love you too." She took out her car keys from her brown purse and made her way to the dark blue four door Chevrolet Style Master car.
Once she got to her car, she opened the front passenger door and placed her purse on the front seat. The loud sound of the motorcycle engine caused her to look up and see Steve drive away on his motorcycle while waving at her. She smiled to herself as she closed the passenger door. As she made her way to the driver side of the car, Peggy saw her older neighbor from across the street standing in her doorway in a bathrobe, slippers, a large amount of hair rollers in her hair, and the morning paper in her hands. Mrs. Mary Ryan, mother of three and a housewife, smiled at Peggy, "Good morning, Peggy!" She called.

Peggy opened the driver’s door of the car as she turned to her neighbor across the street, "Good morning, Mrs. Ryan."

Mrs. Ryan lowered her paper and waved her hand dismissively, "Oh dear." She said cheekily, "I keep telling you to call me Mary."

Peggy smiled and waved, "Mary."

"That Captain America husband of yours." Mrs. Ryan shook her head, "He is something else. He's probably off to save the world again, huh?" She laughed, "Like how he fought off all those men a while ago." She chuckled, "My husband can barely save dinner let alone save his client." Peggy chuckled not knowing what to say. Mrs. Ryan smiled happily, "Anyway, where are you off to in the morning?"

Peggy smiled, "Off to work." She waved, "Have a good day Mrs. Ryan!" She called out as she got in her car. She was quick to cut the conversation short because Mrs. Ryan is a lady of tradition. When Peggy and Steve first got married, Mrs. Ryan was quick to ask if Peggy would now stay at home, become a housewife, and start a family like any "proper" lady should. Not to cause any conflict with the neighbors, Peggy simply agreed to everything Mrs. Ryan said. Though, Peggy does want a family, she doesn't want to give up her job. Peggy considered the Ryans as the annoying neighbors of the block...

Mrs. Ryan shrugged, "We have interesting neighbors…” She said plainly as she watched Peggy drive off down the road. She shook her head, "Captain Rogers will have trouble with that one. Being all independent…"

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**SSR New York City Branch "Bell Co. Office"**

Peggy stepped out of the elevator onto the SSR main office floor with her heels clicking with each step she took. She walked straight and confidently toward the main office space of the office, though her mind was preoccupied with work and the excitement of going to Coney Island later in the day with her husband. But, suddenly one of the male agents walking toward her nodded at her bringing her back to reality, "Good morning, Agent Rogers." The agent said.

Peggy nodded back, "Good morning."

Another agent about to cross her path stopped and nodded, "Good morning, Peggy."

Peggy again nodded back, "Good morning." As she walked toward her desk, agents who walked passed her or crossed her path all gave her a courteous nods and warm greetings.

Though she didn't much care of proving herself to her male counterparts, her successful mission record and reputation finally became admired among the men and other agents in the SSR after her success and major contribution toward the end of the Stark case. But she was only praised and considered an equal in the New York side of the SSR. Outside of the New York City branch, she
would still be considered a second rate agent. But in the New York City branch after the recent incidents in the city, the agents found new confidence in her abilities after she helped the Howling Commandos and Captain America fight off multiple gunmen and the Winter Soldier on the streets of the city. Peggy, being modest, claimed she didn't deserve as much of the credit the commandos are giving her, but the commandos exaggerated her part saying that she fought the Winter Soldier single handedly until Captain America got to her. Surprisingly all the agents believed it including her team. She wasn't mad at the commandos for the exaggeration…she just found it incredibly childish…

As Peggy made her way to her desk, Agent Rick Ramirez approached her with a couple of files, "Good morning, Peggy." He said courteously. He wore a plain black suit, black tie, white dress shirt, and polished black shoes.

Peggy smiled warmly, "Good morning, Ramirez." She got to her desk then saw what Ramirez was holding, "What do you got?"

Ramirez placed the stack of files on her desk, "these are some cases we just got."

Peggy put her purse down on her desk next to the files, "Anything concerning Leviathan?"

Agent Mike Li wearing a grey suit with the suit jacket unbuttoned, grey tie, white dress shirt, grey dress pants, and grey dress shoes, rolled his desk chair back and looked over at Peggy, "We haven't seen or heard of Leviathan in months. All our leads we got are dead ends. The case we have on Leviathan is as cold as it gets."

Peggy looked through the files and didn't find anything that looked like it could lead to Leviathan. The files were a couple of small cases concerning poor weapon development that didn't amount to any concern. Peggy sighed, "Leviathan is here. I have no doubt."

Ramirez nodded, "We know their here. We just can't seem to find them."

Peggy sighed again, "I know. They're plotting against this country as we speak. Time is something we don't have." She looked at both of her agents, "Keep tracking down whatever leads we got. If it's a dead end then it's a dead end, we'll just move to the next one."

Li shook his head, "We're running out on leads. We aren't getting much intel from station chiefs around the country or in Europe."

Peggy nodded, "We'll just work with what we got." Ramirez and Li nodded in agreement. She moved the files on her desk to the side and decided to distribute the cases among other agents after she talked with Sousa. Peggy looked around and noticed Thompson wasn't in the office, "Where's Jack?"

Ramirez nodded to the Chief's office, "talking to the chief."

Peggy nodded, "Thank you." She turned and went for the Chief's office.

Ramirez asked curiously, "What about these cases?"

Peggy turned around, "I'll distribute them to the other agents in a second."

In the Chief's office, Sousa wearing a white dress shirt, brown tie, tan suit trousers, and beige dress shoes leaned back on his desk chair that had his suit jacket draped over it. "I gave you the option to take the Los Angeles station, but you refused it."
Agent Jack Thompson, wearing a dark blue suit, blue patterned tie, white dress shirt, and black dress shoes, leaned against the office window with his arms crossed, "I'd rather stay on Peggy's team. She knows where all the action is." He shrugged, "I just wish she'd take me more often."

Sousa chuckled, "You ever think trouble just finds her?"

Thompson laughed, "Its got to be because she's married to Captain America."

"You boys gossiping about me now are you?" Peggy said with a smile at the doorway.

Sousa chuckled and waved her in, "Come on in, Peggy." He said slowly standing up.

Thompson stood straight, "We didn't say anything bad…"

Peggy walked in and waved at him with a smile, "You can go ahead and say whatever you want, Jack. It never stopped you." Thompson chuckled as he put his hands in his pockets.

Sousa shrugged, "What we were initially talking about is what his friend in the FBI said about the SSR."

Peggy stopped in front of Sousa's desk, "What did he say?"

"The SSR will be defunct and replaced by a new government agency because this was a wartime organization." Sousa sighed, "I heard rumors and some news about it, but I didn't actually think it be this quick."

Thompson nodded, "We're still under the department of the Army… Except we're not the Army. We're the grey area between civilian and the Army."

Peggy nodded, "Colonel Phillips is still in charge of the SSR I believe."

Sousa replied calmly, "Yes he is for the most part."

"Steve, told me about this a while ago actually. The government is supposed to be making some kind of security branch of some kind."

Thompson shrugged, "Well…we're all out of the job." He chuckled, "These mergers are terrible for job security."

Sousa sighed, "That's us gossiping."

Peggy shook her head, "You ladies have no idea what gossiping means…"

Sousa chuckled, "What do you need, Peggy?" He said changing the subject.

Thompson nodded at the two, "I'll get out of your hair." He then walked out calmly to get back to his desk.

Sousa sat down on his chair, "Take a seat." He offered. Peggy sat down calmly and crossed her legs one over the other.

Peggy took a deep breath, "Well… I know I'll have to tell you eventually. Might as well tell you now." She leaned back, "Steve and I are going to have a baby."

Sousa's eyes widened, "You… you're…"
Peggy nodded calmly, "I'm pregnant. Yes."

Sousa smiled, "Congratulations, Peggy! This is great news! I'm so happy for you both." He let out a sigh of relief, "For a second I thought you came in to tell me you were going to quit."

Peggy chuckled, "Me? Quit? Are you joking?" She nodded, "Though, I am worried about how this is going to effect my job."

Sousa chuckled, "Your job is secure, don't you worry about that. You're the best agent we got." He nodded, "Though... I'm going to limit your field duty, and then when your pregnancy goes further down the line I'm going restrict you from field duty in order to keep you out of harms way and to safe guard your baby." He put his hand up to make sure Peggy doesn't argue with him, "Trust me, this is for the best. I'm sure Captain Rogers would agree."

Peggy understood, "Once I have the baby, I can come back to work right? Pick up where I left off?"

Sousa nodded, "Of course. We need you, Peggy. Your job is secure." He smiled, "Also I'll put you on family leave when your due date is near." He shrugged, "Hope I'm getting that right."

Peggy smiled, "Thank you, Daniel."

"Is that all?" Sousa asked with a smile.

"That's everything." Peggy said standing up, "Thank you."

"Any time." Sousa said. But before Peggy left the office, Sousa asked, "You find anything on Leviathan lately?"

Peggy stopped and turned around at the door, "We got nothing. Each lead we have received is just one dead end after another."

Sousa sighed, "We got to keep digging. There's no telling what they'll do." He leaned back on his chair, "I knew finding all those targets before were too easy..." He nodded at her, "Got to keep digging, Peggy."

Peggy looked out of the office to and saw her group of agents looking like they are discussing something serious. She looked back and nodded, "we're working on it."

Sousa nodded, "Keep up the good work."

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Steve & Margaret Rogers Residence, Scarsdale, NY

After getting off work in the early hours of the afternoon, Peggy finally returned home and parked her car behind Steve's motorcycle. She got out of the car and grabbed her purse and her suit jacket from the passenger seat then closed the car door. She put her purse over her shoulder then folded her suit jacket evenly and draped it over her arm before making her way toward the house. As she walked down the path to the house she enjoyed the warm spring sun, clear blue skies, and the pleasant cool spring breeze. The moment she woke up, she knew it was going to be a beautiful day, but she just now got a chance to fully enjoy it. She couldn't help but smile widely while she walked because she knew that their little date at Coney Island will be accompanied by great spring weather. She walked onto the covered wooden front porch and opened the already unlocked front door.

"Steve, Darling I'm home!" She called as she stepped all the way into her house.

Peggy closed the door behind her and heard Steve call back, "I'm in the family room."
Peggy dropped off the car keys on console table then walked down the short hallway into the family room and saw her husband on the couch drawing in his drawing book. Steve wore a light blue checkered long sleeve collared button up shirt, a white under shirt, black belt, dark blue dress pants, and black dress shoes. Peggy leaned against the wall and smiled, "What are you drawing?" She said as she crossed her arms over her stomach with her suit jacket still draped over one of her arms.

Steve stopped drawing and lowered his drawing book to look at his wife, "Uh. Not sure yet. Kind of hitting the wall."

Peggy chuckled, "Is it a dancing monkey?"

Steve laughed, "Can't believe you remember that."

Peggy pushed herself off the wall and walked toward the couch, "You'll be surprised how much I remember." She stopped behind the couch then draped her suit jacket on the couch then wrapped her arms around Steve and kissed his cheek. She then rested her chin on his shoulder and smiled.

Steve closed his drawing book and gripped her arm affectionately, "You always find ways to surprise me." He turned his head and kissed her on the cheek. Peggy turned and kissed his lips briefly in response. Steve smiled, "Ready to go?"

Peggy chuckled, "I will be in a bit. Let me get dressed in something that isn't business oriented." She kissed him again.

Steve smiled, "I'll be here." With that Peggy turned and left. Steve smiled happily as he continued to draw in his drawing book.

Moments later Peggy came down the stairs fully dressed for the day. She wore a white short sleeve blouse with a low round neck with a perfectly tied white bow at the bottom of the low round neck, her blouse was tucked neatly in a long dark red swing skirt, and her outfit was accented with dark red heels. Her hair and make up remained relatively the same, but she did reapply her red lipstick for good measure. She entered the family room again, "Ready." She happily said.

Steve stood up from the couch and fixed his shirt, "Ready." He repeated as he started to roll up his sleeves.

Peggy smiled, "I think we if we go some other day and go earlier, we can go swim."

Steve came up to her and wrapped an arm around her and brought her in close, "We can do that some other day. But I'm just looking forward to kicking your butt in skee ball."

Peggy hummed, "Hm. I'm looking forward to riding the cyclone."

Steve chuckled, "Ah…yeah…"

Peggy smiled, "What, not into roller coasters?"

"Still not over the last time I went on that." Steve said plainly.

Peggy laughed, "Fine, I'll tell you what…If I beat you in skee ball then you have to ride the cyclone with me."

Steve chuckled, "What do I get if I win?"

Peggy shrugged, "My love and support." She laughed.
Steve laughed, "Deal. I have much more riding on this already." He let go of Peggy and made his way to the console table in front of the front door, "I'll drive."

Peggy laughed, "I don't know why the cyclone is such a big deal for you. Its just a roller coaster and you've done scarier things before."

Steve shook his head, "I'm scarred of what happened to me last time."

Peggy laughed as she joined her husband at the front door, "Prepare to lose, darling."

Steve laughed sarcastically, "Ha! You highly underestimate my ability in skee ball."

**Coney Island, Brooklyn, New York**

The sun was slowly setting in New York, but the crowded Saturday spring fun in Coney Island didn't seem to be stopping. People of all ages crowded the amusement park even though the day seemed to be ending. More and more people were pouring into the park for the evening to enjoy good food, music, rides, games, and of course the electric atmosphere that the great Coney Island provided. In a few hours the sun will fall behind the horizon and the night life of Coney Island will erupt with amazing light displays, music, and energetic crowds.

At the skee ball game booth, Steve and Peggy were busy playing rounds of games while the sun set behind them. Peggy laughed, "There it goes!" She said as her ball went into the 100-point mark.

Steve sighed, "Oh man."

Peggy turned to her husband and placed her hands on her hips, "That's game." She said proudly.

Steve chuckled, "one more game? Winner take all"

Peggy laughed, "Darling, do you want to be even more embarrassed? Your wife is kicking your butt in skee ball."

Steve laughed, "I got pride on the line here… and dread of going on the cyclone." He looked around and saw all the other skee ball games occupied with people then saw the crowd of people behind him watching the games and waiting for their turn to play.

Peggy looked over at Steve, "Up to you, but the question is can you handle the shame?"

Steve nodded, "One more round!"

Peggy chuckled, "Prepare to ride the cyclone, darling." Steve got ready for his final match.

Peggy had her arm wrapped around Steve with her hand planted on his chest as they slowly walked to the cyclone roller coaster. Peggy laughed, "Come on, darling it won't be that bad."

Steve sighed, "I can't believe I lost… I used to be the king of skee ball." He said defeated.

Peggy chuckled, "Maybe it's the fact that you aren't used to being so strong while playing skee ball, so you were strong arming the ball way too much."

Steve stopped in his tracks and thought about what she said for a moment, "Huh… that makes some sense… though I should be used to having this strength already…"
Peggy shook her head with a smile, "Darling, you need a delicate touch for that game, and I think you forgot how to do it."

Steve nodded, "Looks like, I'm riding the cyclone." He said in dread.

Peggy gently pushed him with her shoulder, "It won't be that bad, Steve. I promise."

Steve looked at her astonished, "Wait, have you even rode it before?"

Peggy smiled and shook her head, "Not at all. Been wanting to though."

Steve sighed, "Fine. Lets do this…"

"That's the spirit!" Peggy called happily.

After the intense roller coaster ride, Steve was very quiet as he walked with Peggy toward the boardwalk. He had his arm wrapped around Peggy's back while Peggy did the same with Steve as they walked quietly to the boardwalk. The sounds of rides, laughter, music, and cheers from excited people filled their ears while the beautiful view of Ocean in the setting sun occupied their vision.

Peggy looked up at Steve, "Darling, are you alright?"

Steve nodded, "Yeah…"

Peggy chuckled, "Was it that bad? I thought it was quite fun."

"It was scary…" Steve said in a frightful tone.

Peggy laughed, "How is it that you can fight bad guys, go to war, jump out of airplanes, and do all these crazy things, but are afraid of roller coasters."

Steve laughed and shrugged, "Nobody's perfect."

Peggy hugged him tighter, "You are to me, Steve."

Steve smiled, "Well my fear came from the time when Bucky and I had this wonderful idea…"

"I can see where this is going."

"We decided to ride the roller coaster for the first time immediately after eating a ton of hot dogs and candy…" Steve laughed at the memory, "I threw up at the end …and at the time it was the scariest thing I ever been on." He shook his head, "Getting into fights didn't compare…"

Peggy laughed loudly, "You amaze me, Steve."

Steve looked at her curiously, "What?" He said chuckling.

Peggy stopped and turned toward him and smiled, "Nothing, just finding you funny." Steve smiled back at her. She then looked at the view of the ocean said softly, "Its quite a view."

Steve didn't look at the view but instead continued to look at Peggy, "Yes it is." He replied, looking pointedly at the beautiful woman in front of him.

Peggy turned to face him and found that he was looking right at her. Her cheeks quickly flushed a fetching shade of red when she realized Steve was referring to her and not the view. "Thank you."
She whispered. She smiled, "I have to ask you something."

"Go ahead." Steve said warmly.

"This is a little sudden, but I suppose I'm just a little excited." Peggy paused, "What should we name the baby?"

Steve smiled, "I thought about this a lot too actually." He looked up to the sky in thought, "Hm…"

Peggy couldn't stop smiling, "If it's a girl, I think I'd like to name her 'Sarah'."

Steve quickly looked at Peggy and said in a soft tone, "That's my mother's name." He smiled, "I like it. It's a good name."

Peggy looked up at him curiously, "And if it's a boy?"

Steve looked up again, "There's a lot of good names." He suddenly had a good idea. "How about Michael Carter Rogers." He nodded, "Yeah… Michael Carter. He will be named after your brother and have your last name."

Peggy smiled, "I love it. Though, why did you put my last name?"

"Because our child will already have my name, so I want to have your name in their too. I want your name to be part of our child's too." Steve said with a smile. "So, our daughter can be Sarah Margaret Rogers."

"My name?" Peggy asked curiously.

Steve nodded, "Why not? It's a great name. Now our children will have both our names in some way."

Peggy shook her head, "I really love it." She leaned up and kissed his lips. Steve hugged her and deepened the kiss as the sunset behind them.

After a short walk on the boardwalk the couple enjoyed the rest of their time in Coney Island. They got their picture taken, they ate carnie food, enjoyed music, played more games, rode more rides (other than the cyclone), and thoroughly enjoyed each other's company all the way to late in the evening. They made a lot of great memories today and the day ended in a high note.

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**Steve & Margaret Rogers Residence, Scarsdale, NY**

It's now late at night and in the master bedroom Peggy sat up against the headboard of the bed in her usual rose pink short nightgown as she read a book while Steve finished brushing his teeth in the bathroom. The bedroom was dimly lit with the lamps on their night stands being the only source of light. Peggy suddenly realized she forgot something down when they returned home a few hours ago. She put her book down on her night stand and started to get out of bed. Steve walked out of the bedroom in a white t-shirt and grey sweats as he saw Peggy getting up, "What's up?"

Peggy turned around and saw Steve, "Just forgot my purse down stairs on the couch, but I suppose I can get it tomorrow."

Steve waved his hand, "I'll get it. I'll be back in a second."

Peggy smiled, "Thank you, Steve." She happily got back in bed and continued to read her book.
Steve came down the stairs and turned on the lights to the family room, but as he walked to the
couch he saw something in the corner of his eye at the front door. He stopped and turned his head to
see a shadowy figure standing next to the console table in front of the door. Before Steve could say
anything the figure flipped on a light switch to reveal who it really was. Bucky had his hair cut short
and wore a black newsboy cap, long sleeve dark blue collared dress shirt with no tie, black dress
pants, black dress shoes, and a leather glove covering his metallic hand.

Steve instantly recognized him, "Bucky? What are you doing here?" He could tell that his old friend
has gone out of his way to blend in to the crowds.

Bucky spoke softly, "Steve, you have to listen to me… and you have to trust me."

Steve stepped toward him, "I'm listening."

Bucky continued, "Hydra is not gone. They're still active."

"What?"

"Find the man Rolf Wehausen in Paris. You'll have to force him to talk but he should point you in
the right direction." Bucky said ominously.

Steve couldn't believe what he was hearing, "Buck, how do you know this?"

Bucky spoke calmly, "'The enemy of my enemy is my friend'." He said quoting the age old adage.

"Buck, its best we do this together."

"I can't, I won't be able to leave the country without getting caught." Bucky replied plainly.

Steve nodded, "Need you back, pal."

"Not yet. I still got a long way to go to make things right. But once I do…"

Peggy's voice calling from up stairs interrupted Bucky, "Steve, did you find it?"

Steve turned around, "I found it, Peggy. I'll be there in a second." He turned to Bucky, "Buck."

Bucky nodded, "Steve, you have to trust me on this. But you have to do your best to keep this to
yourself. Its for the greater good, believe me." He then turned and left through the front door leaving
Steve with more questions than answers.

Steve returned to the bedroom with Peggy's purse, "Got it, Peggy."

Peggy put her book on her nightstand then turned off her lamp, "Thank you, Steve." Steve walked
over to the arm chairs near the windows and put the purse down on one of the chairs. Peggy sensed
something was off, "You okay, darling?"

Steve turned around, "Yeah why?" He said as he walked over to his side of the bed.

Peggy scooted down toward her pillow and faced Steve as she propped herself up with her elbow,
"You look like you saw a ghost."

Steve got into bed and put the covers over his lower body and faced his wife, "got to be from the
cyclone." He opted not to tell Peggy what just happened. He didn't want to lie to her, but he knew he
would eventually have to tell her.
Peggy chuckled, "Still with the cyclone."

Steve smiled and laid down on his back prompting Peggy to snuggle up to him and lay her head on his chest. Steve whispered, "I love you, Peggy."

Peggy smiled and closed her eyes, "I love you too, Steve."

Some diabolical things are going to go down in the future. Stand by for that.

Not truly following Agent Carter Season 2. Some references here and there.

Again not following the Marvel Universe, I'm going off on a tangent.

*John Flynn was the senior field agent from the Agent Carter One-shot

So I didn't know much of Peggy's family tree from the start so I wrote in a sister. Yeah I know, the show tells that she only had a brother, BUT I didn't know at the time when I wrote in a sister! So this how its going down. When I found out she had a brother I had to write him in too. So now she has a sister. Since this is FanFiction, it is what it is. LOL

Just assume she mentioned her brother to Steve a while back

Family reunion with Peggy's sister and possibly parents will be coming eventually.

Feel free to offer up names for the Rogers child boy or girl names. Not set in stone yet.
It has been three months since the Rogers date at Coney Island, and Peggy is now four months pregnant. Her baby bump grew bigger every month and her four-month bump was now noticeable under her clothes, even though she bought bigger clothes to keep up with the pregnancy. Her growing bump didn't bother her as much as she thought it would except, she did hate the whole getting bigger and buying new clothes part. But a great part about being four months pregnant is that her morning sickness faded away a few weeks ago. Additionally, she's still excited at the prospect of starting a family with Steve, the best man in the world. She knew right away that Steve would be an excellent father just by who he is. She just hoped she can live up to being a good mother. But Steve, like usual, would always reassure her that she will make a great mother and will take it one step further and say that she would be the better parent. That conversation would always end up in a fit of laughter and an agreement to disagree. She figured she just had the jitters as her pregnancy progressed. The life they share is perfect. Her career is going well, she's starting a family, and of course her married life is perfect. All these good things didn't seem to end...

Although it was the cultural norm for married and pregnant women to spend the majority of their time at home and not working, Peggy didn't have any part of it. Although pregnant she still did her job no matter what anyone said. At the SSR Bell Co. Office, Sousa restricted Peggy from all field activity once her baby bump became noticeable and put her on light duty. Peggy still kept her job position as Senior Field Agent, but she just couldn't be active in the field even though she is still fit and in shape enough to handle the physical work. So she opted on leading her team from the office as well as delegating cases and assignments to other agents while Thompson handled her team in the field. She essentially did everything a normal Senior Field Agent would do minus the extensive field work. Peggy didn't complain since it made sense as to why she was restricted and it was neither good nor bad. It just made her feel restless because she was so used to being in the field. Though she quickly put her restlessness behind her because her unborn baby took precedence over everything else, even her job. She still maintained her usual position so she couldn't complain. She also didn't vocalize her pregnancy to everyone because the norm was that pregnancy should remain a private matter, though she did tell her team about it because they deserved to know. Her team took it very well and she received positive reactions and personal congratulations along with a little apprehensiveness. But she was quick to reassure her team and her team never doubted her. But, the rest of the office quickly figured out she was pregnant, but no one dared challenge Peggy. She did initially get the knowing stares but everyone still treated her with professional respect. If anyone wanted to say anything then she'll counter any doubts and comments people may have of her being pregnant and still working in the SSR if the time comes. Although, her fighting reputation and her record precedes her.

Additionally, the new government security branch has been officially named Strategic Homeland Intervention Enforcement and Logistics Division or simply known as S.H.I.E.L.D. The main intention of S.H.I.E.L.D is to protect the United States from all threats with its vast intelligence network, advanced weaponry, scientific research, and exemplary field agents. Additionally, the head of the SSR, U.S. Army Colonel Chester Philips is still conducting the transition of the SSR to be
absorbed by S.H.I.E.L.D. Although the stages of change have been proceeding slowly for the first few months, they are expected to accelerate as the new security branch reaches full operational status. Already the SSR has lost some of its subdivisions due to the subtle transfer, but as per directive the SSR will remain functional until S.H.I.E.L.D is fully operational. The Department of War saw fit to pass up Colonel Philips as the head of the new branch, and saw appointing someone from the Central Intelligence Group (CIG) who had espionage experience to be a better fit of operating the new branch. As it stands, the government gave S.H.I.E.L.D limited operational status even though it is not 100% operational.

For months the SSR has been growing ever more desperate in trying to get leads on Leviathan since they vanished in March. The Soviet deep science division hasn't been heard from or seen in country for months. There was no way Leviathan would quit that easily, so the SSR were desperate for leads before Leviathan can strike again. To make matters worse, sometime in late April the SSR and the CIG (Central Intelligence Group) received word from local assets in France and Germany that Soviet agents have been operating in Western Europe to obtain or capture German scientists that were employed by the Nazi's during the war. Its clear that the Soviets are taking the German scientists in order to further develop Soviet weapons and technology to assert Soviet technological dominance over the United States. Its unclear whether or not the Soviet Agents operating in Western Europe are Leviathan, but nonetheless the Soviet Agents are a direct threat to American interests in Europe. Although Stark is the best engineer in the United States, the government also wanted to recruit German scientists into the country in order to broaden the country's arsenal of weapons and technology like the Soviets. The United States government wanted to assure American military dominance against the Soviet Union so the recruitment of German scientists to better that field started to become priority in the already existing arms race between the two powers.

Following the disturbing news of Soviet Agents in Western Europe, the SSR teamed up with the CIG and the Joint Intelligence Objectives Agency (JIOA) to recruit German Scientists that were employed by the Nazi's during the war to come to the United States. The JIOA was established in 1945, as a subcommittee of the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) to the Staff of the United States Armed Forces and like the CIG, it replaced the OSS (Office of Strategic Services). The recruitment of German scientists became formerly known as Operation Paperclip and is also formerly known by the OSS as Operation Overcast. Officially the operation was a program at the end of the European theatre of World War II aimed at recruiting German scientists for employment by the United States and to deny their scientific expertise and knowledge to the Soviet Union. Originally the OSS was in charge of the operation, but the termination of the agency put the operation under JIOA control. President Truman was well aware of the operation and fully supported it, but he ordered that no Nazi party members or ranking Hydra scientists or officials can be recruited to maintain the integrity of the nations principles...

Although Operation Paperclip has been active since end of the war, the retrieval and recruitment of German Scientists became even more critical since the discovery of Soviet agents in Western Europe with tensions between the Soviet Union and the United States continuing to rise. Now both the Soviet Union and the United States are utilizing German scientists that were once employed by the Nazi regime to further their weapon developments to outdo the other. For the United States, they have been recruiting German scientists for years after the war. Including Hydra scientists.

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**Beginning of July 1947, Steve & Margaret Rogers Residence, Scarsdale, NY**

Its another early sunny summer Saturday in the calm suburb of New York. The sun is shining, the birds are chirping, the trees are rustling quietly from the gentle summer breeze, and neighborhood kids are riding their bikes up and down the quiet suburban streets. Just another day in the neighborhood. In the dim master bedroom of the quiet Rogers house, Steve and Peggy slept on their
sides cuddling up to each other on their bed. Under the messy sheets Steve slept soundly in his usual white t-shirt and grey sweats. He cuddled closely to Peggy and had his arm draped over her side with his hand resting lazily on her baby bump. Peggy slept soundly in her usual rose pink short nightgown, with her back pressed up against Steve's chest while she had a hand tucked under her pillow and the other rested against Steve's hand on her belly. Its looking to be just another summer Saturday…

Suddenly the obnoxious sound of a phone ringing destroyed the serenity of the Rogers Saturday morning. Steve groaned as he slowly opened his eyes in frustration. Peggy pressed her back against Steve's chest and said tiredly while keeping her eyes closed, "Hm. Just let it ring, darling." She said hanging on to her sleep.

Steve groaned, " Might be the work phone." He said trying to go back to sleep. He tightened his grip around her affectionately, but the phone denied him any peace. He groaned again.

Peggy tucked her face into her pillow, "Let it ring." She said tiredly yet again.

Steve opened his eyes and realized the SSR phone was the one ringing on Peggy's night stand. He groaned in frustration again, "It's the SSR line." Peggy sighed in disappointment but kept her eyes closed. Steve propped himself up on one elbow then reached over his wife to get the phone, "Sleep tight, babe. I'll get it and I'll try to keep it down." He picked up the phone then leaned back so he wouldn't bother his sleeping wife, "Captain Rogers." He said quietly into the phone.

On the other side of the line was Gabe Jones in the Howling Commando field office in the Downtown New York 5&10, "Cap, its Gabe. Jacques passed me the weekly update for you, Captain."

Steve nodded on the phone, "Lets hear it."

Gabe then read off the information Jacques Dernier passed to him, "Jacques' contacts say the German you're looking into, Rolf Wehausen, is still in Paris, but they still don't know much about him other than his residence and occupation. The Local contacts say he picked up a new job working for a shipping company…” Gabe paused, "…and he's still regularly seen spending time with the same group of friends at his usual spot at a popular café downtown. Though for the past few days the local contacts say he's been seen with two new individuals at the café in the evenings." That caught Steve's attention. Gabe continued, "That's all we got. I don't know what this is about, but with all this secrecy it must be important…"

Peggy rolled over to Steve and looked up at him curiously with tired eyes. Steve nodded, "It is. Trust me." Peggy closed her eyes and wrapped her arms around him and pressed her body against his.

"I do, sir. Would help if you can fill us in. Why is he so important to you? Does Peggy know about this?" Gabe asked plainly. Steve looked down at Peggy to see if she heard and was satisfied to see that she looked more focused on sleeping then his phone call.

Steve shook his head, "No. I have a hunch, but I need to be sure before it goes further."

Gabe responded calmly, "Jacques' local contacts don't know what to look for."

Steve responded calmly, "I do. I'll be over at the 'five and dime' within the hour." He said carefully trying not to say his target's name.

Gabe replied calmly, "Jacques and I will get you all the information from the local contacts, so I'll give it to you when you arrive."
"Thanks." With that Steve stretched back over to Peggy's night stand to hang up the phone. He then laid down on his back and sighed. Peggy opened her eyes briefly so she can reposition herself on her husband. She rested her head on Steve's chest then wrapped her arm around his torso and hugged him tightly as she closed her eyes again to go back to sleep. Steve then ran his hand gently through her soft brown shoulder length hair and enjoyed the feeling of her hair flowing between his fingers. Peggy whispered tiredly, "What was that about?" She said as she cuddled closer to Steve.

Steve continued to run his hand gently through Peggy's hair, "I have to go to France, today." He said apologetically.

Peggy fully woke up and lifted her head off Steve's chest and gave a concerned look, "For what?" She asked in concern with no trace of being tired on her face.

"A German citizen living in France might have information we might need. Information concerning national security, so I need to get to him as soon as possible." Steve responded vaguely, and carefully choosing his words. He wasn't technically lying and it pained him that he wasn't telling her the absolute truth. The lead Bucky secretly told him three months ago concerning Rolf Wehausen and Hydra is a definite matter of concern. The enemy you can't see and you don't know that exists is the deadliest enemy to have because they are in your blind spot. He trusts Bucky, but he needs to find the connection himself between Wehausen and Hydra before he can fully commit. Once he finds a connection, then he would tell Peggy. He had to admit, thinking Hydra is still active does sound crazy, so that further cemented his mindset on postponing telling his super agent wife about it. So, if for some reason he and Bucky were wrong, then the only thing he wasted was time.

Peggy frowned in disappointment, "So sudden." She felt something was off the moment when Steve answered. The lack of detail in his response told her something was wrong, but she did sense truth in his answer. She didn't pry and decided to trust her husband because sometimes you just have to go on faith. But something must be really important for Steve to speak so vaguely to her. She silently trusts that Steve will tell her soon. He always tells her everything in one way or another.

"I'm sorry, Peggy." Steve said apologetically.

"Its not your fault, darling. You're just doing your job."

Steve ran a gentle hand along her cheek, "I'll be back in a couple of days."

Peggy smiled, "I'll miss you." She said honestly with a warm smile. They leaned into each other and shared a brief kiss.

Steve smiled, "Its only a few days, Peggy." He said reassuring her.

Peggy smiled, "I know. Its just… its going to be strange not having you here for a few days. Going to miss you, darling."

Steve smiled. "I'm going to miss you too, but at least its not going to be long. Its not like the last time I was sent to Europe. You remember? When I had to be there for a long period of time."

Peggy chuckled, "Don't remind me. Solving the Stark case without you was an extreme pain in the bum."

Steve smiled and spoke calmly, "But you did it. And I had no doubt that you could."

Peggy kissed his chest, "I'm just going to miss you, you know?" She reiterated. "Grown quite attached to you. I'm so used to seeing you everyday and always coming home to you…"
Steve smiled, "I'll miss you too. But I'll be back home before you know it."

Peggy smiled, "I love you."

"I love you too." Steve replied affectionately. He kissed her tenderly which Peggy happily reciprocated. He then broke the kiss and quickly rolled her onto her back and kissed her stomach. "And I love you, little one." He said to the small baby bump.

Peggy giggled, "That feels nice."

Steve kissed it again, "I love you both. I'll be back before you know it. Promise."

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**Paris**

After a long commercial flight with a connection in London, Steve made it to Paris. He didn't carry any additional clothes or a suitcase since he didn't plan on staying in France for long. He opted out on bringing his shield and combat uniform because he technically doesn't have the authority to be conducting a mission in France, so the less attention he drew the better off he would be. So for the first few hours of being in Paris, Steve immediately sought out his target. He trusts Jacques' local contacts, but he never specifically told him or the local contacts what to look for, but what the local contacts did give Steve was a good place to start. So he set out to shadow and follow Wehausen even though he wasn't specifically trained for it. What he needed was to covertly find more information on the connection between Hydra and Wehausen before he can act. So he did his best to shadow Wehausen by tapping in the limited lessons Peggy gave him a while ago for fun.

Steve has been in Paris for 24 hours and so far has found nothing significant about Wehausen and his connections with Hydra. Its now about 5pm of the second day, and Steve sat patiently at an outside café drinking tea and pretending to read a newspaper at a table at the busy Les Deux Magots café in the heart of Paris. All of his focus is on Rolf Wehausen and his two associates who sat at a similar outside café table at the same café. Steve was dressed in a plain dark blue suit with a matching dark blue tie, white dress shirt, and black dress with his hair combed neatly. From his table he can see and hear everything that is being said and done at Wehausen's table. The serum also gave him an edge to hear the group whisper if they decided to in this loud outside environment.

Rolf Wehausen is a middle age man with greying light brown hair, and wore a tan suit with a dark red tie and brown dress shoes. His other two associates are both middle age Caucasian men, one has dark brown hair and the other has black hair. Both of the two men wore black suits, black ties, white dress shirts, black shoes, and black fedoras. Steve doesn't know much of the other two men, but the local contacts tell that Wehausen has been seen with them every evening at the same café everyday for the past few months. So therefore they are people of concern which is reason enough for Steve to be aware of them. Since he started following Wehausen, he noted that Wehausen and his associates only talk about seemingly unimportant things and didn't strike him as anything of concern. Additionally, he also noticed that they spoke in perfect English to possibly show some measure of anonymity by not speaking another language other than French and English in Paris. So far everything is amounting to nothing.

Steve gripped his newspaper with one hand while he used his other hand to drink his tea. The tea was very good and he had to thank Peggy for introducing him to the rich taste of many teas, though he still considered himself a coffee drinking man. He peaked over to his targets and listened intently. He heard something that peeked his interest.

Rolf Wehausen adjusted his suit jacket as he leaned back in his chair and spoke evenly, "Now can we talk about business? We've put it off long enough."
The first associate with dark brown hair spoke calmly, "Of course."

The other black haired associate nodded and spoke in a deep voice, "You've been out for a while, so let us fill you in." He leaned forward, "You know Hydra is growing discreetly in the United States government, right?" That caught Steve's attention.

Rolf nodded, "Of course."

The dark brown haired associate leaned back, "But its slow process trying to weed into the Soviet government. Once we fester inside both of their governments, our victory will be assured. Nonetheless, Hydra is making excellent progress in the government agencies in the United States." He smiled, "Through the shadows we also have firm control of S.H.I.E.L.D. The organization that will replace the famed SSR."

The other associate smiled, "Number 1’s contingency plan in case Schmidt would fail is in full effect. Hydra's new order has started." Steve listened intently and didn't realize he was staring at the group.

Rolf smiled, "What about the other Hydra scientists and officers the United States locked up?"

The dark brown haired man smiled, "Most of our Hydra scientific minds have been released, pardoned, and recruited by the United States to develop America's technological power against the Soviet Union."

The other associate smiled, "That's not all. Hydra agents like ourselves who went into hiding after the war are plentiful. Some even quickly joined and infiltrated the U.S. intelligence community and resworn their allegiance to Hydra. The U.S. government didn't even know they were recruiting Hydra agents because they are so focused on their new enemy."

The dark brown haired man spoke up again, "Most of our scientists including Number 1 have been recruited since the early months of last year. In fact, Number 1 was the first. He's been working for the American government since then. He subtly earned their trust and they released him recently. He's our architect of the new Hydra order. You'll know who he is when you see him soon."

The black haired associate continued, "Unfortunately, Agent Peggy Rogers has been very keen on screening anyone from Hydra. But she's just one woman, most of the America officials over there don't listen to her. Its only a matter of time for Hydra to overwhelm the inside of the US government."

Rolf smiled confidently, "So what do I need to do?"

The dark brown haired man slid a small silver object on the table to Rolf. Steve noticed it was a silver ring as Rolf picked it up and put it on his right ring finger. The dark brown haired man spoke, "We have a potential rat in the nest. A man once loyal to our cause now voiced his intentions to leave our organization. He has too much knowledge of our plans to be kept alive. As a precaution, eliminate the Schatten immediately. I know you know who he is. Our associates in the city left a dossier of his whereabouts in your place." The man leaned back in his chair, "Once that is done you'll attend a meeting in four days at the Gibson Grand Hotel and report directly to Number 1. I assume you know where that is."

Rolf Wehausen smiled, "I do."

"Good. The meeting will be at midnight. Don't miss it." The man said.

"I'll be there." The group stood up from their table and they all whispered, "Hail Hydra."
Rolf then noticed Steve staring at him and they both locked eyes for a brief but tense moment. The two associates turned around to see what Rolf was staring at then they finally recognized Steve's face. One of the two men whispered, "Scheisse…"

Rolf Wehausen quickly turned and ran into the streets. In a fraction of a second, Steve shot up from his chair and grabbed the tea cup saucer from under his tea cup, spilling tea all over the table, and rocketed the saucer like his shield into the head of the dark brown haired Hydra agent. The impact of the saucer into the head of the agent shattered the saucer and caused the agent to fall onto the table. The other Hydra agent reached into his coat to pull out a weapon as Steve quickly grabbed his discarded tea cup. Unlike the saucer, Steve baseball threw the tea cup at incredible speeds with pinpoint accuracy into the head of the second agent. The second agent fell back and crashed onto another patrons table. The bystanders in the café were stunned and surprised to see the sudden chaos erupt at their mellow café. There were gasps, looks of confusion, and shock as everyone stood up to see what was happening.

Within seconds Steve took off down the busy Paris streets after Rolf. He was quickly catching up and Wehausen knew that. Rolf whipped took out his pistol from his coat, stopped, turned around, and fired three rounds at Steve. Steve quickly dove to cover behind a parked car on the curb without getting shot. The bystanders on the streets and the drivers in the few stopped cars screamed and duck from the gun fire. Steve peered from his cover and saw Rolf quickly walking around to the driver side door of the closest occupied car. Rolf threw the driver out onto the street then hopped into the car and started to quickly drive off, skillfully weaving in and out of traffic in the busy Paris road. Steve stood up from behind his cover and started to chase after the car. He couldn't help but get déjà vu from this particular moment. Instead of being in New York he was running through the colorful and beautiful Paris streets.

Steve chased after the car down the busy street and was quickly closing the distance. Rolf looked through the rear view mirror of his car and saw how fast Steve was catching up, so he floored the gas pedal and accelerated into a busy intersection in the hopes of losing Captain America. But that wouldn't be the case. The moment Rolf's car pulled out into the intersection, his car got hit on the side by another fast moving car, turning his car 180 degrees and pushing it further into the intersection. His tires screeched against the pavement and echoed through the block as his bashed up car skidded along the pavement. Then his car immediately got hit again on the opposite side by another car. Crushed metal pieces, rubber, glass, and aluminum were tossed into the air from the impact of the cars. The car accident that initially only involved two cars amounted with dozen more running into each other trying to avoid the accident. The sounds of screeching tires and cars hitting cars echoed through out the block. Soon the intersection was clogged with a massive car accident that shut down the entire road. Innocent bystanders on the side walks gasped and watched in surprise at the sudden chaos. Once everything settled, some of the drivers in the accident got out of the cars with the look of astonishment while others got out and got extremely mad at one another for getting into the accident.

Rolf Wehausen was hunched forward onto the steering column when he opened his eyes after being momentarily knocked unconscious. His face and neck had a number of small cuts on them from the shattered glass that flew across the car during the accident. His car was totaled and bent out of shape with all the windows shattered. Glass fragments from the driver side window and the windshield rested all over his body. He sat up and groaned as glass crackled under him. He looked over to his right and saw his pistol laying on the floor under the passenger seat. He groaned in pain as he slowly leaned over to grab his pistol but he was suddenly forcefully pulled out the driver side window by his collar.

Rolf hit the ground with a tremendous thud in a small gap in the middle of the accident. He groaned as he got his bearings back, and suddenly realized Captain America was standing over him. Steve
bent down and grabbed him by the collar forcefully, "What does Hydra have planned?"

Rolf smiled, "I'm the first of many. Don't you remember? Cut off one head, two more shall take its place." Before Steve could say anything Rolf's mouth started to foam, which meant only one thing. He took a suicide pill that was hidden away in his jaw. Steve dropped Rolf's lifeless corps then stood up straight and sighed in frustration as people started to investigate what was happening. He shook his head remembering how ironic this whole situation is. It was almost like he was reliving a memory. He looked down at Rolf’s body and saw the silver ring that was on his right ring finger. He bent down again and removed the ring, and took a good look at it. The polished silver ring had a single small Hydra red skull symbol engraved on the top. He put the ring in his pocket to save it because his gut told him he would probably need it later.

As people started to stare at him, he had a sudden realization on how dangerous the game he is about to play.

New York City, New York

SSR New York City Branch, "Bell Co. Office"

It's a day later past the international date line in New York City, and its looking like another usual week day morning. For Peggy, it's a little unusual because for the past few days Steve has been away on business in France. She missed him but continued on as usual. She went to work like always and dressed in maternity clothes like she has been doing for a while to adjust for her growing baby bump size. She wore a maternal dark blue women's business suit jacket and skirt with a white collared women's maternity blouse, nylon stockings, and dark blue heels. The suit jacket buttoned down the front and had a half belt start at the side and fastened at the back. Her skirt had a set of buttons that moved the skirt out if she needed to. Like usual, she had her brown purse across her body, and she also wore neutral make up with her favorite red lipstick, and wore her elegantly wavy shoulder length dark brown hair down.

The office is looking busy and pleasant with the bright morning sun light gleaming through all the open windows throughout the office. Peggy walked into the busy office like normal and stepped confidently with her heels clicking along the hard wood floor with every step as she approached her desk. Like always, she was greeted by passing agents as she walked by them. As she walked into the desk space she saw Thompson in his grey suit and grey tie approaching her. She smiled, "Good morning, Jack."

Thompson gave an uneasy smile, "Did you hear what happened?"

Peggy stopped in the middle of the desk space and looked curiously at him, "No. What happened?" Thompson put his hands in his pockets, "Your husband is in trouble." He said uncomfortably.

Peggy kept control of her emotions. The day that looked pleasant quickly went South with that one small sentence. "What? What happened?" She said with a worried voice. "Better elaborate, Jack." She quickly looked over at Ramirez and Li's desks and saw them looking at her with worried looks. The two agents wore a plain dark blue suit and tie, and a plain black suit and tie respectively.

Li spoke up, "You got to tell her, Jack."

Peggy looked at Thompson, "Jack. Just tell me…" She said plainly.

Thompson sighed, "Captain Rogers is in trouble for conducting some sort of unsanctioned operation
in France." He shrugged, "Technically he went AWOL."

Peggy gasped, "Goodness… Do…" She was cut off by Sousa calling her from his office.

Sousa stuck his head out from his office and called out to Peggy, "Peggy… I need to see you in my office."

Peggy nodded, "I'll be there in a second, Daniel." She looked over at her team and saw that they all had concerned looks.

Ramirez nodded, "He's going to hit you with some questions, Peggy."

Peggy removed her purse then walked to her desk to place her things, "I'll be out in a second, boys." She paused and rubbed her baby bump briefly before stepping off for Sousa's office.

Ramirez looked over at Li and Thompson, "What do you think they're going to do to Captain America."

Thompson watched Peggy as she walked into Sousa's office, "He's Captain America. I think he can write his own ticket anywhere."

Li nodded, "Yeah, but he got busted for going AWOL AND doing something he wasn't supposed to in France."

Thompson turned for his desk, "I guess we'll see."

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Peggy entered Sousa's office calmly then closed the door behind her, "Yes, Daniel?" She saw Sousa leaning on his cane while looking out of the windows next to his desk.

Sousa turned around and nodded, "Take a seat, Peggy." Peggy sat down calmly then put her knees together and placed her hands on her lap. Sousa limped to his desk chair and sat down calmly. He was silent for a moment which made the office feel a bit tense. Sousa spoke calmly, "You know I have to ask…"

Peggy spoke up calmly, "This is about Steve?" She asked with concern in her voice.

Sousa nodded, "I'm sure everyone in the SSR heard about it." He sighed, "Anyway. I need to ask because everyone up the ladder is asking; did you know about it?"

Peggy shook her head gently, "No… He never told me. He only said he was going to France for national security purposes."

Sousa sighed not wanting to pry but he had to, "I'm not saying I don't trust you, but he tells you everything, Peggy."

Peggy shook her head again, "I'm telling the truth, Daniel. He never mentioned anything more."

Sousa knew she was telling the truth but he had to push. He nodded, "Then, I'll tell you what I know." Peggy nodded. He spoke evenly, "Reports came in from the guys at the top that Captain Rogers conducted an unsanctioned operation of some kind in Paris without permission and without leave. His little operation ended up with three people dead, dozens injured, and an entire city block shut down because of a massive car accident." Peggy's eyes widened but she didn't say anything as she was trying to process what she just heard. Sousa spoke evenly, "It's a mess. Especially now that our agency is going to be absorbed into the new security branch." He sighed, "Timing couldn't be
better. The government is already accelerating our absorption into S.H.I.E.L.D so this might've just given the government more reason for more of our division and people to get cut."

Peggy asked evenly, "Do you know where Steve is now?"

Sousa nodded, "His flight landed a few hours ago. He had to report in to Colonel Phillips directly."

Peggy tensed. Sousa nodded at her sympathetically. There was a long pause between them before Sousa spoke up again, "If you don't have anymore questions then that's all." He leaned back in his chair, "Hope you know I had to ask."

Peggy nodded, "Its okay, Daniel. Thank you." She stood up then headed to the door. She gripped the door nob then realized something from the last conversation she had with Steve before he left. The lack of details he gave should've been her first clue. He never said he was on an assignment and never said who gave him the orders. He tells her everything and the fact that he didn't tell her much told her everything. He told a white lie to her because he wouldn't throw words around like "national security" lightly. She knew deep down that her husband went to Paris for a much bigger reason that she doesn't know quite yet…

Sousa realized she was just hovering at the door, "Peggy, you alright?" He called out to her curiously.

Peggy turned her head and nodded, "Of course."

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**Camp Lehigh**

**Wheaton, New Jersey**

Inside Colonel Phillips' office in the base head quarters building took place a tense private meeting between Steve and Colonel Phillips over the incident in Paris. Steve, still in his plain dark blue suit and tie, sat emotionless on one of the two arm chairs in front of the Colonel's desk as he waited for the meeting to continue on. Colonel Phillips dressed in his US Army khaki summer service uniform, stood up from behind his desk and dropped a thick file at the edge of the desk for Steve to see. "Start anywhere you like." Colonel Phillips said as he sat back down in his chair. He nodded, "Take your time, Captain, but in five minutes the new head of S.H.I.E.L.D is going to come through that door and I'm going to have to explain to him how our most valuable asset decided to go AWOL in Paris and cause a very public incident."

Steve, emotionless, leaned forward and slowly took the file from the desk, and opened it. The file was the local police reports from Paris about Captain America causing an incident in the city. Steve expected blow back from the incident by everyone and even newspapers of every type, so this didn't come as a surprise to him. He closed the file and put it back on the desk and looked back at the Colonel, "With all do respect, sir..." He started sayings plainly.

Colonel Phillips leaned back in his chair and said in frustration, "You went AWOL and killed three people then caused an entire accident that shut down an entire block." Steve looked calm but he actually didn't know that he killed Rolf's associates. He knew he knocked them out at the most, but he didn't think he actually killed them.

Steve responded calmly, "Rather the accident than three hostile spies and killers get away."

Colonel Phillips spoke sternly, "You had no authority. None. As you know, we're in the biggest shake up in the SSR. The ink is barely dry with this merger with S.H.I.E.L.D and they're already itching for a better reason to pull the SSR entirely, and you just given them one. The government and
all its wisdom feels like its easier to start an entirely new division in S.H.I.E.L.D. If anything, they just want our research divisions." He leaned forward, "I'm trying to prove how important the SSR is in the field other than scientific research. In short, I'm trying to keep our people from being cut." He tapped his finger on the Paris file, "This. This isn't helping."

Steve nodded, "You're right, sir." He said plainly.

Colonel Phillips slowly stood up and asked sternly, "This is an unofficial question. Paris, what were you doing there?" Steve slowly leaned closer to the desk then reached over and took a pencil and a random typed paper from an organized stack from the Colonel's desk then leaned back in his chair. Colonel Phillips watched intently as Steve flipped the page over to the blank side, folded it in half, then began scribbling something on the paper. Colonel Phillips squinted, "Answer the question verbally, Captain." He ordered in a stern but quiet tone.

Steve stopped scribbling on the paper and looked up at his commanding officer. "Its just a coincidence… I was just visiting an old friend." He lied calmly. Steve hated lying with a passion, but if Hydra is really that deep inside the government then they can have eyes and ears everywhere to assure their agenda is undisturbed. He trusts Colonel Phillips, but now he has to be cautious around everything and everyone. There's only a select group he can trust completely, so he has to be cautious with everyone else.

Colonel Phillips spoke in frustration, "You don't tell your wife about it?" Steve didn't break eye contact with the Colonel for a long tense few seconds. Colonel Phillips nodded, "Fine. As of this morning you are officially grounded. I'm standing you down from all field operations until further notice."

Steve stood up and made eye contact with Colonel Phillips as he placed the folded paper on the desk. "Understood, sir." He said as he pushed the folded paper toward the Colonel. He then buttoned his suit jacket and turned around to leave.

Just as Steve took his first step toward the door, Colonel Phillips spoke up to him, "Captain Rogers."

Steve turned around, "Sir?"

"I don't know what you're trying to do, but it has to stop. Now," Colonel Phillips said. Steve nodded then turned around and continued for the door. Colonel Phillips took the folded paper Steve left behind and looked down and read what Steve wrote. He cringed at what Steve wrote but said nothing.

Just as Steve reached the door, the door swung open revealing Lucy, Colonel Phillips' secretary, holding the door open for a man with neatly combed black hair dressed in a well pressed black suit and tie. Steve stopped in his tracks as the man walked in. "So sorry… am I interrupting?" The man said apologetically.

Colonel Phillips took the paper and put in his front uniform pocket, "Not remotely. Captain Rogers, I would like you to meet John Weyland the director of S.H.I.E.L.D."

John Weyland smiled confidently as he turned to Steve, "Oh Captain Rogers, so good to finally meet you. Can't say how much of an honor it is to meet Captain America. Heard so many good things about you."

Steve smiled and extended a hand to John, "Congratulations on the appointment. I guess I have to call you Director or Sir now."
John smiled and shook Steve's hand, "No, no. John is fine."

Steve nodded cautiously, "I'll keep it formal."

John nodded and spoke evenly, "As you wish. Well my door is always open, Captain. For all of my employees." He stepped closer to Steve and smiled confidently as he spoke in a hushed voice, "This merger is going to be a whole new start for us. We're going to be able to stop a lot of threats before they ever happen."

Steve raised his eyebrows and nodded, "That all sounds great, sir."

Colonel Phillips spoke evenly, "That'll be all, Captain. Report back to base tomorrow morning for a meeting concerning S.H.I.E.L.D at 0800. Agent Rogers will escort you here."

Steve looked back at the Colonel and nodded, "Understood, sir."

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**Steve & Margaret Rogers Residence, Scarsdale, NY**

Once Steve got home, he immediately took a shower and changed since he's been in the same set of clothes for far too long. He was now casually dressed in a light blue long sleeve collared shirt with the top two buttons unbuttoned with the sleeves rolled up past his elbows, a white undershirt underneath, dark brown dress pants, black belt, and black shoes. His shirts were neatly tucked into his pants and like usual he kept his hair combed neatly.

It was now about five in the afternoon and all was quiet in the Rogers home. Steve sat patiently on the couch in the family room reading a book while he waited for his wife to come home from work. He really wasn't paying attention to the book because of all the things that he was thinking about occupied his mind. To start, he didn't know how to speak to Peggy after he lied to her. She'll probably be incredibly upset with him for not telling her the truth, which she has every right to be. He couldn't blame her if she was. He's incredibly upset with himself for not telling the truth. He hates lying in general and he never wanted to lie to his wife. He deserves whatever he gets from Peggy. But the other important thing in his mind right now is the news of Hydra infiltrating the government. He didn't know how many people in the government are Hydra and he didn't know how far Hydra's influence has gone. But judging from the conversation he heard from Rolf Wehausen, its clear that Hydra's influence has infiltrated deep in the government without anyone noticing. Because of this, Steve doesn't know who to trust other than the select individuals he has spent countless time with. Hydra seemed quick to infiltrate the government since the end of the war.

He didn't know how, but he's going to have to find a way to stop and expose Hydra from gaining anymore power and influence. If Hydra is as deep in the government as he believes they are, then his actions will be labeled as rogue or hostile against the United States. But he's willing to accept all the negatives that he'll most likely get, as long as Hydra is removed and innocent people remain free from their terror. He knew Hydra had plans, but he just didn't know the important details like how much time he had to stop their agenda and what their plan entails. But the moment Rolf Wehausen was requested to attend that meeting, Steve knew that Hydra's plans were already in motion. But whatever it is, the faster he stops them, the better off he'll be… but he can't do it alone….

Suddenly the sound of the front door opening and closing brought Steve back to reality. Peggy's voice called out from around the corner at the front door, "Steve darling, I'm home."

Steve put his book down on the table then stood up, "I'm in the family room." He replied nervously. He heard Peggy's heels clicking on the hard wood floor then saw her turn the corner to the family room.
Peggy walked into the family room with her purse in her hand and her dark blue maternal suit jacket neatly draped over the same arm. To Steve's surprise she smiled happily at him as she quickly placed her purse down on the couch and neatly draped her suit jacket on the couch. Peggy then quickly reached Steve and embraced him tightly, "Oh my goodness, Steve." She whispered.

Steve returned her embrace and whispered, "Peggy, I'm sorry. I…"

Peggy cut him off and kissed him as she ran a hand through his hair. After a while she broke the kiss and rested her forehead against his, "Steve…I've missed you." She whispered gently as she rested her arms on his shoulders. "I heard what happened over there."

"I'm so sorry, Peggy." Steve paused. He then quickly rambled, "I understand that you might be upset with me, and I don't blame you. I know I lied, but know I never wanted to. I'm going to tell you everything. I promise." He frowned, "Please, forgive me."

Peggy leaned back and smiled reassuringly, "Steve, look at me. I'm not upset with you." She ran a hand across his cheek with a loving smile.

Steve looked at her confused, "You're not? Even though I didn't tell you the truth about Paris?"

Peggy smiled, "Darling you didn't lie. You just didn't give me all the information." She chuckled, "I'm a senior field agent for the SSR, Steve, I figured something was off because you sounded unsure with your words the day you left. You telling me nothing told me everything." She shrugged, "You also don't use words like 'national security' lightly...I had faith that you left for a good reason."

Steve nodded sadly, "I didn't want to lie to you. I hope you know that." He frowned, "I can't…"

Peggy ran a hand across his cheek again, "that's what I love about you, Steve."

Steve chuckled, "You know... I'm kind of surprised that you aren't upset."

Peggy chuckled, "I think you should've known by now that I'm full of surprises."

"True enough." Steve said with a smile.

"You always try do the right thing, so I'm sure you went to Paris for the right reasons." Peggy said in an understanding voice. She brought him closer and kissed his lips briefly. "Always know that I love you, Steve. And you know that I am very rarely upset with you." Peggy whispered once she broke the kiss.

Steve smiled, "I love you too." She did get upset with him on occasion due to the mood swings that accompany pregnancy in the early stages, but he never counted that.

Peggy nodded, "Now...we have to talk about it." Steve nodded. She continued, "Everyone in the SSR is talking about what you did in Paris."

"I'll tell you everything." Steve said plainly. They both maneuvered to the couch and sat down next to each other. Steve leaned forward, resting his elbows on his knees while Peggy sat upright at the edge of her cushion with her knees together as she waited for him to talk. Steve spoke calmly, "You remember our trip to Coney Island a few months back?"

Peggy smiled, "How could I forget."

Steve spoke in an even tone, "Well...that night when you were in bed and I was down stairs, Bucky came to the house to tell me something important." Peggy didn't say a word as she listened intently to
her husband's words. Steve continued calmly, "He came to tell me that… Hydra… is still active…"

Peggy cringed, "Goodness…" She whispered in shock. "Bucky, came to our house?" Peggy said worried. Steve nodded quietly. She didn't exactly trust Bucky all that much since he used to try to kill Steve on many occasions. Bucky may have have been brainwashed to do it, but the fact still remains that he tried to kill her husband. So she's still reluctant to trust him even though Steve was quick to openly put faith in him. The only reason why she isn't severely worried about Bucky suddenly being in close proximity is because of Steve's trust. She spoke up curiously, "How is this possible? I thought Hydra died with Red skull. Did he say anything else?"

Steve nodded, "I thought they died with Red skull too. But apparently not." He leaned back on the couch, "He told me to find a German citizen living in Paris named Rolf Wehausen. I've had Jacques' local contacts track him until I arrived in Paris."

"Did you find anything while you were there?" Peggy asked curiously.

Steve nodded, "Something big." He paused, "Hydra has infiltrated deep in our government."

Peggy cringed again, "Oh my goodness, Steve…" She was shocked before, but now his words have settled in her mind.

Steve continued, "For a while now they have slowly infiltrated into the deepest parts of our government including S.H.I.E.L.D. I don't know how deep they are, but I'm sure it's safe to assume that they could be everywhere in the government, including the SSR." He shook his head, "From what I gathered, they are planning something big."

"How did they orchestrate all this? I actually thought we beat Hydra for good." Peggy said with concern.

"That's how they got in. We thought we beat them, but in fact they went into hiding instead. They're using the threat of communism to infiltrate the government. Our government is looking for Soviet spies and communists, not Hydra." Steve sighed, "It also doesn't help that the government is recruiting former Nazi's and upper echelon Hydra personnel." He shook his head, "Hydra's influence never died with Schmidt…" Steve then spoke in frustration, "I remember the President saying that he doesn't want us to recruit Nazi party members or ranking Hydra personnel…but I guess rules don't apply to some… So now this happened."

Peggy started to rub his back gently, "I didn't know we were doing that, Steve."

"I know, darling." Steve responded calmly.

Peggy nodded, "Is there anything else you found in Paris?" She asked.

Steve nodded, "There's a meeting taking place in a few days with someone important to Hydra."

"Where?"

"Gibson Grand Hotel at midnight."

Peggy shook her head, "That's all the way in D.C."

"Yeah. Need to go to it."

Peggy scooted closer to him, "I'm coming with you." Steve looked at her with a worried look. She gripped his arm, "Before you protest, darling. I'm still fit to do everything physically. You don't need
to worry."

Steve smiled, "I wasn't doubting your abilities. I'm worried about my wife and our baby while doing this."

"We'll be okay. I promise." Peggy smiled, "Besides, this falls under the field of espionage. This is my field of expertise. You're going to need my help anyway."

Steve smiled, "Fair enough." Steve nodded, "Let's do this then." He paused, "But the first problem is that the SSR is probably not going to let me out of their sight."

Peggy nodded, "That is a bit of a problem isn't it." She paused, "By the way, Steve…” Steve raised his eyebrows in question. She continued, "I'm supposed to escort you to Camp Lehigh tomorrow to assure you go check in with the Colonel."

Steve nodded, "The Colonel told me." he hummed as he thought to himself.

After a moment Peggy broke the silence, "Does Colonel Phillips know about all this?" She asked curiously changing the subject.

Steve shook his head, "I couldn't tell him openly, so I slipped him a piece of paper during my debrief." He sighed, "I don't know who to trust outside of you, my team, and the Colonel. We have to keep this small and quiet… though I already tilted my hand, so I'm sure they'll be watching me. I have to assume everyone outside my immediate group is Hydra until proven otherwise."

Peggy nodded, "I understand. But there are some people I know that we can trust."

Steve nodded, "More power to us." He paused, "I don't know exactly what Hydra has planned but whatever it is we have to stop them… and fast."

Peggy nodded, "Agreed."

Steve paused and the room again settled back into quiet. Then Steve suddenly remembered something important, "Hey, darling…" He said calmly.

Peggy raised her eyebrows, "Hm?"

"I heard a name over in Paris… The Schatten. That might be important to us."

Peggy responded calmly, "That's German for 'Shadow'." She looked at him curiously, "Who is he?"

"I don't know. But, Rolf Wehausen was supposed to kill him." Steve paused, "Since Wehausen is dead, I'm sure Hydra will send someone else to go after him. He might give us some good info on Hydra…"

Peggy nodded, "Good idea, darling."

Steve nodded too, "I have a feeling he'll come up during that meeting we're going to attend."

Peggy smiled, "That is a good guess." She chuckled, "You're getting good at this whole investigative thing, darling."

Steve smiled, "Thanks."

Peggy linked her arm with his and leaned into him, "We'll stop them. Like we always do." She said reassuringly.
Steve nodded, "I know…" he sighed, "Its about to get serious." Peggy looked at him with concern. He gave a half smile to his wife, "Thank you, Peggy…" He said in a hushed tone.

Peggy looked confused, "For what?"

Steve smiled, "For being there, for listening, and for believing me even though I didn't have much to go on." He leaned into her and chuckled, "And for being such a great wife."

Peggy chuckled, "Always, my darling." She leaned back into him and kissed his cheek.

Steve then relaxed, "You hungry?" He asked changing the subject.

Peggy nodded with a smile, "I've been craving the usual." She said while rubbing her baby bump.

Steve smiled, "Let me solve that for you. I'll take care of dinner." He turned and kissed the side of her head then stood up.

Peggy smiled, "Thank you, darling." She said as she received a warm smile from her husband as he walked into the kitchen. She noticed a change in his attitude from care free and happy to quiet and serious in just a few days. But she couldn't really blame him. Something bad is brewing and the fate of his unknowing nation is now resting on his shoulders. She may be helping him, but she knew that he would be the one that will be attracting most of the negative attention, and she's sure that her husband knows it.

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**Camp Lehigh**

**Wheaton, New Jersey**

Early the next morning looked like its going to be a start of another beautiful summer day with the sun shining and clear blue skies. But, it was already clear that it was anything but another summer day for the Rogers. Peggy's dark blue four door car just past the main U.S. Army entrance to Camp Lehigh and started to quickly accelerate down the forested windy road deeper into the base.

In the car, Peggy drove while Steve sat quietly in the front passenger seat. Peggy, like usual wore her elegant wavy hair down, make up, red lipstick, and had her small necklace of Captain America's shield around her neck. She also wore a white maternity blouse neatly tucked into her dark red maternity swing skirt, and wore dark red low heel shoes to match her skirt. Her blouse is a button front, short sleeve, V-neck white blouse with a medium sized bow drooping down at the base of the V-neck. Steve on the other hand wore his US Army khaki summer service uniform with polished black shoes. His service shirt had his rank on the right side of his collar and the SSR emblem on the left. Both his service shirt and trousers are pressed and cleaned to perfection, and his black dress shoes are polished enough that he could see his reflection in them. Last but not least his Captain's garrison cover lay folded neatly on his left thigh and his silver bracelet Peggy gave him remains on his right wrist.

Peggy snuck a look at Steve who sat quietly looking out of the window as she navigated the windy road deeper into the base. "Darling…" Peggy said warmly with a smile.

Steve returned back to reality and looked toward her, "Hm?" He responded calmly.

"You're awfully quiet." Peggy replied with a smile.

Steve chuckled, "Sorry. Just anticipating what I'm going to receive during this 'meeting'."
Peggy smiled, "It's okay, Steve. When in doubt shoot your way out." She said jokingly.

Steve laughed, "Ah, Peggy. What would I ever do without you."

"Probably be lost, confused, and conflicted all at the same time." Peggy said with a chuckle.

Steve nodded, "That is probably an accurate assumption."

"Hope you know I was joking, darling."

Steve laughed, "Oh… I thought you were being serious. I thought we were really going into S.H.I.E.L.D to wage war." He said in a joking sarcastic tone. Peggy just smiled widely as she drove.

Soon enough they entered the main operating area of the base. Peggy continued to drive through the base as she expertly navigated the series of roads to cut through the base. She passed by the camp head quarters building, administrative buildings, chow hall, training fields, PT field, armory, a number of Army Barracks', and a series of munition bunkers. As they passed by the motor pool, Steve began to wonder where the meeting is going to take place since they've passed by the majority of the operating area of the base. But soon they were back on another forested windy road.

Steve sighed, "Where we going?"

Peggy smiled, "We've been there before, Steve. It'll look familiar when you see it, though I'm sure it's changed since the last time you've been over there." Steve looked at her confused but continued to think back.

After a while the forested road opened up to reveal another part of the base. The building layout was smaller than the operating base but it had everything the operating base had but a lot more compact. This section of the base had its own administrative buildings, a number of barracks', armory, munition bunkers, motor pool, chow hall, PT field, and trails. This smaller part of the base even had its own parameter fence with a guard post at the single entrance. As the other segment of the base came into full view, Steve's jaw dropped when he recognized it. Peggy looked over at him, "We first met here."

Steve whispered, "Camp Lehigh's SSR training field..."

Peggy smiled, "Yes it is. Though now its S.H.I.E.L. D's headquarters."

Steve looked at his wife, "How could I forget." Peggy smiled at him.

She started to slow the car down and prepared to stop as they approached the gate and guard post. She skillfully reached behind Steve's seat and grabbed her brown purse located on the back seat, then brought her purse to her lap. Once they reached the gate, she gently stopped the car in front of the gate and rolled down her window to greet the Army guard.

The Army guard stepped out of his guard post and approached the car and recognized the two occupants, "Good morning, ma'am, good morning, sir." He said respectfully as he snapped a salute to Steve.

Steve returned the salute, "Good morning, Sergeant."

Peggy spoke calmly, "Agent Rogers and Captain Rogers here to meet with Colonel Phillips and Director Weyland." She said as she opened her purse to get her documents just in case.

The Army guard nodded, "Go right in, ma'am." He stepped back from the car then opened the gate.
Peggy nodded, "Thank you." She then slowly drove forward past the gate.

Steve nodded, "So this is where Weyland is placing S.H.I.E.L.D."

Peggy drove slowly into the base, "You met him?"

Steve looked at her with concern in his eyes, "Yesterday. What do we know about him?"

Peggy shook her head, "He's a pig."

Steve chuckled, "Other than the obvious."

"He never served during the war and he's the classic type of person to just climb the ladder. He wrote a dossier last year about how the United States will be forced to battle Communist threats both domestically and abroad. How communists will infiltrate our country and pose threats to all our interests. Worse, he proposed a surge of atomic weapons to deter any threats posed by potential enemies." Peggy sighed, "I heard he has some pretty high friends in DC." She said as she continued driving slowly through the base.

Steve rolled his eyes, "Of course he does."

Peggy looked over at her husband, "This absorption with S.H.I.E.L.D is just the start of it. In a few days there's supposed to be a security conference in DC to discuss the new responsibility of the American intelligence community to battle Communism and any threats posed against the United States."

Steve nodded, "Let me guess, he wants S.H.I.E.L.D to spearhead the intelligence community."

Peggy nodded, "Indeed. We heard that Weyland has this new plan to eliminate any and all potential threats to the United States. Lets just say that the President is very interested in it. But if Weyland gets his way, he can eliminate anyone and call it security."

Steve sighed, "I'm guessing you're not okay with this either?"

Peggy shook her head, "Goodness, no. This is a terrible idea." She slowed the car down and maneuvered to park in a small parking lot near a barracks building. "As you know a lot has happened concerning communism. Last year in Canada, a special commission investigated espionage after top secret documents concerning RDX, radar, and other weapons were handed over to the Soviets by a domestic spy-ring. Then the FBI arrested two American citizens for being spies for the Soviet Union. They state that Soviet agents and communist sympathizers have infiltrated the government before and after the war...This isn't exactly good timing for us." Peggy finished parking the car, "All playing to Weyland's hands." She sighed, "Lets just say Colonel Phillips is feeling the pressure."

Steve nodded, "Yeah, I noticed that."

Peggy nodded, "Always had a bad feeling about him the moment I heard Colonel Phillips got passed over for the head of S.H.I.E.L.D. Then Weyland comes up with this insane plan about eliminating threats." She sighed, "Then you told me about Hydra. Now everything seems so convenient." She turned off the car then opened the door.

Steve did the same and exited the car, "I don't need to say that I have a bad feeling about this too, but I'm going to say it anyway." He looked around and absorbed his surroundings. Then suddenly he spotted something odd across the parade field. He spotted a large concrete munition bunker right next to a barracks."
Peggy looked at him confused, "What is it, Steve?"

"I'm guessing S.H.I.E.L.D is in that bunker, right?" Steve said nodding to the munition bunker.

Peggy looked at him with astonishment, "Yes, how did you know?"

Steve smiled at his wife, "Army regulations forbid storing munitions within five hundred yards of the barracks." He nodded to the building, "That building is in the wrong place."

Peggy chuckled, "Look at you my darling. You're getting better at this investigating skill."

Steve laughed, "It was hardly an investigation."

Peggy rubbed her baby bump slowly and said, "Come on, we can't be late."

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Steve and Peggy approached the entrance to the "munitions bunker" and saw a tall fence surrounding the bunker with a single entrance gate. Two soldiers and a man in a suit kept guard at the gate while another two soldiers and another man in a suit kept guard at the entrance of the bunker. The two men in suits looked to be recently appointed agents of S.H.I.E.L.D to serve as agency guards for the bunker. The couple approached the gate, and without any hesitation the Army guards opened up the gate for them and snapped to attention. The two soldiers nodded and said in unison, "Good morning, ma'am, good morning sir." The agent at the gate just watched Steve and Peggy with an emotionless stare, which made Peggy feel uncomfortable.

Steve nodded at the two soldiers, "Carry on, gentlemen."

The two soldiers nodded, "Yes, sir."

Peggy and Steve made their way to the entrance of the bunker and like the gate, the two soldiers at the entrance slid open the bunker door and went to attention, "Good morning, ma'am, good morning, sir." Steve returned the greeting causing the soldiers to stand at ease.

Steve and Peggy walked into the bunker, but as Peggy walked in she spotted the two agents looking at them awkwardly. If they were going for subtly, they were clearly failing at it.

Steve and Peggy walked down a small flight of steps into a wide office space inside the bunker. Instead of rows of munitions, there were rows and rows of desks. On the right side of the bunker were small private offices, at the far end of the bunker is a special file room, and painted largely on the center of the back wall is the new S.H.I.E.L.D seal. The office was busy with well dressed men in suits working at their desks and men roaming around the office with files and papers in hand. Steve looked at Peggy with a look of uncertainty in his eyes.

Peggy nodded and whispered to him, "Follow me." She led the way to the back file room through the middle of the bunker between two columns of desks with Steve following close behind.

Once they entered the back file room Steve saw to his left rows of shelves full with files and papers. Immediately in front and to his right were two desks one in front of the other, occupied by two well dressed men in black suits and ties. The man in the front desk spoke up first, "Yes?"

Peggy spoke a code word, "Insight."

The man turned around and nodded to his associate behind him. The second man reached under his desk and pressed a button. The man in the lead desk nodded, "Its open."
Peggy nodded then walked toward the back of the room with Steve trailing behind. As Peggy turned left at the last shelf, Steve noticed a picture of John Weyland mounted on the wall. He stopped and stared at it as his bad feeling came back in his gut. Peggy stopped and turned around and saw Steve staring at the picture, "Darling."

Steve turned, "Coming." He said as he caught up with his wife. Once he was by Peggy's side, he saw what she was standing in front of. They were in front of a large hidden passage way that was tucked between two shelves in the center back wall. He nodded to the opening, "Secret bunker with a secret passage way." He looked down the small hallway and stared at the elevator doors, "and a secret elevator."

Peggy nodded, "I guess this is 'Welcome to S.H.I.E.L.D.'"

Steve smiled at her, "Why do I get the feeling that you were here before?"

Peggy shook her head, "This is my first time here too, darling. Daniel just told me where to go and gave me the necessary information to access certain areas."

Steve nodded, "Fair enough." He stepped forward and looked at his wife, "Shall we?"

Steve and Peggy took the elevator down over a hundred feet beneath the surface of the Earth to reach the secret section of the S.H.I.E.L.D bunker. Once the elevator landed on the bottom it let out a metallic ding to signal its arrival to the subterranean level. The metal doors slid open to reveal a clean, long, wide, and brightly lit room. From where Steve and Peggy stood in the elevator, they could only manage to see the central control point at the center of the room which was about thirty meters down the long unobstructed path. But there was much more they couldn't see from where they were. The central control point had an array of large computer terminals forming a backward "C" with the opening of the "C" facing in line with the elevator. Working diligently in the middle of the central control point with his back turned toward them is a slightly older looking gentleman in a white lab coat. Neither Steve nor Peggy could tell what he looked like but that was the least of their concerns.

After a brief pause, Steve and Peggy simultaneously exited the elevator into the top secret subterranean room. The moment they walked out of the elevator they realized how big the room actually was. The bright room was incredibly wide and had rows upon rows of large bookshelf sized computers on both the left and right side of the center path. Steve didn't know what they were but he kept an emotionless look on his face like Peggy. This is the first time either of them been here so everything looked completely new to them.

Steve scanned the room and saw a number of men in white lab coats working on these bookshelves sized mechanical devices, "What are these?" Steve asked curiously.

Suddenly to his right he heard Colonel Phillips speak in his usual bravado, "These are top secret state of the art digital computers."

Steve and Peggy looked to their right and saw Colonel Phillips, Howard Stark, and even Edwin Jarvis approaching them. The Colonel wore the same summer khaki uniform as Steve but instead has a Colonel rank pinned on rather than a Captains. Howard Stark, like usual, is dressed in a grey suit and tie with a white dress shirt. Edwin Jarvis is formally dressed in a brown suit, brown vest, red striped tie, and a white dress shirt.

Before either Steve and Peggy can greet them, Howard spoke as he stopped next to the couple, "These digital computers and data banks are the product of years of a government funded research
project called Project Ghost Eye during the war. This project went along side Project PX to provide a way to do more computing functions faster and more accurately than man can. But, both projects didn't successfully finish until early last year." He paused, "Project PX for its rudimentary abilities and design became known to the public while Project Ghost Eye remained top secret for its far more advanced system and functionality." He smiled "These Ghost Eye computers are smaller than the ENIAC computers and does a lot more with double the speed."

Steve raised an eyebrow, "These are considered small?" He asked referring to the bookshelf sized computers.

Peggy looked around, "These are incredible."

Howard chuckled, "Compared to the ENIAC computers, yes. Those ENIAC computers are massive." He stuck his hands in his pockets and looked at the computers, "Anyway, these Ghost Eye computers can solve complex equations a thousand times faster than the human mind can, and they can even be programmed to do much more. The use of algorithms is the essential part of how these things process data." He smiled, "Its interesting. But I'm sure I lost you, Captain."

Steve nodded with a half smile, "It's okay to tell me that they work by magic, Stark." Peggy laughed and gently shoved him with her shoulder.

Jarvis nodded at everyone, "Agents Rogers, Captain Rogers. Good to see you both again."

Steve nodded, "Likewise, Mr. Jarvis."

Peggy looked confused, "Good to see you, Mr. Jarvis, but how did you get down here?"

Howard smiled, "He's because he's my personal assistant." That answer made a surprising a lot of sense to the Rogers. He chuckled, "Relax, he passed the security check."

Before the conversation could continue, Director John Weyland appeared from behind one of the large computers on their right. He wore a plain black suit and tie, and carried a clip board with a stack of papers. "Good to see everyone here today." He stopped next to the group and nodded, "Welcome to S.H.I.E.L.D."

Colonel Phillips turned to Director Weyland, "Director Weyland, Captain Rogers and Agent Rogers are here as requested." With that Peggy stepped closer to Steve.

Weyland nodded, "Well, let's get down to business." He faced Steve and Peggy, "Welcome to Project Ghost Eye."

Steve nodded and said plainly, "We've been introduced."

Peggy spoke up, "So this is S.H.I.E.L.D."

Director Weyland nodded, "Yes it is." He turned to the computers, "These advanced computers from Project Ghost Eye are now under the charge of S.H.I.E.L.D. With these computers, I plan to launch this agency's first operational project once the President and the War Department authorizes it." He then faced the group and smiled, "Project Insight. This will be the first operational step of this agency. Insight is a highly sophisticated algorithm in these computers to compute any possible threats posed against the United States. With this information we can eliminate any threats before they can ever happen."

Steve looked at Weyland, "I thought the punishment came after the crime."
Weyland shook his head, "We can't afford to wait that long."

Peggy spoke up, "Who's we?" Colonel Phillips, Howard Stark, and Edwin Jarvis just watched and listened to the conversation unfold.

Weyland looked back at the couple and spoke plainly, "I'm sure the both of you know that the war caused significant damage to Europe's and Asia's infrastructure with millions of lives lost. And now that we have Atomic Bombs its only a matter of time before the Soviets obtain one, and once the Soviets have one... total annihilation can come in a blink of an eye. The chaos that the second world war brought can't happen again." He looked around the room, "Once S.H.I.E.L.D got approved, I asked the President and the war department for a surge of threat analysis and proposed the idea of Project Insight." He smiled confidently, "For once we're way ahead of the curve. We can stop attacks like Pearl Harbor from ever happening and protect all our allies. This Project can even be tailored to protect people around the world. Imagine the future with this." He spoke happily, "With United States having control of such information we can assure peace. We can be a type of... world police so to speak."

Steve nodded, "By holding a gun on everyone on Earth and calling it protection."

Weyland stepped closer to Steve, "I know what you boys did during the war. You all did some nasty stuff."

Steve nodded and spoke sternly, "Yeah. We did what we had to do and compromised, sometimes in ways that didn't let us sleep so well, but we did so people could be free." He pointed to the computers, "This isn't freedom. This is fear."

Weyland shook his head, "S.H.I.E.L.D takes the world how it is, not how we like it to be. The world isn't so simple anymore." He spoke sternly at Steve, "You're going have to play ball one way or another, Cap."

Steve tensed for a moment and Peggy saw it in his eyes. She gently put her hand on his arm and whispered, "Darling."

Steve glanced at Peggy then looked book at Weyland dead in the eyes, "Don't hold your breath."

Weyland nodded, "If you say so. Well that is all for the meeting. It was pretty quick but I just wanted you to be introduced to the new organization."

Steve nodded then turned to the Colonel, "Is that all, sir?"

Colonel Phillips nodded, "That's all." After a brief pause Colonel Phillips spoke up again, "Since you're restricted from field operations, I need you to check in at the Commando 'five and dime' and call into base from there. Understood, Captain?"

Steve nodded, "Yes sir."

Peggy gripped Steve's arm and gently pulled on it, "Lets go, darling." Steve nodded then turned around. "Howard, Mr. Jarvis, it was good to see you." She said as she left with Steve to the elevator.

Jarvis nodded, "Have a good day, Agent Rogers."

Howard nodded, "Like wise Peg." He said as Peggy and Steve reached the elevator.

Colonel Phillips turned to Director Weyland and said plainly, "The Rogers have a point."
Director Weyland spoke evenly, "This is what we need to do to keep the country safe." He gave a half smile, "He'll play ball. One way or another I guarantee it." With that he turned around and headed to the central control point to talk to the lone scientist working there.

Colonel Phillips shook his head gently as he watched Director Weyland walk away. Howard walked up to the Colonel, "What's going on, Colonel?" He asked plainly.

Colonel Phillips breathed calmly and didn't answer right away.

Just as the elevator doors closed Steve turned to Peggy and said plainly, "The Director is dirty."

Peggy nodded, "Like a muddy rag, darling." She smiled confidently, "Where do we start?"

Steve smiled, "We need to get a few things from the house then we have to talk to a few friends."

Peggy kept her smile, "Remember we have a little meeting to attend."

"I haven't forgotten. Though we might need a disguise." Steve chuckled, "Think you can go blonde again?"

Peggy chuckled, "Oh heavens no."

Steve nodded and spoke seriously, "Nonetheless… we need to shut down Hydra before the President authorizes Project Insight. My gut is telling me that the moment Project Insight is activated then Hydra will make its move."

Peggy nodded, "We'll do this together, Steve." Steve smiled at his wife.

UPDATE 15 May 2016

Added a few things to disclose some information.

YEAH I know. YET another two parter, but I did say diabolical shit was about to go DOWN. Any who, I found out how long this thing is going to be so hence two parter. Hint: INCREDIBLY

AWOL: Absence WithOut Leave

Schatten: Shadow in German

Project PX: The US government project to make the first electronic general purpose computer

ENIAC: Electronic Numerical Intergrator and Computer

I got varying sources on Operation Paperclip, so I'm just going to alter it a bit. Who knows maybe the Operation and the recruitment of German Scientists started a lot sooner than we thought. ;)

I know computers with advanced capabilities came out years later, but this is the Marvel Universe. If Howard Stark can make a car hover off the ground, then they can have advanced computers. If SHIELD has flying carriers then they can have supercomputers in 1947.
Chapter 19 Paranoia Part 2

I don't own Captain America

Going to follow the basic trajectory of James Bond: Spectre just fair warning

Previously:

Captain Steve Rogers recently traveled to Paris in secret based off a lead given to him by Bucky concerning Hydra. Bucky told him to find a man named Rolf Wehausen which would lead him to the truth about Hydra. So while in Paris, Steve spied and eavesdropped on Rolf Wehausen's meeting with his two associates and discovered that Hydra is still operating and has infiltrated the deepest parts of the government, including SHIELD and parts of the SSR. Steve also learned of an important Hydra meeting that would be taking place in four days at midnight at the Gibson Grand Hotel in Washington DC. But before he could find out anymore information, he was discovered by Wehausen and became involved in a brief but chaotic chase through a Paris street. At the end of the chase, Steve left all three Hydra agents dead and an entire Paris street and intersection closed with dozens of innocent people injured in result of the chase. After learning about Hydra's infiltration, Steve trusts no one and doesn't know who's Hydra and who isn't. The only ones he trusts is his wife, Colonel Phillips, and a select group of individuals. To make matters more stressful, the director of SHIELD, Director John Weyland, is trying put in motion SHIELD's first operation code named "Project Insight". This project utilizes a complex computer algorithm in the highly advanced SHIELD computer system known as "Ghost Eye" to determine potential threats to the United States. With this, Director Weyland will try to get the President's seal of approval to eliminate any potential threats posed to the United States. Needless to say both Steve and Peggy don't trust Director Weyland and are very suspicious of his loyalty and intentions. Meanwhile, the director of the SSR, Colonel Chester Phillips, is trying to keep most of the SSR intact and prevent the government from completely dissolving the entire agency rather than fold the whole agency into SHIELD like it was initially planned. Additionally, after Steve's rogue actions in Paris, Steve has been suspended from all field operations until further notice. But he would not obey the restriction placed upon him because of what he had discovered. Hydra is getting ready to make their big move, so he will do whatever it takes to prevent them from going any further. This time he plans to finish the job… but he's not going at it alone. When he returned back home, Peggy talked him into letting her go with him to take down Hydra even though she's four months pregnant. She assured him that she's still fit to do the job, plus he knew better than to doubt her. He's just worried about her and he knows he shouldn't be.

Now both Steve and Peggy are getting ready to conduct their own mission. They know they'll be operating without authority thus making them "rogue".

After the meeting in the SHIELD Bunker, Steve and Peggy went back home to change and grab some items that they may need for their off the books mission. They made sure to pack light to ensure that nothing can slow them down. Steve changed into civilian clothes that consisted of a blue shirt with the top two buttons unbuttoned, white under shirt, black dress pants, black shoes, and a grey fedora. He grabbed his .45 pistol, extra ammunition, a simple casual change of clothes, and his combat uniform and gear and packed it all into a green military sea bag. He of course left his shield out of the sea bag so he can carry it by hand. Peggy changed into plain conservative clothes to avoid attracting any attention to her attire and kept her brown elegant wavy hair down. She wore a maternal dark blue women's business suit jacket and skirt with a white collared women's maternity
blouse, nylon stockings, and dark blue heels. For now, since she’s not in action she refrained from
taking off her small necklace of Steve's shield and her wedding ring. But like Steve, she grabbed her
own items for their mission including her own military green sea bag and her purse. She packed her
leather jacket, her pair of OD green combat trousers, black combat boots, and extra ammunition for
her pistol and placed them all in her sea bag. On top of the usual things that occupy her purse, she
also placed her Walther PPK and two extra magazines into it.

Speed is the key, so they needed to avoid as much attention as possible and had to travel light to
increase mobility. With Hydra deep inside the government and the level of Hydra's influence
unknown to the couple, both Steve and Peggy assumed that anyone in the government is Hydra
aside from the obvious exceptions like Colonel Phillips. But they knew the moment they left the state
that it would be only a matter of time before SHIELD and the SSR would start looking for them.
But, Peggy knew that the main focus would be more on Steve because of his status, abilities, and the
danger he poses to the Hydra infiltrated government. She knew if Steve had left by himself, she
would still end up being questioned because she's his wife and that's reason enough for the
government to question her about his whereabouts. So in hindsight it was smart of her to go with him
anyway. Besides, she wouldn't leave her husband in a time of need like this in the first place…

Howling Commando, " Downtown New York 5 &10 " SSR Field Office New York City, New
York

It's a little past one in the sunny afternoon with sun shining high in the clear blue New York skies.
Inside the hidden Howling Commando field office, the original Commando team (minus Bucky) all
sat in civilian clothes around the main conference table waiting patiently for the Rogers to arrive for
the meeting that was called a few hours earlier. This meeting Steve called struck them as strange
because when he called each of them individually, he was very specific about only having the
original Commando team present for the meeting. Steve made sure the rest of the Commandos
remained out of the loop, which caused the original crew to feel on edge about the true nature of the
meeting.

The rectangular conference table, located in front of the chalk and bulletin boards at the center of the
room, had space for ten people but the original Commandos took only half those seats. The head of
the table closest to the chalk board was reserved for Steve and remained unoccupied until he arrives.
James Montgomery Falsworth and Jacques Dernier sat across from each other and closest to the head
of the table, Timothy "Dum Dum" Dugan sat next to James and across from Gabe Jones, and lastly
Jim Morita sat next to Dugan.

Jim leaned forward, "Is anyone else here feeling a little bit weird about this meeting?"

James nodded, "Its not like the other times we met with the Captain. This time he sounded like
something big is happening."

Dugan leaned back in his chair, "Well he did get in trouble for going to Paris and stirring up all that
chaos."

Jacques spoke up in his usual thick French accent, "If Captain Rogers went to Paris and caused that
much trouble then it was for a good reason. I'm sure he was trying to avoid an open confrontation…"

Gabe nodded, "He's right. We all know the Captain wouldn't do something that reckless." Gabe
Jones and Jacques Dernier were the only two commandos Steve gave any sort of details about his
trip to Paris. Steve made sure he didn't expose too much to them for the sake of secrecy at the time. It
wasn't that he didn't trust the rest of the commandos, he just wanted to limit the people who knew his
actual intentions. But in the end all of the commandos heard about the result of his trip and what
happened to him because of it.

Suddenly they heard the faint sound of the secret door to the Howling Commando field office open and close, followed by the sound of heels clicking on the concrete floor. Dugan nodded, "Looks like they're here." He said automatically figuring it had to be Steve and Peggy arriving.

But to their surprise Peggy came out of the hallway alone without Steve which surprised them completely. She never showed up to the Howling Commando office without him, so this was completely alien to them. They all watched her quietly as she made her way around the table.

She stopped at the head of the table and finally got a good look at them, only to see that they all had strange looks plastered on their faces, "What?" She asked curiously.

Timothy Dugan leaned forward in his chair, "Not that we don't like you Peggy, but where is the Captain?" He shrugged, "If you're here, he shouldn't be far behind, right?"

Jim Morita nodded, "We thought we were meeting with both of you right now." He said curiously.

James Montgomery Falsworth looked up at Peggy, "Does this have to do with Paris?"

Peggy gave a small smile, "Relax, everyone he's parking the car." She nodded at Falsworth, "And yes this has to do with Paris."

Dugan leaned back in his chair, "Oh just so you know, Peggy. Colonel Phillips ordered us to assure that the Captain checks in through this office daily to make sure he doesn't go on another personal mission of some kind." He shook his head, "A bullshit order if you ask me." Peggy hummed in response.

Jim nodded, "Anyway Peggy, we were just talking about Paris..."

Gabe chimed in, "Its Captain Rogers we're talking about, fellas. Like I said, he would only do something that drastic if it was for the right reasons." Everyone nodded.

Peggy smiled to herself as she listened to the commandos speak highly in defense of Steve. To the Commandos and even to her, Steve was larger than life. She knew that they all respected him, and that they would follow him to hell and back. She then spoke softly but loud enough for everyone to hear, "There's only two of you in this room that knew Steve was going to Paris." Gabe and Jacques suddenly turned still and quiet as the other commandos started to look around curiously. Peggy smiled, "Don't be alarmed, even I didn't know why he was going to Paris in the beginning." She reassured, "It's not that he doesn't trust you, its that he wanted to limit the people who knew just in case the lead he was following turned out to be false. Trust me."

Jacques leaned forward, "What was the lead?"

Dugan looked surprised, "Wait, Peggy. You're not upset that the Captain essentially lied to you, and that..."

Falsworth elbowed him in the ribs earning a grunt from Dugan, "Obviously, she isn't upset...Dum Dum."

Peggy chuckled, "Am I upset with Steve? No, I'm not. I understood the caution, though I wish he would've told me nonetheless..."

Dugan quickly spoke, "So you and him are fine then..."
Falsworth rolled his eyes again, "Dugan, there is a more pressing issue than Peggy's marriage to the Captain."

Peggy shook her head and said in a serious tone, "Steve and I are better than fine, Timothy. Relax." She said while unknowingly placing her hands on her abdomen. "Anyway, James is right. There's a more pressing issue." She leaned against the table, "Now, the reason why Steve and I wanted only you five here is because you all were the original group to battle Hydra...and we know we can trust you." The original Commandos all smiled and nodded at her in response. Peggy took a deep breath, "This may come as a shock to you, and the information I'm going to tell you cannot leave between us and Steve."

Gabe nodded, "You can count on us, Peggy."

Peggy nodded again, "Let me emphasize this. This cannot leave between us or Steve. As of now don't even tell the President or even your own mothers. It's that serious."

Jim nodded, "We got it, Peggy."

Peggy took another deep breath, "That blind lead Steve was following…lead him to discover that Hydra… is still active… and they have infiltrated our government." The room immediately fell into absolute silence at the end of her sentence.

None of the commandos knew how to respond to that shocking revelation, and they couldn't rightfully believe what she just said. It all seemed impossible and farfetched for Hydra to be still active after they took down all of Hydra's bases and strongholds, and even arrested everyone they could find in prominent positions in Hydra. They couldn't grasp nor believe the information because they all still held onto the belief that Hydra was gone. All the commandos had a variation of surprised and confused looks as they stared up at Peggy. Dugan was the first to break the silence in a confused tone, "How? We saw to their end! Captain Rogers took down Schmidt!"

Peggy sighed, "The remnants of Hydra infiltrated the government through Operation Paperclip. I'm sure you're all aware of that operation, right?"

Jim shook his head, "Uh. Remind us."

Peggy sighed, "Operation Paperclip was the recruitment of German scientists for employment by the United States and to deny their scientific expertise and knowledge to the Soviet Union. Both Nazi party members and prominent Hydra officials were recruited for this purpose. Because of this Hydra was able to infiltrate deep inside the government, including the new organization known as SHIELD. Its also safe to assume that they are well within the SSR too."

James spoke up in confusion, "How did they..."

"The government is looking for Communist agents, not Hydra." Peggy shook her head, "No one, not even me, could have imagined Hydra surviving the end of the war. Let alone end up infiltrating the government. Their influence has spread unchecked for years now."

Gabe shook his head, "This is crazy. I can't..."

James looked down at the table, "I can't imagine seeing what Hydra would've done if the Captain didn't find out." He said trusting Peggy's words instantly.

Jim shook his head, "James, we saw Hydra fall. There's no way..." He rambled in a mixture of confusion and desperation.
"If Peggy is telling us this...then Hydra is still active." James turned to Jim, "She wouldn't just tell us this if she didn't have proof."

Dugan sighed, "I trust Peggy with my life, but what makes you believe it, James?"

James looked at Peggy who had a serious look on her face, then turned back to Dugan, "Her confidence."

Peggy nodded, "why would I make this up? I wouldn't be telling you something like this if I wasn't sure it was true." She sighed, "And Steve wouldn't tell me something like this if he wasn't sure it was true. I know its hard to believe, but you just have to trust us."

Dugan nodded, "Sorry, Peggy." He sighed, "We just... its hard to believe that Hydra is still active you know? After everything we been through to stop them. Hell, the Captain gave everything...well almost everything."

Peggy frowned, "Don't remind me." She sighed, "Because of Steve, we can stop them before they can go any further. I think Steve might've tipped their hand early."

Jacques leaned forward, "Weren't you ordered to interview Hydra prisoners at the end of the war to see if they would cooperate with the us?"

Peggy nodded, "Yes, I was, but that was way before I knew about Operation Paperclip. I didn't trust anyone from Hydra so I reported to my superiors that they were too dangerous and couldn't be trusted." She shook her head, "Clearly no one listened to me."

Dugan sighed, "Typical..."

Jim spoke up, "What is Hydra planning?"

Peggy shook her head, "We're not a hundred percent sure what it is yet. All we know is that it probably involves SHIELD."

Jim nodded, "Now we know that you two didn't just call the meeting just to tell us this. You obviously have a plan to expose and stop Hydra don't you? That probably involves..."

Suddenly everyone heard Steve's voice from the entrance of the room, "It's a good thing those two agents who were supposed to watch the entrance were reassigned. If they were here we might've not gotten to do the meeting." He stepped into the room and removed with his fedora, "Sounds like all of you know what's going on?"

The Commandos turned to him and greeted him courteously. Peggy nodded at her husband, "Steve." She said with a small smile.

As Steve started to walk toward the table, Dugan stood up, "What do you need from us, sir?"

Steve didn't answer right away as he made his way to the head of the table to stop next to Peggy. Peggy stepped back a little to give Steve the floor as she leaned to one side and crossed her arms over her stomach. Steve took a deep breath then looked to his team, "Before I ask anything of you. Understand what Peggy and I are intending to do will go against direct orders from Colonel Phillips, SHIELD, and the SSR. We will be pursued...and anyone we associate ourselves with will likely be targeted as well. Peggy has told you that Hydra has infiltrated both SHIELD and the SSR, so that means they have a variety of resources at their disposal to look for us." He paused, "We told you this because we can use your help. I won't lie to you, we'll be out numbered, probably outgunned, and will probably be charged as criminals." He leaned against the table, "I will not order you to help us,
but I will ask. If any of you refuse… I will not hold it against you.”

Dugan chuckled, "Hell, Captain you know I'll always fight. Besides we've operated in far worse cases before." Both Steve and Peggy smiled proudly at Dugan.

Jim nodded with a smile, "I'm in."

James chuckled, "Lets finish the job this time."

Gabe smiled confidently, "I'm in."

Jacques nodded at Steve, "Vive la Capitaine Amérique." He then spoke in English, "I'm in."

Steve smiled and nodded at their responses. Dugan spoke up again, "Well. We got one request."

Steve raised a brow, "What's that?"

"Buy the first round of drinks when this is done." Dugan said jokingly as he sat down.

Steve laughed, "I'll buy the whole damn bar when we're done." Peggy couldn't help but laugh and shake her head.

Once Peggy calmed down she turned serious, "Now, with that being said…Be careful with who you trust. Assume anyone outside this room is Hydra unless Steve and I tell you differently. Again, both SHIELD and the SSR have been infiltrated so be careful." The Commandos understood perfectly and responded with silent nods.

James leaned back on his chair, "So what do we need to do?"

Steve took out a folded piece of paper from his pocket, "First, when I was in Paris I overheard a name. The Hydra assassin I followed was tasked to assassinate a man named Schatten, or Shadow in German. We need to find out who that is before Hydra tries to assassinate him again. He might be our only solid lead to give us valuable information on the details of Hydra's agenda." He paused then raised the folded paper up, "Secondly, this is the mission for Dugan, James, and Jacques." He then slid the paper to James.

Jim nodded, "What are the rest of us doing?"

"The rest of you do your best to cover for me and Peggy. Falsify reports or do whatever you need to do to buy us time." Steve paused, "But once we get more intel on what's happening, I might need all of you. So be ready at any moment you two." He said referring to Jim and Gabe.

Gabe nodded, "You can count on us."

Jim spoke up, "What about finding Schatten? You said he's might be our only solid lead."

Peggy responded, "You can try looking for him in the SSR files, but I have a feeling that you won't be able to find him with his alias alone."

Steve nodded, "She has a valid point."

As Steve continued with telling the Commandos everything he had discovered, including Director Weyland's plans for SHIELD and his personal feelings about their soon to be boss, Peggy spotted something that caught her attention on the floor. She cocked her head to the left and saw a newspaper on the floor next to James' seat. The papers headline and picture caught her attention which prompted her to quickly step forward and bend down to grab the paper. Steve paused, "What
is it, Peggy?” he asked curiously.

Peggy picked up the newspaper and saw the headline and accompanying picture of a black and white photo of a middle aged man in a suit. The headline read, **HIGH-POWERED BUSINESSMAN AND AMERICAN SENITORIAL CANDIDATE, CALVIN CHADWICK FOUND MURDERED.** Peggy shook her head then looked at James, "James, is this today's paper?"

James nodded, "Yes of course. Why?"

Steve was confused, "What is it?"

Peggy shook her head, "Calvin Chadwick is a rich businessman who owned Isodyne Energy before he tried making a bid for senate."

Steve was still confused, "Other than his death, what's the matter?"

"He had a file the size of a dictionary back in the SSR." Peggy shook her head, "This is odd."

Jim didn't understand either, "I don't get it."

Peggy sighed, "I don't know either. But two months ago Brett Hall, another powerful businessman, was founded murdered in his home. Then last month a rich banker by the name of Charles Dafoe was found dead in an apparent suicide. Then last week William Gloucester, owner of a powerful financial firm, was also found dead."

Steve nodded, "You feel like there's a connection to all these? Or…"

"I don't know, darling. But all these powerful and influential businessmen dying in a short time period looks suspicious." She shook her head, "I don't know how else to explain it."

Steve nodded, "I've got a gut feeling about what happened, but I'll save it for later." He turned his attention to James, "You, Jacques, and Dugan understand what you need to do?"

James nodded, "So when do we start?"

"Now." Steve nodded.  

Steve wore his fedora while carried a small canvas bag over his shoulder as he walked with Peggy out of the Howling Commando field office and onto the busy New York City sidewalks. The sidewalk was cluttered with hundreds of pedestrians unknowingly walking past Steve and Peggy. The busy sidewalk swallowed the two of them whole and made them seem to be almost invisible in the ocean of people. It was time to go take down Hydra once and for all. They were ready, but they knew time was not on their side because the longer they took to bring down Hydra, the more wanted Steve would become. The moment he disobeys his restrictions and orders, both the SSR and SHIELD would be forced to arrest him. But since Steve is a super soldier he is considered a dangerous individual so both the SSR and SHEILD would go after him with extra force. Needless to say, the odds were not in their favor…

Peggy looked up at Steve, "You ready?" She said as they stopped just in front of the entrance to the "Downtown New York 5 &10". 

Steve nodded, "I am." He paused, "You know, you don't have to come." He said plainly. 

Peggy shook her head, "Darling…"
Steve turned and looked into her eyes, "I'm not saying I don't need your help... I want your help... in fact I need it. But I don't want them to come for you and lose everything because of me." He shook his head, "You worked so hard to get what you wanted. When everything and everyone was against you there you were proving the world wrong... You made it so far in the SSR, and you're arguably their best agent. You can do more alone in four hours than a group of agents could do in a whole day." He looked down, "I don't want to be the reason you lose everything you worked for."

Peggy stepped closer and wrapped her arms around him, "Darling, of all the things you taught me, the most important one is to always try to do the right thing even when everything is going against you." She smiled reassuringly, "Going with you to take down Hydra is the right thing to do. Yes, no one might agree or even believe us, but since when was doing the right thing ever so easy. We're doing this for the right reasons..."

Steve nodded, "I just don't want you to lose everything you worked for because of me."

Peggy held him tight, "Steve, you didn't tell me to come. I wanted to come. Following you to stop Hydra is far more important than my career, and frankly is even more important than us." Steve nodded quietly. She ran a hand over his cheek, "If I lose my job over this then so be it. It won't be the end of the world if that happens. Besides, I can always find something else to do." She chuckled, "I'm sure some men would feel less insecure if I'm not around."

Steve gave a small smile, "you deserve better."

"I have better...I have you." She said softly with a smile.

Steve leaned forward and kissed her briefly. He smiled, "Come on. Time to finish what we started."

Peggy smiled, "Right behind you, my darling." She linked her arm with Steve's as they started to walk down the street.

After a few minutes of walking down the block, Steve suddenly stopped at a black two-door Dodge coupe parked at the curb. Peggy looked up at him, "This isn't our car, Steve." She said confused.

Steve smiled, "I know." He said as he opened the passenger door for Peggy, "Get in. Our bags are in the trunk"

Peggy shook her head with a smile then got in the car.

Steve prepared for a long drive as he accelerated their recently acquired Dodge coup onto the highway to get to the Gibson Grand Hotel in Washington D.C. As Steve settled for the long drive, Peggy looked over at her husband and smiled with a questioning look, "So when did my husband learn how to steal cars?"

Steve chuckled, "Nazi Germany."

Peggy couldn't help but laugh, "Really?"

"Yes really." Steve said with a smile, "And we're borrowing."

Peggy shook her head with a smile, "Whatever you say, darling."

Steve shrugged, "Need a different car because I have a feeling the government would be looking for our car."
"I understand. It's good thinking." She said as stretched while rubbing her baby bump.

Steve looked over at her and gave a small smile, "How are you two doing?"

Peggy looked down at her belly, "We're doing good. Not really excited about getting bigger though." She smiled, "But I can't wait to start this family."

Steve smiled as he looked forward again, "Me neither." He turned serious, "We just have to stop Hydra first."

Peggy sighed, "There's always something."

Steve nodded, "This is an interesting life we live isn't it?"

Peggy caressed his arm, "Yes it is, Steve. Yes, it is. Wouldn't have it any other way."

They turned quiet for a moment as they continued their long drive. Steve spoke evenly, "For the meeting tonight. You have to go in alone…I can't go in because everyone would probably recognize me." He nodded, "If anything goes wrong, I'll be ready with the shield and the car."

Peggy nodded, "Shouldn't be a problem..." She paused, "Hm. I might need a way in."

"I have one." He said as he reached into his right pocket while he steered the car with his left hand. He then pulled out the silver Hydra ring and showed Peggy, "replace your ring with this one, so if they ask you for an invitation just silently show them the ring on your hand and hopefully it'll be enough."

Peggy gently took the ring from his hand, "Here's hoping." She looked at the silver ring and saw the single small Hydra red skull symbol engraved on the top, "Hm." She hummed as she observed the ring. After a moment she removed her wedding ring then slipped the Hydra ring in its place. With her wedding ring in her hand, she took off her Captain America shield necklace then unhooked the chain and slipped her ring onto it so she could have her ring in one place with her necklace. She then gently put her necklace and ring into the inside pocket of her dark blue suit jacket.

Peggy nodded, "Let's hurry and finish this so we can go home."

Steve smiled, "Atta girl."

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**Gibson Grand Hotel, Washington D.C.**

It was ten minutes past midnight, and Steve and Peggy were just now slowly driving down the dimly lit streets to the Gibson Grand Hotel. Even though they arrived in D.C. around seven in the evening, they purposely wanted to show up late to the Hydra meeting. For the five hours they waited before the meeting they ate dinner, and Peggy got them a room in a small hotel in downtown D.C. to spend the night. Peggy was the one to get the room because she isn't as recognizable as Steve so it was easy to get one without suspicion. When the time came for them to go to the meeting they ultimately decided to arrive late because Peggy didn't want to risk being singled out at the entrance or at the start. She thought if she arrived late, there is a chance that no one will recognize her because everyone would be focusing on what is being discussed…in theory.

The grand hotel was slowly approaching on the right as Steve drove their Dodge coup slowly down the dim road. He could see that the large hotel was built in a fancy classical style with five floors and dozens of exterior lights to brightly illuminate the outside of the hotel during the night. He looked over at Peggy in the dark, "Alright, get ready."
Peggy reached into her purse, removed her Walther PPK, and loaded it, "ready, darling." She then slid the right side of her skirt up to expose a small band wrapped around her right mid thigh that was just above the hem of her stocking. She gently slid her pistol into the band so she could conceal carry her pistol into the meeting just in case.

Steve turned into the hotel's long C-shaped driveway, and quickly noticed a long line of expensive high end cars parked along the right side. Some were even parked in front of the black awning that hung over the entrance of the luxurious hotel. Steve slowly parked the car at the end of the line closest to the entrance of the drive way, "This is definitely the place." He shut the car off and turned off the head lights. He turned to Peggy who was barely visible in the dim light from the exterior lights of the hotel, "I'll be ready with the shield just in case."

Peggy nodded, "Thank you, Steve." She leaned into him and kissed him briefly before she left the car. As Peggy walked to the hotel entrance, Steve reached to the back seat and grabbed his shield to place it next to him in the front seat.

The lobby of the hotel is also designed in a classical style with hard wood floors, decorative crown moldings, and fancy furniture. It also had a large crystal chandelier hanging from the center of the ceiling, with paintings and tapestries lining the walls. As Peggy walked into the lobby her heels clicked on the hard wood floor with each step she took. As she was heading to the front desk, she looked to her right and saw two men in suits standing at the far end of the hall way in front of a door. She determined that's the most likely place she needs to go and quickly turned and headed in that direction.

The woman at the front desk called out to Peggy, "Excuse me, ma'am. Ma'am." Peggy ignored her as she walked into the hallway.

Peggy walked down to the end of the hallway toward the two men standing in front of the tall door. Before she could say anything, one of the men stepped in front of her, "Excuse me, ma'am, this is a private room." Peggy silently raised her right hand up to show the Hydra ring on her finger. The man stepped aside, "Excuse me. Go right in." He nodded to his partner to open the door which prompted Peggy to go inside. As soon as she went in, the other man closed the door behind her.

Peggy entered through the only door of a long dimly lit banquet room. The room matched the classical theme of the rest of the hotel, and had tall windows on the right side of the room and paintings on the left. At the center of the room was a long wood conference table that had the majority of the light focused upon it. The very ends of the table and everything surrounding it remained dark in the shadows. The professionally dressed six men and one woman sitting at the table were the only ones illuminated by the light, which made them the main focus of the room.

Peggy stepped inside and immediately noticed a large number of men and women dressed in formal business attire standing around in the shadows surrounding the table. She noted that the conference table sat seven people but the seat at the head of the table, which she was practically standing behind, was empty and was almost covered completely by shadow.

The meeting was already in session so no one took notice of her silent entry, so she quietly moved to her right toward the windows and deeper into the shadows to get away from the door. But as she moved in the shadows she noticed the only woman sitting at the table. The blonde woman sat at a prominent position of the table which happened to be the first chair to the left of the table's head. Peggy stopped behind the row of standing men as she tried to figure out who the blonde woman was. The blonde looked strangely familiar, but she couldn't quite put her finger on it. Suddenly her focus turned elsewhere when she recognized the head of Roxxon Oil Corporation, Hugh Jones sitting on the same side of the table as the blonde woman. She tried to figure out why he was here in
a Hydra meeting, but then quickly tensed as she started to listen to one of the members of the table speaking.

An older well dressed man who sat toward the middle of the table and to the right of the head, spoke calmly as everyone in the room listened to him intently. "We have gained significant influence in the governments of the United States and especially in the Soviet Union. Hydra has gained a surprisingly significant foot hold in the Soviet deep science and espionage division known as Leviathan. The Soviet Stalinists responded well to our influence. But in total we have infiltrated multiple government divisions and agencies of both powers, but we still face challenges from certain individuals from the United States." He nodded toward the blonde woman, "Doctor Frost."

Peggy came to a sudden realization when she heard the name "Doctor Frost". She put the name and the looks together and figured out that the blonde woman is the incredibly famous Hollywood actress and the former wife of the recently deceased Calvin Chadwick, Whitney Frost. The American public sees her as the famous actress but its not common knowledge that she is also known discretely as a genius inventor and scientist. Frost is also the one in charge behind the scenes of Isodyne Energy and the reason why Isodyne Energy became so prominent after the war. Peggy only knew these things because the SSR had a small file on Frost because of her inventions and work to help the allies during the war. Overall in the SSR, Peggy didn't see much of a file on Frost or Chadwick, so that meant they weren't people of concern to them. Frost being in this meeting about Hydra changed all that. She obviously didn't look like she was grieving over her recently deceased husband, and in fact she looked rather calm about it. This made Peggy want to piece everything together about this new Hydra…

Frost leaned forward in her chair and spoke in a serious tone, "We have now identified the key individuals we need to target from both countries." She signaled another man who sat toward the middle of the table on the opposite side of her, "But first, a report from our influence campaign. Mister Hayes if you please…"

Mister Hayes, an older man with a full head of grey hair, leaned forward and interlaced his fingers on the table and spoke evenly, "After eliminating Calvin Chadwick, Brett Hall, Charles Dafoe, and William Gloucester, we have seized their assets and businesses making our private economic influence twenty times more powerful than it was before. This is in part of our process of eliminating potential threats that can counter us and to increase our chances of success…" He paused, "The impending completion of the U.S. Strategic Homeland Intervention, Enforcement, and Logistics Division will mean our capability is second to none. Since we are in control, now is the moment for aggressive expansion. The news is only…" He paused when he heard two loud knocks on the banquet hall doors. After a moment the doors opened revealing a group of five shadowy men entering the room. All seven people at the conference table stood up in unison while everyone standing in the shadows around the conference table stood straight in the position of attention. Peggy watched quietly as the group of men entered the room and walked toward the head of the conference table. As soon as the door closed behind them, the men were consumed by the shadows and can only be recognized by their silhouettes. Peggy noted that one of the men was significantly shorter than the others, and watched as one of the taller men pulled the chair out from the table for the shorter one to sit while the other three stood behind them in a perfect horizontal line. As soon as the shorter man sat down, the man went in line with the other three. Peggy then focused on the man in the chair, and figured that he was the current head of Hydra.

There was a long period of eerie silence as the man at the head of table silently observed everyone at the table and perhaps the room. After a long silence, the man at the head spoke in a thick German accent, "Don't let me disturb you…" Peggy recognized the voice but at the same time felt unsure.
Mister Hayes stuttered as he started to speak again, "The news is only good. Our increased influence and surveillance capabilities means that the government intelligence agencies and even the law enforcement in the United States are easily in our control. We are successfully manipulating the politics, agencies, and economies of both the United States and the Soviet Union. With this... we are winning." He said with a confident smile.

Frost nodded, "Thank you, Mister Hayes." She looked around the table, "Now the other matter at hand." She leaned forward, "After the successful number of assassinations and executions, the death of a useful potential asset leaves one more assassination outstanding. The Schatten must be eliminated in order to guarantee security" She looked to the far right corner of the conference table, "Mr. Hansen, will you travel to Lake San Cristobal to assassinate him?"

Mr. Hansen, a middle aged muscular man with dark brown hair, stood up and was considerably tall, "Consider it done."

Frost reached down and brought up a small file, "Please approach and take this dossier we have of the target." She said as brought up a thin file and placed it in front of her.

Mr. Hansen nodded, "Of course." He said as he walked quietly around the table to Frost. The sheer silence of the room made his footsteps on the floor seem louder than they actually are.

As soon as Mr. Hansen got the dossier the man at the head of the table started to speak causing him to stay in place. "It's funny..." The mysterious man said slowly in a thick German accent, "All that excitement in Paris rang a distant bell... And now... suddenly, this evening, it makes perfect sense..." He paused for a long, tense moment as everyone focused on him. "Welcome, Peggy." He said without turning his head in a loud voice that echoed throughout the room. Peggy's heart skipped a beat as a look of shock started to make its way across her face. Without looking anywhere but forward, the man continued to speak, "It's been a long time. But, finally, here we are..." Peggy locked her eyes on the mysterious man as her heart beat started to pick up rapidly. She needed to make an exit... and quickly. The strange man spoke evenly, "It's probably safe to assume that Captain Rogers isn't far. What took you two so long?" After a tense moment of silence Peggy saw the man turn his head toward her. Even in the shadows she could feel the man's eyes on her. "Cut off one head... two more shall take its place." The man said plainly.

Peggy took a big step backward causing everyone around her to stare at her, as they finally realized the woman standing by them wasn't one of them. Peggy then quickly turned around to make her exit but stopped when she saw a relatively big burly man standing in her path. She felt the weight of all the eyes in the room bearing down on her as she formed her exit strategy. "Where's Mr. Rogers, Mrs. Rogers?" The burly man said. Peggy smiled confidently then throat punched him causing the man to cringe forward and cough in pain. She quickly grabbed her pistol from her thigh holster and shot the window to break the glass then kicked the burly man through it.

Without looking back, she quickly jumped through the open window and rolled onto the grass when she landed to cushion her short fall. She quickly popped up and ran through the dim outside toward the car parked at the driveway. Thankfully the driveway was a lot closer than she thought. As she ran she heard gunfire behind her and bullets whizzing past her head. She slid on the grass then suddenly saw a dark shadow envelop over her. She looked up and saw Steve hunched over her with his shield up to protect himself and her. She smiled confidently, "What took you so long?" She said over the bullets bouncing off his shield.

Steve smiled, "Sorry." He stood up slowly as helped her up while keeping his shield up to cover the two of them. "You okay?" He said once she was on her feet.

Peggy gripped his arm as she stayed behind him, "Ask me later." She said with a confident smile.
Steve took out his pistol with his free hand and started firing at the Hydra agents who were now pouring out the broken window. He turned to Peggy, "Go." He said calmly. Without hesitating Peggy turned and sprinted to the car. In heels and four months pregnant she was surprisingly fast. Steve then quickly turned around and followed Peggy while keeping his shield up to protect himself and her. His presence automatically drew all the attention so all the Hydra agents were shooting at him.

Once at the car, Steve stopped Peggy just before she jumped into the front passenger seat of the car, "Take the shield," he said as he handed it to her. He then whipped around and fired his pistol at the approaching Hydra agents, dropping four of them before Peggy got into the car. Peggy shut the door and brought the shield up to the window to protect her head and body from the rounds hitting the car. Steve dropped two more Hydra agents before he rolled over the hood of the car and got into the drivers seat.

He quickly started the car and slammed his foot on the gas pedal and accelerated out of the C-shaped hotel driveway as bullets impacted the side of the car. The car engine roared as he drifted the car out of the driveway then accelerated down the empty dim city streets. As he shot past an empty intersection, Peggy lowered the shield and looked over at him. Even in the dim flickering light she could see a stream of blood seeping out of Steve's shoulder. She gasped, "Steve, you're hit!"

Steve quickly glanced down to his shoulder then back up at the speeding road, "I'm okay." He looked up at the rear view mirror and saw a car with bright head lights quickly approaching them. He spoke evenly, "Got a tail." Peggy looked back and saw the car that was rapidly closing the distance. There was no question that their tail car was with Hydra. "Hold on," Steve said calmly. He then jerked the wheel hard to the right and drifted the car onto another dim empty street.

Peggy looked back again and saw that the tail followed them through the turn. Steve jerked the wheel hard to the right again and drifted the car onto an empty intersection. The car skidded and screeched as it fought the hard turn onto another road, but this time the dim road had a few cars driving on both sides. Steve looked through the mirror and saw that their tail was incredibly close, "This guy's good."

Peggy looked at him with surprise, "How did you learn to drive like this?"

Before Steve could answer he looked to his right and saw that their tail peeled off to the right side so the two cars were now driving parallel with one another. Steve looked forward and accelerated, "I'll tell you later." He said as the Hydra tail car matched his speed.

Peggy looked to her right and saw that the driver of the enemy car who is none other than Mr. Hansen, the tall muscular man assigned to kill The Schatten. She looked over at Steve, "The man driving that car is the man assigned to kill the Schatten. He has a file on where to find him."

Steve nodded as he quickly glanced to his right and saw Mr. Hansen staring back at them while they were driving in high speed. "Hold on." Steve said again as he jerked the wheel to the left and drifted the car down another road. Hansen's car did the same thing but now he was behind them again. Steve kept his eyes on the road as he spoke, "Peggy, can you grab the radio in the canvas bag on the back seat."

Peggy nodded and quickly turned around in her seat and reached for the canvas bag on the seat directly behind her. Once she grabbed the bag she sat back down on her seat, "Got it." She said as she opened the bag and pulled out a BC-611 hand held radio or commonly known as a walkie-talkie. Steve said calmly, "Hopefully they're in range. Tell Dugan, James, and Jacques that there's a change of plans... we'll won't make the rendezvous and instead meet at the hotel."
Peggy nodded and got on the radio, "Dugan, James, Jacques, this is Peggy, come in." There was no answer. She shifted in her seat as Steve sped down the road with Hansen close behind. She reiterated back on the radio, "Dugan, James, Jacques, come in. This is Peggy, does anyone read?"

Finally, the radio crackled to life with James Falsworth's English accent speaking through the radio, "Peggy, this is James. We hear you."

Peggy heard Dugan's muffled voice on the radio, "We look weird with a military radio in a middle of a public park…"

Peggy shook her head, "Boys." She said sternly.

James replied back, "Sorry…"

"Steve and I got a tail chasing us so we're not going to make it to the rendezvous…” Peggy jolted forward as she felt an impact on the rear of their car. She turned around just as Hansen rammed their car yet again.

Steve shook his head, "This guy can really move." He said as he yanked the wheel to the left making the car quickly make a left turn while drifting through another intersection. Hansen of course followed close behind. The sounds of roaring engines and screeching tires echoed through the empty dark downtown city streets as the two cars raced through DC.

Peggy got on the radio, "Meet us at Clover Hotel, room 421." She said urgently.

James replied, "Got it. Is everything…"

Peggy couldn't hear what he said because she dropped the radio on the floor when she felt another massive jolt on the car. She turned around and saw Hansen suddenly peel off to the right side of their car. She quickly turned to Steve, "Steve."

Steve nodded, "I see him." He slammed on the brakes just as Hansen tried to do a pit maneuver causing him to overshoot. Steve accelerated again to try to return the favor, but Hansen slowed down so now both of their cars were completely next to each other. Hansen quickly turned and slammed his car into Steve's with a loud metallic thud. Steve shuddered but kept the car in his control.

While Steve fought back Peggy looked to her left and saw Hansen pointing a gun at them, "Look out!" She called desperately. Steve didn't even look and slammed on his brakes yet again just as Hansen pulled the trigger. The Rogers coup skidded as it slowed back, but Steve was quick to regain its speed and chase Hansen down.

Steve brought their car just behind Hansen's as the two dueling cars weaved through the few cars on the dark streets. "Can you shoot out his tires?" Steve asked urgently.

Peggy took out her pistol and reloaded, "Get me a better angle!" She called back. Steve responded quickly and weaved his car to the left of Hansen's and accelerated. Peggy rolled down her window, stood up, and leaned half of her body out of the car and aimed her pistol at Hansen's rear left tire. She took a moment to focus her aim as Steve tried to keep his position next to Hansen's erratic driving. She squeezed the trigger and fired two rounds into Hansen's car but failed to hit the tire. She recoiled back as Steve swung their car wide to the left to dodge an innocent car. He quickly regained his position slightly behind Hansen's left side giving Peggy another opportunity. Peggy shot again and again but each round hit Hansen's car frame because he was weaving side to side to try to make it harder for her to shoot.

Steve anticipated what Hansen was going to do and quickly reached over and yanked Peggy in the
car just as Hansen slammed his car into theirs. The two cars banged loudly with the high pitch scream of screeching metal. Steve fought back and twisted his wheal to the right as he engaged Hansen in another car dog fight. Hansen weaved to the right again and got separation between him and the Rogers, but that gave Peggy a golden opportunity. She quickly leaned out the window again and instead of aiming at the wheels, she aimed at Hansen. She exhaled and squeezed…

Peggy’s pistol fired a single round and it sailed into the back of Hansen’s head. Hansen recoiled forward and slammed into the steering column from the bullet impact causing his car to swerve out of control. His dead body still pressed weight on the gas so the car accelerated even more. Steve slammed on his brakes to dodge Hansen’s car weaving recklessly to the left and right. Finally, Hansen’s car weaved to the right and crashed into two parked cars stopping the Hydra vehicle permanently. Steve slowed the car down and stopped next to the wreck and turned to Peggy, "Nice shooting, Peggy." He said with a smile in the dim light.

Peggy smiled, "Thank you." She opened her door and stepped out then placed Steve's shield back on the back seats.

Steve opened his door and stepped out as well, "We need to hurry and grab that file." He said as he heard police sirens in the distance. As Peggy rushed to the car Steve felt a sharp sting on his left side just below his ribs. He grunted and shook his head as he placed his hand on his side and felt the warm blood pooling under his blue shirt. He must've gotten hit when he gave Peggy his shield.

Peggy opened the heavily dented drivers door of Hansen’s car and saw Hansen’s lifeless body tumble out. Police sirens were distant but she knew they were getting louder making her hurry and find the file. As soon as she leaned into the car she spotted the file on the floor of the passenger seat surrounded by broken glass shards. She quickly grabbed the file and called to Steve, "Got it!"

Steve waved at her, "Let’s go." Peggy quickly ran back to their borrowed car and hopped back into her seat.

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**Clover Hotel**

**Downtown Washington DC**

Before making it back to the hotel, the Rogers dumped their borrowed coup about twenty blocks from Hansen’s crash and then walked the long distance back to the hotel under the cover of darkness. They left behind their damaged car because they needed to avoid attention as much as possible, and to keep the police focused on the general area of the crash site. Bringing the heavily damaged car would raise suspicions and questions at the small hotel, so they decided it was best to make it to the hotel on foot. Since its so late at night, Steve and Peggy were able to move stealthily through the shadows of Downtown DC without delay.

It was about three in the morning when the Rogers finally got to the hotel. Luckily for them their hotel was located quite a distance from the whole car chase so they knew that the police presence would be limited around their area. But since Steve is carrying his shield and Army pack, they went through a secluded side door to get in without being noticed from the employees at the front desk.

**Room 421**

Steve and Peggy quickly entered their small hotel room and shut the door behind them, and were immediately greeted by Dugan, Jacques, and James M. Falsworth. Dugan smiled, "Hey, Peggy." He chuckled, "Car trouble?"
Peggy shook her head and handed Jacques the file she obtained from Hansen's car, "Jacques, can you put this on the bed for me?"

Jacques took the file and nodded, "Oui." He turned then went to place the file on the bed.

Steve gave a light chuckle as he put his shield down by the door along with the canvas Army bag. Peggy gently took Steve's hand while she began to speak to James, "James, can you get my purse? It's in the closet?"

James nodded, "Of course." He said as he turned around to go to the closet. The hotel room was small with one queen sized bed, small bathroom, closet, small table with two chairs, dresser, a desk with a radio and a chair. Both Peggy and Steve had put their bags and other items in the closet, but with Dugan, Jacques, and James the hotel room is more cluttered than normal. The three Commandos brought with them two black duffle bags and placed them on the floor so the room looked more compact than it actually was.

Peggy led Steve to the desk and had him sit down. Steve grunted as he sat down on the chair, "I'm alright, Peggy." He said while his wound stung.

Peggy gave him a warm smile and kissed the top of his head, "That didn't sound like it." She ran her hand through his hair, "I'll patch you up, alright?"

Steve nodded, "Thanks." He said as he clenched his left side. He felt the sharp pain on his side and the feeling of warm blood continuing to ooze out of the wound that he yet to see.

Peggy turned around and looked at Dugan sternly, "I hope you boys didn't go through my things while you were here."

Dugan looked around at his two other commandos, "Why is she looking at me when she said that?"

Peggy shook her head, "No reason." She removed her dark blue women's business suit jacket and tossed it on the bed next to the file. She then went over to the closet just as James got her purse.

Jacques leaned over to Dugan, "Because its you." Dugan smiled and shoulder checked him earning a laugh from him.

James handed Peggy the purse, "Don't worry, Peg. We didn't do anything but wait."

Peggy nodded, "Thanks." She said as she placed her purse on the bed and reached in to remove a medium sized OD green pouch.

Steve looked at the black duffel bags laying on the floor, "Pretty sure I said pack light. What did you fellas bring?" He said clenching his side.

Dugan looked at the two bags, "We figured we might fight. So we brought weapons, ammunition, and explosives."

Peggy approached Steve with her pouch in hand, "Wait...explosives?" She said surprised.

Jacques nodded with a smile, "Oui. We're going against Hydra again, so I think its better to have it and not need it. Hydra always has something to blow up."

Steve looked up at Peggy and shrugged, "He does have a point."

Peggy shook her head, "You boys." She said in an almost motherly tone. She put her pouch on the
table and unraveled it, exposing medical tools, bandages, surgical thread, needle, clamp, small bottle of penicillin, syringe, and morphine syrettes.

James chuckled, "I think she's ready to be a mother."

Peggy removed a couple of bandages and a clamp, "I sure hope so. Look at what I have to deal with." She said referring to the commandos.

Dugan chuckled, "Ouch." He tilted and looked at Steve who was clenching his side. Even though Steve's hand was covering the wound he could still see the blood pooling under his blue shirt. The shirt was now a darker shade of blue on Steve's left side and shoulder. Dugan then also noticed another wound on Steve's shoulder but it was more of a big scratch than anything else. "You alright, Cap?" He asked.

Steve nodded, "Just got grazed while escaping the meeting."

Jacques asked curiously, "What happened?"

Steve looked over at Peggy as she kneeled down right next to him. Peggy nodded to Steve, "Remove your shirts, darling." Steve complied and removed both of his shirts quickly exposing a relatively large and deep graze on his side. Blood started to slowly ooze now that he removed his hand and shirts. Peggy took the bandage and pressed it on his side to slow the bleeding for a moment before she cleaned and disinfected his wound. "That's a lot of blood for a graze, Steve." She said in concern. Steve shrugged innocently. "Give me a moment, boys while I tend to Steve." She turned to James, "Actually, James. Can you wet a towel for me?"

James nodded, "Of course."

Dugan chuckled, "The Captain is just a big target."

Peggy laughed, "That's for sure." Steve chuckled. Peggy tilted her head and said plainly, "You're going to need stitches for this."

Steve sighed, "Ah swell."

Peggy chuckled, "Don't worry, my darling. I will take good care of you."

Steve laid his head back, "With that I have no doubt."

James approached with a wet hand towel and handed it to Peggy, "Looks like our Captain is in good hands." Dugan chuckled.

Jacques nodded, "Best of hands." Everyone chuckled.

Peggy removed the bandage then proceeded to clean the wound with the wet towel she got from James. Steve grunted as a sharp sting went along his side as Peggy cleaned off the wound and excess blood. After she cleaned his wound she looked up at Steve, "Hold this here, darling," she said referring to the bloody bandage on his side. Steve complied loyally and held the bandage in its place as she went back to her pouch and grabbed surgical thread and a fresh bandage. She returned to his side and kneeled down to start stitching up his wound.

Dugan tilted his head, "Why do you have a first aid kit in your purse again?"

Peggy started to carefully begin stitching Steve's wound, "because I'm an agent in the SSR and I might need to treat myself if I can't get to a hospital." Steve shuddered as Peggy stitched his wound.
Dugan chuckled, "Even Captain America needs help."

Steve nodded as he fought the sharp sting from Peggy stitching, "I can't do everything by myself." He looked over at Dugan, "I'm still human fellas. I make mistakes like everyone else. Even though everyone says I can, I can't alone carry the world on my shoulders." Peggy smiled at that comment as she stitched his wound. Steve cringed, "Ah."

Peggy looked up at him, "Sorry," She said apologetically.

After Peggy stitched and bandaged Steve's wounds on his side and shoulder it was now time to start talking about Hydra. Peggy washed her hands from blood and Steve put on a clean white shirt and sat back on the desk chair. Both James and Jacques sat on the bed while Dugan leaned against the wall closest to Steve.

Dugan nodded, "So what happened?"

Peggy came over to Steve and leaned against the desk, "I wasn't expecting that much people in the meeting, but the room was full of people. But the whole room was primarily focused on the seven people sitting at the conference table."

Steve looked up at her, "Did you identify anyone?"

"I saw the head of Roxxon Oil Corporation, Hugh Jones, and actress Whitney Frost."

Dugan looked confused, "Wait…Whitney Frost? The Whitney Frost?"


Steve looked confused, "What does an actress have to do with Hydra?"

Peggy continued, "The people in the meeting, specifically the ones who sat at the table seemed to have vast sums of wealth and power. Hydra has grown considerably than I previously thought and now has powerful economic influence." She paused, "the deaths of Calvin Chadwick, Brett Hall, Charles Dafoe, and William Gloucester are all linked, Hydra is conducting multiple assassinations to eliminate any threats to their agenda." She shook her head, "Matter of fact, they've infiltrated both the U.S. AND the Soviet Union. They're manipulating the politics, economies, and government agencies of both the United States and the Soviet Union."

James stood up from the bed, "What are they after?"

Dugan shrugged, "Got to be the same goal as last time. World domination and getting rid of personal freedoms."

Steve nodded, "makes sense. They're in both the U.S. and the Soviet Union… the two dominant powers in the world that came out of the war." He inferred, "If they're successful in infiltrating both us and and the Soviets then they can exert their will on anyone in the world."

Jacques tilted his head, "How do we know if we lost."

"When everything goes south." Steve said plainly.

Dugan sighed, "That's terrible and…uh. What's that word?"

Peggy spoke up, "I think you're looking for vague, Timothy."
"Vague." Dugan said completing his thought.

Steve looked up at Peggy. "Was there anything else you found out, Peggy?"

Peggy nodded, "It's confirmed that Hydra has infiltrated SHIELD. But worse I found out in the meeting that Hydra has gained a firm foot hold in Leviathan."

Dugan cringed, "What?"

Peggy shook her head, "Apparently the Soviet Stalinists responded well to them."

Steve sighed, "This isn't good..." He looked up to Peggy, "Do you know who's pulling the strings in Hydra?"

Peggy nodded, "I have a gut feeling."

"Who?" Steve asked curiously.

"Doctor Zola," Peggy said plainly.

Steve looked at her with disbelief, "Zola? Are you sure?"

Jacques shook his head, "I thought he was in prison for war crimes."

Peggy nodded, "The head of the meeting sounded familiar...but as I said. A gut feeling." She crossed her arms, "Only way we know for sure is if we see him face to face."

Steve nodded, "We'll take it. That's more than we had a minute ago."

Dugan spoke up, "Can you contact anyone back in the SSR to check?"

Peggy shook her head, "I might get reported. Plus, me asking about Zola out of the blue might look suspicious."

James nodded, "She makes a fair point."

Steve leaned back in his seat and sighed. He crossed his arms, "So Hydra is back...they infiltrated both the U.S. and the Soviet Union... They're in SHIELD, SSR, Leviathan, and its probably safe to assume other agencies." He shook his head, "They haven't changed... they still want to conquer the world and take away freedoms."

Dugan sighed, "What's our next step?"

"The Schatten..." Steve looked up at Peggy, "Do you have the file?"

Peggy nodded to the bed, "Its on the bed."

Jacques stood up, "I got it," He said as he grabbed the file that was next to Peggy's suit jacket then handed it to Steve.

Steve nodded in thanks to him then opened the file. He turned his chair around and placed the file on the desk, "Alright, gather round." Peggy turned around and rested her hand on the back of Steve's chair. Dugan, James, and Jacques then joined Peggy behind Steve to look over his shoulder to see the file.

The thin file is a dossier of the Schatten with only a few pages. The file contained a picture, alias
name, real name, location, date of birth, notes about the Schatten, and a description of the terrain and environment surrounding his location. Steve recognized the picture of the man in the file, "Wait… I've seen him before."

Dugan shook his head, "when?"

Peggy recognized him too, "I know…” Steve looked up at her. "He was with General Reinhardt at that compound in Austria. He was his executive officer."

Jacques nodded, "But why do they want him dead?"

"We have to ask him personally." Steve said plainly. "We have to beat Hydra to the punch. I bet they got someone else to assassinate him by now." He leaned back, "So the 'Schatten's' real name is Mattäus Wolf. Ex-Hydra and executive officer of General Reinhardt…”

James hummed, "So what do we do."

Peggy spoke up, "We need to fly to Maine." The Commandos all looked at her with confused and uneasy looks. She shrugged, "That's what we need to do isn't it?"

Dugan nodded, "yeah, but we're carrying two duffel bags full of weapons, ammunition, and explosives."

Steve spoke evenly, "She's right. We need to fly there as soon as possible if we hope to beat Hydra."

James nodded, "Yes but we have two military sea bags. The airport will want to search it."

Peggy spoke up, "Who says we'll take a commercial flight?"

Steve looked up at her, "You got something in mind?"

"I've got to make a call."

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**Howard Stark Penthouse**

**Central Park South, New York City, New York**

**04:10AM**

It was still hours away from sunrise and the city of New York was still illuminated by city lights. The city that never sleeps was still a buzz of activity in the dark morning hours of the day. But Howard Stark's Penthouse overlooking Central Park was anything but busy. The neoclassical styled penthouse was quiet, dark, and cozy with Howard Stark and a mystery woman sleeping soundly on the large bed in the master bedroom. It just seemed like another quiet early morning in the Stark Penthouse.

Suddenly the phones in the penthouse erupted in every room causing quite a cacophony of mechanical noises. Howard groaned while he pushed his face into his pillow as he tried to cling to his dear beauty sleep. The brunette mystery woman next to him wrapped her arms around him and held him close. "Just let it ring," she whispered tiredly into his ear. Howard liked that idea and melted into her grasp and was soon on the verge of falling back to sleep next to her.

But unfortunately the phone had other ideas. The phone rang unrelentingly for what seemed like an eternity. It almost felt like it was getting louder and louder. Howard groaned again, "I guess its that
important…” He sat up from the bed earning a pout from his mystery woman. He turned on the lamp on his nightstand then answered the phone that was right next to it, "Yes…” He said in a tired frustrating tone.

Peggy answered on the other end, "Howard, its me. Peggy."

Howard stood up and responded in a confused tone, "Peggy? What the hell?"

Peggy spoke quickly, "Listen Howard, the deaths of Calvin Chadwick, Brett Hall, Charles Dafoe, and William Gloucester are all linked. Its Hydra, they're back. They have gained significant influence and infiltrated the government and been eliminating anyone and anything that is a threat to their agenda… Those men posed some sort of threat to them so they staged murders…"

Stark stood up and picked up the receiver of the phone and started to walk out of the room, "So what Colonel Phillips told me is true… Steve was right."

Peggy spoke confidently, "Of course he was."

"So what do you need from me?" Howard spoke nervously.

The brunette in his bed asked curiously, "Who is it, hon?"

Howard turned around and smiled, "Its Captain America's wife…uh she's having some marital issues right now." He waved at her, "It will only be a moment."

The brunette smiled, "Don't be long."

In the hotel, Peggy looked confused, "Who was that?"

Howard stepped out of his room and out of sight, "No one."

"No it wasn't…"

"Its just a friend, Peg." Howard defended innocently.

"Sure it is, Howard." Peggy said not believing him. "And I'm not having marital issues with Steve…"

Howard changed the subject, "So what's going on Peggy?"

Peggy knew what was more important, "I need you to be careful around SHIELD." Before Howard can answer, she kept going, "They've been infiltrated by Hydra. So be careful with who you trust, and watch your back. Hydra has already murdered four people. But who knows how many others they've killed to cement their dominance."

Howard shook his head, "This is heavy stuff, Peg. A lot to take in." He nodded, "I'll be careful. I survived against Leviathan remember…"

"Look how well that turned out." Peggy said evenly. She spoke up again, "Second thing. I need you to trust me and trust Steve." Peggy said seriously.

Howard was almost offended by that statement, "Of course I trust you two, Peggy."

"I'm just checking." Peggy paused, "Do you have a private plane near D.C.?"

"Yes. Why?"
"We need it." Peggy said seriously. She was about to explain when Howard cut her off.

"Take it, Peg. I know its important. You two can tell me about it some time." Howard smiled, "I have three in Potomac Airfield."

"Got it. Thank you, Howard."

"Be careful, Peg. Both you and Steve" Howard said.

"You too. Watch Colonel Phillips' back too." With that Peggy hung up the phone.

Howard put the phone down on the receiver he carried and let out a long breath as he leaned against the wall. Things just got complicated and confusing in less than two minutes. He sighed, "I knew I should've slept through it." He said as he turned back to the room.

Hotel

Peggy hung up the phone and turned back to Steve and the commandos hanging around the bed, "Got a private ride there." She smiled, "Howard is letting us use one of his planes."

Dugan smiled, "At least we're going in style."

Jacques nodded, "When do we go?"

"Yeah, do we get any chance to hit the sack for a bit?" Dugan asked tiredly.

Steve looked up at Peggy and she gave him a slight shake of the head. Steve stood up and looked at his team, "We need to go now. Hydra is probably making their move right now and I'm sure SHIELD and the SSR would be after us very soon."

Dugan groaned as James and Jacques stood up. James smiled, "We got a car we can take to the plane."

Steve nodded, "Great." Everyone started to grab their things to get going for the airport. Steve walked over to Peggy by the desk, "No sleep is got to be bad for pregnancy, right?"

Peggy nodded, "Definitely..." She smiled reassuringly, "We'll make up for it. I promise" She said as she reached over and gripped his hand.

Steve turned around and walked over to the door to get his shield, "Lets go fellas. Hydra is the biggest threat that we face right now, and is a threat to my wife and her pregnancy. Lets wrap this up so we can go home."

Dugan nodded, "Damn right."

Again, some spoilers from the plot with James Bond Spectre

Those of you who know. Whitney Frost and Hugh Jones are part of the Council of Nine.

But, for the sake of this story, the Council of Nine in this story just got discovered, so initially the SSR (loyalists) had no information on the owners. To them and the rest of the public, the
deaths of the millionaires and business owners just looks like another murder case.

Further developments will occur with an interesting new twist
Chapter 20 Paranoia Part III

I don't own Captain America

Going to follow the basic trajectory of James Bond: Spectre just fair warning.

Part 3 of 4 for the Paranoia series

Previously

July 1947: Hydra has survived through the end of the war and immersed reborn as a more illusive enemy. Now Hydra is more clandestine and has infiltrated government agencies of both the United States and the Soviet Union which include SHIELD and Leviathan respectively. Hydra's mission for domination of the world and draconian anti-freedom principles haven't changed, but their method of accomplishing their goals have. If Hydra remains to grow, then the danger they'd cause to innocent people around the world would be astronomical, so that's why the Rogers are committed to stop them.

But after Steve had discovered Hydra's infiltration, Colonel Phillips restricted him from all field operations until further notice after his little unauthorized trip to Paris that caused an international incident. Regardless of the restrictions placed on Steve, he took it upon himself to stop Hydra and is willing to disobey orders and break the law to do it because the cause is just. But he's afraid he already tipped his hand to Hydra because of his public incident in Paris, so he trusts no one except a select few individuals for fear of Hydra agents inside the government, especially in SHIELD. But with help from his wife, Margaret "Peggy" Rogers, and the original five Howling Commandos, he's now not alone on taking down Hydra. But they're all outside the law on this.

Shortly after Steve got grounded, he and Peggy, James Montgomery Falsworth, Jacques Dernier, and Timothy "Dum Dum" Dugan left for Washington DC to infiltrate a Hydra meeting taking place at the Gibson Grand Hotel in Washington DC at midnight. While that group left for the meeting, the rest of the original commandos consisting of Jim Morita and Gabe Jones stayed behind in the Howling Commando field office and cover for the Rogers, falsify reports, and attempt to dig up anything else on Hydra on their end.

When Peggy briefly infiltrated the meeting she was able to gain useful information about Hydra's presence in the United States. Not only did she learn that Hydra has gained significant influence in the United States and the Soviet Union, but she also learned that Hydra has a large number of assets in the U.S., which includes a large number of influential individuals and businesses. Influential individuals like Hugh Jones of Roxxon Oil Corporation, and the famed Hollywood actress Whitney Frost. Peggy figured there were more rich and powerful people in the meeting she didn't recognize or see, but she was more focused on things being discussed in the meeting. But before she could learn any more details she was discovered and was forced to escape. Once Steve extracted Peggy from the meeting they quickly made their getaway in their borrowed car but were pursued by a Hydra assassin who was assigned to assassinate the Schatten or "Shadow" in German. The Schatten is the only firm lead they have on finding more about Hydra's infiltration, so finding him was priority. During the high speed car chase, Peggy was able to kill the assassin and obtain the dossier the assassin had on the Schatten. With that dossier, Peggy, Steve, Dugan, Dernier, and Falsworth found the location and the Schatten's real name. The Schatten is actually Mattäus Wolf, the former executive officer of Hydra General Reinhardt. Also according to the dossier, he is located deep in rural Maine.
The Rogers and the three commandos now have their next destination, but the commandos fear that the commercial airlines would want to search their suspicious looking duffel bags that are carrying a variety of weapons and explosives. Although airport security is lax, the commandos don't want to take any chances and neither do the Rogers. So Peggy called Howard Stark at 4AM to see if he has any private planes near DC, and it turns out that he has three at the Potomac Airfield. Stark happily and willingly allowed Peggy to commandeer one of his planes. But before the call ended, Peggy warned Stark of Hydra and SHIELD because he would be an obvious target for them. In his usual manner, Stark assured Peggy that he would be cautious which didn't exactly make her feel any better.

Now the Rogers and the three commandos are on their way to Maine to talk to Mattäus Wolf before Hydra can try assassinating him again…

0800 (08:00 AM)

In the clear blue skies over the eastern seaboard of the United States, a lone dual engine silver Beechcraft Model 18 twin tail airplane belonging to Stark cruised at over 22,000 feet on its way to Maine. The sleek polished silver plane shined brilliantly in the morning sun as it flew through the clear skies. Though the aircraft is mostly polished silver, it also had the highly recognizable white and blue Stark Industries logo painted on both of the plane's twin tail vertical stabilizers making it look iconic of Stark. But Stark isn't the one flying it nor are any of his many private pilots...

The plane is expertly piloted by Peggy while Steve sat in the copilot seat navigating. In the passenger compartment are the luggage and the three commandos, Timothy "Dum Dum" Dugan, James Montgomery Falsworth, and Jacques Dernier sprawled out on the passenger seats fast asleep since the plane left Potomac Airfield. Although Peggy talked to Stark around four in the morning to get the plane, they didn't get to the airfield, and takeoff till six. They needed to hurry because they didn't know when Hydra would try to make another assassination attempt on Mattäus Wolf, so time was of the essence. For the group, it's already feeling like a long day ahead of them, and its already been a long week.

In the cockpit, Steve remained surprised at the aviation skills of Peggy since he didn't know she could fly. He knows his wife very well but he's always surprised at her surprising amount of talents. He started to wander and stare at her aimlessly for the hundredth time since they took off. He stopped thinking about Hydra for one moment and started to think of his wife. To him, she always looked incredible and he knew that many people would agree, but for some strange reason at this very moment she looked much more than incredible. Peggy wore her brown leather jacket zipped up to just below her collar bone, white collared button up maternity blouse, pair of dark green trousers, and her black combat boots. She wore her neutral make up with faint lipstick, her hair tied in a loose low pony tail, she had her Captain America necklace on her neck again, and her wedding ring back on her left ring finger. She looked ready to drop into Germany again while Steve looked like another kid on the block. He wore casual clothes consisting of a white and blue pattern plaid long sleeve button up shirt with the top two buttons unbuttoned, white under shirt, khakis pants, black shoes, his wedding ring on his ring finger, and his sterling silver bracelet on his left wrist.

Peggy noticed him staring and glanced over at him for a moment and smiled, "Not that I mind you staring, Steve..."

Steve shook his head as he returned back to reality, "right. Sorry."

"Like I said, I don't mind." Peggy responded with a chuckle. She glanced at him again, "What's on your mind, darling?"
Steve chuckled and shook his head, "I don't know why… but you just look so incredible right now. More so than usual for some reason."

Peggy giggle, "I'm dressed like a soldier, Steve"

"A very attractive soldier at that." Steve responded quickly with a smile. "A soldier with red lip stick and make up." He chuckled.

Peggy blushed and shook her head, "I don't know what to say..." No matter the situation, Steve always manages to make her feel weak in the knees. So to speak. He is such the romantic its almost funny. If the United States knew how sappy he was, then everyone would laugh. But she doesn't mind it at all because right now she can use the distraction.

"Needless to say…I think you always look incredible." Steve said smiling.

Peggy chuckled, "You don't look so bad yourself."

Steve shrugged, "I'll take that."

Peggy laughed, "There's got to be more than that…"

Steve looked at her confused, "Uh…I love you?"

Peggy shook her head with a smile, "Not that. But I love you too." She glanced over at him, "You seem like you want to ask me something."

Steve shook his head, "Incredible how you know these things…"

"Call it women's intuition." Peggy smiled, "So go ahead and ask me, Steve."

Steve chuckled, "When did you learn how to fly?"

Peggy laughed, "When did you learn how to drive like that during the chase?"

It was now Steve's turn to laugh, "Nazi Germany." He smiled at her, "Now your turn."

"Its always Nazi Germany…" Peggy said while shaking her head.

Steve chuckled, "Well its true." He nodded to Peggy, "Now tell me." He said warmly.

Peggy shrugged, "Well...Howard taught me on our spare time shortly after you disappeared. I guess he thought teaching me how to fly would relax me a little bit."

"Did it?" Steve asked curiously.

"I don't own a plane so I didn't get many chances to fly. But it's a good skill to have and that I thankfully retained." Peggy responded evenly.

"See, now this is a skill that I didn't know you had." He said pleasantly.

Peggy smiled over at him, "As I said. I'm a woman with many hidden talents."

Steve chuckled, "And my response remains the same. I look forward to discover every one." Peggy smiled and held out her hand prompting him to interlace his fingers with hers. They stayed quiet for a moment, enjoying this brief intimate moment together. They could use the distraction because they've been going nonstop since they left that meeting in Camp Lehigh a few days ago.
Suddenly Dugan appeared between them, "You two are so adorable, you know that?" Like the rest of the Commandos, he wore very casual civilian clothes consisting of a long sleeve collared shirt, dress pants with belt, and dress shoes.

Peggy sighed and let go her husband's hand, "And romantic moment destroyed."

Steve chuckled and looked at the map, "What can we do for you, Dugan?"

Dugan smiled, "what's the ETA?"

Peggy spoke up, "We've been flying for about a few hours, and we're heading toward the northern end of Maine. So we would roughly get there about…."

Steve checked the map, "an hour or two. We're getting a head wind so that's slowing us down."

Dugan nodded, "What's our landing plan. Or are we just going to rush out of the plane and catch a ride?"

Steve looked at the map, "Mattäus Wolf is in a cabin near Square Lake, Maine. There’s a smaller auxiliary airfield near there, so we'll land there then borrow a ride." He paused, "Those smaller airfields should be less crowded anyway."

Dugan nodded again, "Got it." He turned around and left the cockpit to sprawl out on the seats again.

Peggy turned to Steve with a smile, "borrowing another car?" She chuckled, "I think we got to the point that we should just say we're stealing them now."

Steve chuckled, "Helps ease my conscious." He shrugged, "Plus they are unknowingly helping us stop Hydra."

Peggy laughed, "Fair point, darling." They suddenly turned silent for a moment.

Steve reached over a gripped her thigh, "Hey." He said about to change the subject.

Peggy turned to him with a warm smile, "Yes?"

"When this is all over. We'll go home and relax. I'll cook up some food, we'll put on some music, and we'll just lounge like there's no tomorrow. Just the two of us." Steve said warmly.

Peggy smiled, "Sounds perfect."

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Camp Lehigh

SHIELD Section

Wheaton, New Jersey

0900 (09:00 AM)

Colonel Phillips walked into the SHIELD administration building just behind Director of SHIELD, John Weyland. Colonel Phillips wore his Army khaki service uniform with his garrison cover in his left hand while Weyland wore a fancy black suit with a white dress shirt and a black tie, and carried a dark red folder in his right hand. The Colonel spoke calmly as the two approached the door to the stairway, "Heard SHIELD is getting an accelerated timeline to become active. I'm sure in no small
Weyland smiled without looking back at the Colonel, "Good news isn't it? We won't be a hundred percent but we already have more than enough assets in place to do be effective in any place." As the two got to the door to the stairway, a tall, serious looking man in a black suit and tie opened the door for them, prompting them to enter. Weyland smiled as they started to walk up the stairs, "When SHIELD goes online, this organization will be the most sophisticated extra-governmental joint military and intelligence agency in history. A nimble global security force tasked in keeping the world safe if you will."

Colonel Phillips remained close behind Weyland as they walked up the stairs, "My sympathies on the Vice President and the Secretary of War of not being on board with Project Insight. Must've been a blow."

They got to the second floor and Weyland pushed open the door for the two of them, "Not really." The moment Phillips walked through the doorway, Weyland let it go so it closed behind them, "Its only a matter of time 'till those two see the light. Besides it's the President's approval that truly matters." The two of them started to walk down a well lit and well-furnished hallway that produced a relaxed and warm atmosphere. Weyland shrugged, "And you know what they say, Rome wasn't built in a day. Day and a half maybe." He finished with a light chuckle as they approached his main office. "The threat of infiltration, sabotage, and attacks by Soviet agents and domestic Communist sympathizers will prove to the Vice President and the Secretary of War that Project Insight is for the greater good. Believe me." When they got to his office, Weyland let Phillips in.

Weyland made his way to his desk while Colonel Phillips remained by the door with his hands crossed behind his back. Phillips sighed, "Look, John…"

Weyland placed his red folder on the center of his desk and interrupted the Colonel, "That spy ring situation in Canada and those two Americans who were arrested for being spies for the Soviet Union is exactly why we need Project Insight. What happens if Soviet sympathizers decided to destroy something important that resembled the United States? Like the Empire State Building or something else. Project Insight's special complex computer algorithm weighs in a number of factors that can tell us who we need to stop to prevent something like that before it happens. This can even tell us who's a threat to our national security so we can eliminate him or her where ever they might be before they even have a chance to harm us…” He paused, "Its like…knowing the future." He smiled warmly at the Colonel.

"And it can target American citizens as well…”

"If they're a threat, then we must deal with them." Weyland responded calmly.

Phillips sighed, "Look, John…” He shook his head, "I know security is a fact of this world now. But Captain Rogers has a point. This is fear tactics. This project is targeting people before they even commit a crime… this makes us no better than the Soviets."

Weyland shook his head, "Come on, Colonel." He nodded to the door, "Its too late if we react after the fact. We could stop things like this from…"

It was the Colonel's turn to interrupt, "That is different. What factors are you weighing in? Personality, political position, what someone says? This is leading to censoring what people believe and what they can say. This goes against everything that we stand for." He nods, "Yes, we should investigate, assess, target, maybe even do some surveillance. That might be lengthier than plugging it into your fancy computers, but we can figure out if those individuals actually do pose a credible threat to us. If they aren't than we won't have to compromise our integrity." He shook his head, "All
those computers operating are very linear… how do you expect them to account for every variable."

Weyland shook his head, "I didn't want to have to do this… but it looks like you and the SSR still can't control your agents or assets." He opened a drawer and pushed a button on an audio recorder.

The recorder started to play and Steve's voice echoed through the room, "It's a good thing those two agents who were supposed to watch the entrance were reassigned. If they were here we might've not gotten to do the meeting… Sounds like all of you know what's going on?" Weyland fast forwarded the tape for a second then let it play again. Steve's voice again echoed in the room, "I won't lie to you, we'll be out numbered, probably outgunned, and will probably be charged as criminals. I will not order you to help us, but I will ask. If any of you refuse… I will not hold it against you."

Then the Commandos started to speak. Dugan's unique charismatic voice came through the recorder loudly. He chuckled, "Hell, Captain you know I'll always fight. Besides we've operated in far worse cases before.

Jim started to speak, "I'm in."

James followed, "Lets finish the job this time."

Then Gabe followed suite, "I'm in." The recorder captured the whole conversation.

Jacques in his French accent came through the speakers, "Vive la Capitaine Amérique." He then spoke in English, "I'm in."

Dugan spoke up again, "Well. We got one request."

Steve's voice entered yet again, "What's that?"

"Buy the first round of drinks when this is done." Dugan responded.

Steve laughed, "I'll buy the whole damn bar when we're done." The Colonel looked at Weyland with a shocked look across his face while Weyland looked at him with a serious look.

Peggy's voice came through the recorder, "Now, with that being said…Be careful with who you trust. Assume anyone outside this room is…” Weyland then shut off the recorder.

Weyland spoke calmly, "I guess something can be said with dealing with potential threats." He sat down in his seat, "Sounds like Captain Rogers, Agent Rogers, and the famed Howling Commandos are going rogue… which means they need to be dealt with."

Phillips remained shocked, "You watch SSR personnel?"

"SHIELD watches everyone." Weyland said calmly.

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**Square Lake, Maine**

It's almost noon with the sun shining in the clear blue sky, and a single black Chevy pickup truck drove quickly through the windy roads in the dense Maine forests near Square Lake. The plain black pickup truck bounced on the bumpy, twisting road as it sped through the thick forest. Dugan bounced in the truck bed as the truck ran over another pothole in the road, "Agh!" He rubbed his head, "Hey, Cap! Can you miss at least one of the potholes?" He called out to Steve who is busy driving the truck dangerously fast. Both James and Jacques sat with Dugan in the truck bed while they did their best making sure the luggage doesn't get tossed out of the back from the bumpy road
and Steve's crazy fast driving.

Peggy who sat in the passenger seat next to Steve looked at her husband with a funny grin, "Just because you can run crazy fast doesn't mean we need to drive this crazy."

Steve nodded, "We do need to get there fast don't we?"

"Well we very much like to get there alive, darling." Peggy said calmly.

The truck bounced again causing Dugan to groan, "The axel on this truck will be long gone by the time we return it to the guy at the airfield."

James sighed, "I think the truck won't even make it to the destination." He said as he pressed his weight on Steve's shield and bag to keep them from sliding off the back. Jacques remained quiet with a smile on his face as his two friends and comrades worried about Steve's driving.

Peggy turned around and looked at the commandos through the cab rear window, "Relax you boys. Steve is slowing down."

As the truck rounded the bend, Steve quickly slowed down and made a sharp right turn onto a small and nearly unseen uphill windy road. The sudden deceleration and turn caused Peggy to grip his arm and brace herself against the dash as she fought her own momentum. In the back, Dugan and the rest of the commandos shot forward and slammed into the cab of the pickup truck then to the side of the truck with a loud thud. As the truck accelerated up the tight road, all three of the commandos groaned in pain as they regained their composure. Dugan rubbed his forehead, "I didn't think he'd slow down that fast."

Peggy ran her hand through her hair and looked at Steve, "A little warning next time, Steve."

Steve glanced at her, "Sorry..." he said apologetically as he slowed the truck down gradually to navigate the tighter windy road.

After a while of driving up the nearly unseen uphill windy road, the truck came to a gradual stop in what seemed to be the middle of the woods. Steve turned off the truck and opened his door, "we'll get out here, so we don't spook him." He nodded ahead, "The house is about fifty meters up this road give or take. Let's go." He stepped out and grabbed his canvas bag that carried the hand held radio then slung on his back.

Peggy nodded, "Right." She hopped out of the truck then removed her pistol from her purse and slung her purse across her body.

Steve walked to the side of the truck, "James, Jacques grab all your gear and set up positions in the tree line, and watch the road and truck. Radio if there's any problems" He said pointing to the trees to the right of the truck, "Dugan, you're with us."

James stood up, "Got it."

Jacques acknowledged as well, "Oui."

Dugan nodded, "Right behind you, Cap." He said as he stood up and reached into one of the black duffel bags and pulled out his trench gun.

James grabbed Steve's shield, "Rogers!" He called out tossing Steve his shield.

"Thanks." Steve said coolly. He nodded at James, "Got radios right?"
James nodded back, "Got radios."

Jacques grabbed the duffel bags then looked over at Steve, "What about your gear Capitaine?"

"Don't worry about ours." Steve said as he started walking up the road. With that James and Jacques each removed a Thompson Submachine gun then slung the duffel bags on their shoulders and hopped off the trucks and pushed into the tree line.

After a moment of walking in silence up the wooded road, Steve, Peggy, and Dugan rounded the top of the hill onto a clearing and spotted a large two story wood cabin. The large wood cabin had a long covered porch that spanned all along the parameter of the cabin. Adjacent to the cabin is a rusting dark blue pickup truck, a medium sized shed, and a stack of chopped logs. But the cabin and the surrounding clearing looked lifeless like no one has ever been there in years. The wood on the cabin and shed looked faded and weathered, and the truck was severely rusted. The whole area didn't feel right. Steve gripped his shield and nodded to Dugan, "Go around back. Peggy and I will take the front."

Dugan nodded, "Got it." He said then went to jog around back.

Peggy looked at Steve, "Right behind you." She said as she and Steve started to walk toward the front.

Once the Rogers got to the front, they slowly walked up the porch steps and walked lightly to the door. Peggy gripped her pistol at her side and looked around as Steve gripped the door knob. Steve looked back at her and whispered, "Its unlocked." Peggy nodded quietly prompting him to slowly open the door. As Steve pushed open the door it creaked loudly as it slowly swung open revealing a house only illuminated by natural light. Directly ahead of them are stairs leading up to the second floor, to the right is a well-furnished living room complete with décor that matches the cabin in the woods feeling, and past the living room is a small hallway leading to the equally styled kitchen.

Steve and Peggy walked in slowly while scanning the interior of the silent cabin. The inside of the cabin didn't look as big as it did on the outside, probably because of all the furniture and décor that cluttered the interior. The woods flooring creaked under each step the Rogers took into the house. Peggy gently bit the bottom of her lip as she followed Steve deeper into the cabin. The silence was unsettling to say the least. Steve gripped his shield as he slowly walked through the living room with Peggy close behind him. Peggy then turned and made her way to the coffee table in the living room.

She ran two fingers over the top of the table leaving a large trail behind as her fingers gathered a thick clump of dust. She whispered, "Doesn't look like anyone has lived here for years maybe."

Steve nodded, "Yeah. But the dossier pointed here. So he has to be here."

Steve spotted Dugan walking through the kitchen with his trench gun at the ready with the stock of the weapon at his shoulder and the barrel pointing downward. Dugan turned and saw Steve and Peggy, "Cap." He said with a nod.

Steve whispered, "See anything back there."

Dugan met them in the center of the hallway while shaking his head, "Just dust and spider webs. Doesn't look like anyone has been here for months. Maybe years." He paused, "Is he even here?"

Peggy nodded, "He should."

Out of curiosity, Steve looked to his left and pushed open a door located next to a six foot tall mirror and revealed a cluttered basement, that looked lifeless and dusty like the rest of the house. Steve
sighed and shook his head. Dugan spoke quietly, "Maybe we should check up top."

Peggy nodded, "He's right. We still haven't checked upstairs."

Suddenly Steve spotted something at the base of the mirror. He tilted his head and spotted a slither of light peering through the bottom of the mirror. He looked at the mirror up and down for a moment prompting Peggy to look at him with curiosity, "What are you doing?" She said softly.

Steve moved closer to the mirror and started to feel the parameter with one hand, "One second." After a moment he moved to the top and felt a switch. The moment he flipped the switch the trio heard a familiar sound of a door unlocking, but the sound came from behind the mirror. Steve paused and nodded at Dugan then pushed the mirror forward, swinging it open like a door revealing a whole other basement. The trio took a step forward and peered inside, and were ultimately surprised at what they saw. They saw a man with dark hair slouching on a chair in the center of the basement staring at a long bulletin board on the wall. The bulletin board had pictures, newspaper articles, and red yarn connecting each object together and linking it to one picture at the center of the board. The basement was cluttered with trash and boxes spread out along the floor. It was more like a living space than an actual basement. It had a desk, bed, chairs, shelves, and a camp stove, but it had no bathroom.

The man knew that his secret passage way was open and that someone was watching him, "Do me a favor…make it quick…" He said weakly in a thick German accent. He knew very well Hydra was going after him.

There was no doubt in the trio’s mind that the man in the basement is Mattäus Wolf. Steve relaxed and spoke calmly, "In the kitchen, Mr. Wolf." Wolf recognized the voice and turned his head weakly just as Steve turned and left the doorway.

Dugan and Peggy stayed at the doorway and stared at Wolf as he slowly got to his feet. Dugan leaned over to Peggy and whispered, "What's that smell?"

Peggy whispered back with an emotionless expression, "Given there is probably no bathroom down there, I think I know what that smell is." She said staring at a bunch of metal containers lining the right side of the basement.

Dugan groaned, "That's nasty."

"When he comes up, go down there and search the basement." Peggy whispered her order. Dugan looked at her with pleading eyes not to go down there. "There's obviously a lot of information he put together. See if you can find anything interesting."

Dugan stood there in silence but Peggy nodded silently to the basement. Dugan sighed, "Yes, Peggy."

Mattäus Wolf sat down weakly at the head of the kitchen table and coughed, "I always knew my sins would catch up to me…but you're the last person I thought to see before I die." He said referring to Steve. Steve stood at the other end of the table with his arms crossed and an emotionless expression. He had put his shield down against one of the table legs, and had his canvas bag on the dusty table. Peggy silently leaned against the stove behind Mattäus Wolf as they listened to him speak weakly. Wolf coughed again, "So what do I owe the pleasure, Captain Rogers?"

Steve got a good look at Wolf and saw that the man looked like he aged nearly twenty years since the last time he saw him in November of 1945. The man was pale, incredibly skinny, and looked old. Immediate signs of severe malnutrition. Steve spoke calmly, "My wife was at a meeting recently and
your name came up."

Wolf smiled weakly, "Flattered that the SSR talked about me."

Peggy walked forward and placed the Hydra ring Steve acquired in front of him. "It wasn't the SSR. It was Hydra. Your people, not ours." She said as she walked back to her spot at the stove.

Wolf picked up the ring slowly, "Ah…" He said softly as he observed the silver ring with a small Hydra Red Skull on it. "A while ago, I was poisoned while I was eating. It's slowly doing its job… I don't have very long… Hydra doesn't have the decency to kill you quickly." He put the ring and slid it across the dusty table leaving behind a dust free streak, "So, here we are Captain Rogers." He leaned back in his chair, "Two dead men enjoying the day."

Steve cocked his head to the side, "What did you do?"

"I disobeyed him…" Wolf said quickly. "I followed him as far as I could." He shook his head, "But he…changed."

"I see. You grew a conscious."

Wolf retorted sharply, "Our game is our game. I did my fair share of killing. But I was too blind to see Hydra's true intentions until it was too late. The butchering of families, women, and children… how is that justifiable? I didn't join for that…"

"Yet you still took part in it… and here you are. An ex officer for a Hydra general and someone who once held a prominent position in the Neo-Hydra movement." Steve said coldly.

"It's not so easy to slip away."

Steve leaned forward, "Since you're no longer with Hydra then tell me who's running it now."

Wolf quickly responded, "Armin Zola… and supported by the Council of Nine."

Peggy spoke up, "The what?"

Steve nodded, "Explain."

Wolf shifted in his seat, "When Doctor Zola was recruited by your government a few years ago, he quickly took the opportunity to please your government with his ideas, all the while plotting to regrow Hydra within. He quickly heard about the Council of Nine through an American businessman who invested in the Nazi war machine in 1939. From there he quickly persuaded the Council to become loyal to the ideology of Hydra." He then started to cough painfully for a moment before continuing, "The Council of Nine, or simply known as the Council, is a group of powerful and influential individuals, mostly businessmen, who seek to seize power and control of the United States government through manipulation of politics and the economy."

"I see. A powerful group like that would increase the sphere of influence Hydra would have in the United States."

Wolf nodded, "Doctor Zola was able to convince the Council to swear their allegiance to Hydra. Hydra became a very good investment for the Council, and they made Zola their new leader." He spoke weakly, "With your country recruiting ex-Hydra and ex-Nazi personnel to help your country, Hydra had already a strong foundation inside your government. The power Hydra already possess and it potential made the Council of Nine quickly join them." He leaned forward, "Your government gives Zola so much freedom… it makes it easy for him to bring Hydra back from the ashes." He
smirked, "Then...with the development of SHIELD...It only made it easier for Zola."

"Well...Where can we find him?" Steve asked calmly.

"You won't find him." Wolf said weakly.

"The poison in your food or drinks in the past suggests that he doesn't like you very much. And clearly the feeling is mutual. So why don't you tell me how to find him?" Steve said a little bit more forcefully.

"You can't stop him. You can't stop Hydra. What difference does it make if I tell you or don't tell you. You cut off one head, two more shall take its place." Wolf said defiantly. Peggy looked at Steve with a concerned look.

Peggy spoke up, "What do you have to lose?"

Steve stepped closer and said sternly, "Where can I find him?"

"He's Everywhere. Everywhere!" Wolf leaned forward, "He's in SHIELD, he's in Washington, kissing your lover, he's eating dinner with your family! He is everywhere and nowhere." Wolf said with equal intensity. There was an intense pause of silence in the room as Steve was at ends with what to do.

Suddenly Wolf reached down and grabbed a small revolver in his right ankle holster. Peggy quickly reacted and were about to pounce and take the weapon, but Steve held up his hands to signal her to stop. As Wolf pointed the gun at Steve, Peggy looked at Steve with concern and worry in her eyes. Wolf struggled to cock the hammer of the revolver back but he eventually did. After an intense moment of Wolf pointing a loaded pistol at Steve, he slowly lowered it on the table and spoke weakly, "There is already enough pain and destruction in this world... And I was part of the cause of it." He coughed, "The only way for evil to triumph, is if good men do nothing...isn't that right?" He said referring to the famous quote made by Edmund Burke. "I'll burn in hell for my sins...but I will tell you." Peggy and Dugan relaxed. "Go to New Orleans and find the O'Neil Night Club. Go to my private office in the basement...You'll find what you're looking for there." He said it more slowly, "O'Neil Night Club. New Orleans" He leaned forward and smiled, "You're a kite dancing in a hurricane, Captain Rogers..." He slowly brought his pistol up to his throat, "So long..." He said briskly as he pulled the trigger, shooting himself through the throat with the back of his head exploding outwards. Peggy flinched at the moment Wolf shot himself.

Steve looked down and sighed as he shook his head slightly. He looked up, "You alright, Peggy?" Peggy nodded silently.

Suddenly they heard heavy footsteps rapidly approaching from the basement. Dugan quickly appeared in the kitchen with his trench gun at the ready, "You two alright?"

Both Steve and Peggy nodded simultaneously. Peggy answered softly, "We're alright, Timothy."

Peggy walked up to the table and took the Hydra ring and put it her pocket. She then went to Wolf's corpse and gently closed his eyes. Dugan lowered his weapon and looked at Steve, "What happened? Did he say anything?"

Steve nodded, "He shot himself... but he told us about Zola, but said to go to the O'Neil Night Club in New Orleans and we'll find what we're looking for there" He said as Peggy started to search Wolf's body.

"Night club?" Dugan asked confused.
As Peggy searched she spoke up, "That's our next destination. He only gave us that..."

Steve shrugged, "yeah, we don't know. We'll have to go to the club and take a look for ourselves."
He looked at Dugan, "Find anything down there?"

Dugan nodded, "Other than piss and crap filled containers, I confirmed Zola is the one in charge."
He looked over in the direction of the basement, "downstairs Wolf had pictures and newspaper articles all connected to Zola and Hydra. The murders of those rich people Peggy mentioned earlier and even cases of Communist espionage in Western countries, Wolf connected them to Hydra and Zola."

Peggy looked up and hummed, "Hm."

Steve nodded, "We got where we need to go." He took out his hand held radio from the canvas bag on the table, "Falsworth, Jacques. Come in, over."

After a moment the radio crackled to life with Jacques on the other end, "Oui, Capitaine"

"We met with Wolf and got what we needed. We're heading back. Stand by at the truck."

"On it." Jacques said quickly.

Steve nodded, "Last thing." He looked at Dugan, "Dugan, get on the landline and get the Field Office on the line. Report what we found to keep them in the loop."

Dugan nodded, "On it, sir." He said as he went to go find a phone.

Steve grabbed his shield off the floor and walked over to Peggy, "You okay?"

Peggy placed her pistol on the counter and started to rub her baby bump gently, "I'm okay, darling." Steve wrapped his free hand around her waist and looked at her with an apologetic look. Peggy smiled up at him, "I just can't wait for this madness to end." She sighed, "I'm so tired of fighting Hydra."

Steve nodded, "You and me both."

Peggy chuckled, "This makes me want to quit my job and live the simple life. Just raise a family..."

Steve smiled slightly, "We'll stop them. Like always."

Peggy turned to him, "Are you still thinking about leaving the Army and stop being Captain America?" She asked softly. Steve was about to answer but Peggy continued, "Sorry. I didn't mean..."

"It's okay, Peggy. It's a simple question." He said softly. He nodded, "Yeah, I'm thinking about it. I got..."

Suddenly Dugan interrupted them standing next to the pantry of the kitchen, "I reported into Jim and Gabe."

Steve nodded, "Anything new?"

Dugan shook his head, "Nothing. Neither SHIELD or the SSR have called for a report about you checking in."

Steve looked down, "Hm."
Dugan nodded, "What's wrong, Cap."

"A gut feeling." Steve nodded, "Alright, let's head back to the truck."

Peggy looked back up at Steve, "I guess we can talk about this later." She said referring to their earlier conversation. Steve nodded with a small smile.

New York City
Brooklyn Bridge Park
Pier 3 Greenway Terrace
1200 (12:00pm)

Colonel Phillips in a gray suit, tie, and fedora, sat on the center of a bench at the edge of the Pier 3 Greenway Terrace of Brooklyn Bridge Park. The view from his bench gave an excellent panoramic view of the Brooklyn Bridge, East River, and Manhattan. A very picturesque location for many of the cities inhabitants and tourists looking for a nice place to relax and enjoy the day. Except he wasn't there for the view. He was waiting for someone.

As he sat idly on his bench, he started to think of how everything has changed in a span of a few days. A few days ago, Phillips was busy focusing on trying to make the merge of the SSR with SHIELD more seamless, but he ran into difficulties because many government officials looked at much of the SSR as obsolete. So he was busy trying to consolidate as much of the SSR as possible in SHIELD so his people don't lose their jobs. But then the note Steve wrote changed his reality. The note said, "Hydra has infiltrated the government, Hydra is in control of SHIELD." Initially the note sounded farfetched and impossible with the thought of Hydra being able to survive the end of the war. But Steve's note really got him thinking, because that's not something Steve would say lightly. Phillips figured that during Steve's unauthorized trip to Paris, he must've found out something about Hydra because why else would he suddenly tell him about it. But ever since he wrote that note, Phillips couldn't shake the feeling that Steve may be right. Like Steve, Phillips knew that the SHIELD project titled Insight sounded like a terrible idea. But because of the note, he started to look at SHIELD differently, he started to see them as wrong. The whole agency seemed, felt, and looked wrong. Everything was wrong. Steve started to look right with every passing hour. But then SHIELD Director Weyland played the recording of Steve, Peggy, and the original Howling Commandos preparing to act aggressively on their own. It became clear that Weyland and SHIELD are going after Steve. With that Phillips' gut and preliminary evidence told him that Steve was right and that Hydra is controlling SHIELD. When in doubt go with the gut.

The thought of Hydra being back and infiltrating the government suddenly occupied his mind while he sat quietly on the bench. The extensive damage Hydra can do to the government, and the country is unthinkable. No one knows that Hydra is back aside from him, Peggy, Steve, the original Howling Commandos, and Stark (which Phillips briefly mentioned this subject to) which makes Hydra incredibly dangerous. If Colonel Phillips tried reporting Hydra's infiltration, who would believe him? No one would think a dead enemy would come back, and he would most likely get targeted by Hydra agents within the government. No, the threat the US government is primarily focused on is the Communists, which makes the US blind to other immediate threats. Besides, the only substantial evidence Colonel Phillips has in his possession is the word of Captain America. And Phillips knew that Director Weyland most likely reported that the Rogers have gone rogue, which would give him the operational authority to utilize any assets available to go after the Rogers and the Commandos. Assets could be anything from field agents from both the SSR and SHIELD, FBI, or even local
police. Needless to say, Colonel Phillips can do nothing to help the Rogers from his current position. Him, Stark, the Rogers, and the Commandos are so far the only ones standing between Hydra and their completion of whatever goal they have in store.

He sighed as he leaned back and stared out across the river. He saw someone he was secretly eyeing for the past fifteen minutes sit down on his right. The mystery person had his face turned away from him so he couldn't visually tell who it was. The person wore a dark blue business suit with white stripes, red tie with white stripes, and a grey fedora. The man also used a cane and had a very apparent limp when walking. Colonel Phillips looked up to the sky and said in a low voice, "Sousa." He said almost a hundred percent sure that was him.

Sousa kept his fedora on and turned to face the Colonel, "Colonel." He said briskly.

"We're waiting on one more." Phillips said plainly. "At least I hope he gets here."

Sousa spoke softly, "Is this about Steve and Peggy?"

"I'll tell you when our other person shows up." Phillips responded softly.

Suddenly Stark sat down on Phillips' left, "Sorry I'm late." He said in a low tone. Stark wore a brown suit, black tie, and a brown fedora.

"Now that we're all here." Phillips paused, "Was anyone followed?" He nodded, "I know this place is pretty public but there is so many people here that it's good for cover."

Sousa responded in question, "I don't think I was followed?"

Stark followed, "Not anymore than usual."

"I'll take it." Phillips said coolly.

Sousa responded calmly, "What's going on?"

Stark spoke up interrupting Sousa, "Peggy called me last night."

Sousa spoke up in a tense tone, "I have pending orders to arrest the Rogers and the original batch of Howling Commandos. Apparently the Rogers have gone rogue and need to be contained."

Phillips looked at Sousa, "One moment, Sousa." He looked back at Stark, "What did she say?"

"Last night, Peggy called asking for a plane. She didn't tell me where she and Steve were going, but all she said was to trust her. I gave it to her and she told me that Hydra was back and they infiltrated the government." Stark nodded, "She also informed me that Hydra has been eliminating anyone who is a threat to them and their plans."

Sousa became confused, "Hydra?"

Phillips sighed, "I'll be damned…Steve was a hundred percent right…" He shook his head, "Hopefully we're not too late." He tensed, "We have to do something. I have limited authority in the SSR and SHIELD now because of Director Weyland. Which means, Director Weyland will try to obtain operational authority of the SSR to arrest the Rogers and the Commandos. We have to act… and rapidly."

Sousa spoke up, "The guys up in SHIELD haven't told me anything. What's going on? Why are we talking about Hydra?"
Before Phillips can respond, Stark spoke up, "Hydra isn't gone."

"What?" Sousa asked shocked.

Phillips responded, "Hydra's back."

"How? That's impossible, they fell during the war. How?" Sousa said in confusion.

"We thought they did. But they went underground, so to speak." Phillips sighed, "Now they have infiltrated our government including SHIELD. I don't know how they did this, and I don't know how far they've gone, but clearly they've been infiltrating us since the end of the war." He paused, "The only reason Stark and I know this is because the Rogers recently informed us about this. And this is something they wouldn't say lightly and so far they look to be right. Hydra is the reason why we're here in the park." Phillips looked at Sousa, "You're here because we're going need your help. And Peggy seems to trust you and she spoke highly of you, so that's good enough for me."

Sousa nodded, "Yes sir…You can count on me, sir." He said hesitantly trying to take in what Phillips just said about Hydra.

Stark leaned forward to look at Sousa, "You alright?"

Sousa nodded again, "Just a lot to take in, in a short period of time. But you can count on me."

Phillips nodded, "Good."

Sousa spoke up with a little more confidence, "What do you need me to do?"

"First, I don't know whose Hydra and who isn't, so be careful with who you trust. The safe bet is to keep this between ourselves." Sousa and Stark nodded in agreement. Phillips nodded, "We have to help the Rogers and the Commandos anyway we can." He turned to Stark, "Stark, head to the Howling Commando field office, I assume you know where that is."

Stark nodded, "I do."

"Good. That place is compromised; SHIELD has that place zeroed in. So go there and cue any of the original Howling Commandos there in some discreet way. The Rogers explained everything to them a while ago, so it shouldn't take long. Then get weapons, explosives, any gear or intelligence they have and get then out of there, and report back to me."

Stark nodded, "Got it."

Phillips looked over at Sousa, "SHIELD will relay information about the location of the Rogers to you and other SSR offices. But since the Rogers and the Commandos come from New York, SHIELD will likely rely on your office the most to help arrest them. This will be a joint agency case, so do what ever you need to do to slow SHIELD down. You'll be in the perfect position to do so." He paused, "Since SHIELD will provide information on where the Rogers are, take note on where they're going and keep track of them, so we can help them if we get the chance."

Sousa nodded, "Got it. What about you?"

Phillips nodded, "I'm going to find a way to bring down SHIELD at Camp Lehigh. But right after we're done here, I have to go to a meeting with Director Weyland, the President, and his cabinet in the White House." He paused and looked back at Sousa, "Sousa, I need you to come with me to the meeting."
Sousa nodded, "Understood."

"One last thing to both of you." Phillips looked at both Sousa and Stark, "Be careful with who you trust. Some of your people in your working with might be Hydra, so be cautious."

"Got it." Sousa responded. Stark nodded quietly.

Phillips focused on Stark, "Especially you, Stark. We might need your expert engineering abilities and one of your fancy firecrackers to bring down SHIELD."

Stark nodded, "You can count on me."

"Good. This is what we have to do…"

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**White House**

**Washington D.C.**

**1400 (02:00pm)**

After a short flight from New York to Washington D.C., Colonel Phillips and Chief Sousa were at the White House to attend a security meeting. Colonel Phillips in his full military dress uniform held his cover in his left hand and walked alongside Sousa, who wore the same well-pressed dark blue suit from earlier. They walked at a relatively fast pace through the halls of the White House toward the Cabinet Room for the meeting. As they turned the final corner to the meeting they saw the doors were open and a large number of well dressed men were leaving the room. Phillips and Sousa became confused because they thought the meeting was taking place at 1430. They saw Director Weyland in a black suit with a white dress shirt and a black tie, carrying a dark red folder in his left hand, and he was shaking the hand of Secretary of War, Robert P. Patterson as Phillips and Sousa approached them.

Secretary of War, Robert Patterson smiled at Weyland, "Thank you very much. Looks like we need this."

Weyland gave a friendly smile, "No, thank you. Wish you all the best, sir." He said as Patterson nodded with a warm smile and walked away just as Phillips and Sousa stopped in front of Weyland.

Phillips looked confused, "What's going on?"

Weyland looked up and gave a shocked look, "The meeting was pushed ahead. Did you not get the message?" He said quickly.

Phillips replied in a serious tone, "No. We didn't."

"Last minute decision as I can remember." Weyland said evenly.

"President and his cabinet on board, I take it?" Phillips replied.

"Yeah, who can blame them. The Soviet Union rejected the Marshall Plan, and the Greek Civil war is taking a negative turn. The pressure to stop the Communist is on." Weyland said as he moved between Phillips and Sousa. "Project Insight has been officially sanctioned. The project will take effect in less than 48 hours. It's a major step forward." He said while walking with Phillips and Sousa walking close behind. Sousa did his best with his limp, but he wasn't losing the pace. "The Security environment changes every…"
Phillips interrupted him, "As you said before…"

Weyland stopped and turned to the Colonel, "Look. The President and the Secretary of War asked me to take charge of the intelligence community…"

"Yes. And?" Phillips replied coldly.

"And I should tell you, I've spoken with the Secretary of War..." Weyland paused as he looked Phillips in the eye, "And in light of the new information I've given him...they decided to close down the SSR and all its assets with immediate effect. And... the government is going to arrest the Rogers for conspiracy to commit treason." He said softly.

Phillips tensed and replied sternly, "You don't know what you're doing."

Weyland shook his head, "It's nothing personal. It's the future." He shrugged, "And... you and Captain Rogers are not. Super soldier or not, he's become dangerous in the eyes of the government..."

"You're a cocky little bastard aren't you." Phillips replied coldly.

Weyland chuckled lightly, "I'll take that as a compliment."

"I wouldn't." Phillips squinted, "This isn't over yet." He turned and walked away. Sousa paused an eyed Weyland with a cold look for a moment before following the Colonel. Weyland shook his head and watched them leave.

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New Orleans, LA

2100 (09:00pm)

After nine hours of flying and one refueling stop in Maryland, the Rogers and the three Howling Commandos finally landed at Moisant Field commercial airport in New Orleans, Louisiana around nine at night. Peggy was able to land the plane at the airport with little hassle because she used a fake name and said she was carrying Howard Stark for a business trip in the city. Shortly after landing they took a taxi cab to the O'Neil Night Club that Wolf had mentioned earlier in the day. The group left all their gear in the plane including Steve's shield, and they only took with them side arms that they concealed for self defense.

Bourbon Street

French Quarter

The taxi dropped off the Rogers and the three Commandos a block away from the club in the famous Bourbon Street in the French Quarter of New Orleans. The New Orleans nightlife was very much alive at this time with the street jam-packed with people on both the sidewalks and street making it hard for cars to navigate the tight single lane streets. The beautifully designed French and Spanish styled architecture gave a very pleasant nostalgic feeling to everyone in the streets. The nightlife in Bourbon Street was very electric with bright lights shining in the buildings, street music, and the sound of energetic and happy crowds making their way through the street. Steve, Peggy, Dugan, Jacques, and James, still in the same clothes they wore all day, started to push their way through the crowd toward the O'Neil Night club.

Jacques looked around and smiled, "Makes me miss France."
Peggy gripped Steve's arm as they walked through the crowd while at the same time adjusting her brown purse that was across her body with her free hand. Steve chuckled, "Welcome to Bourbon Street."

Peggy looked at Steve with surprise, "You've been here before?"

Steve shook his head, "Only heard stories. Heard its quite a place." He nodded, "I can see why."

"Would be a nice place to visit when this whole mess is over." Peggy said with a nod.

Dugan laughed, "Planning Steven Junior's first vacation already I see." He said behind the couple.

Peggy shook her head, "I don't know about this place being the first place to visit, but its definitely up there on the list."

James spoke up, "Did you two figure out a name for your baby yet?" He said while pacing next to Dugan.

"Not yet. But we did briefly talk about it. Let's take down Hydra and we'll continue this conversation." Peggy quickly replied.

Before the conversation went any further, Steve interrupted them, "There's the club." He said nodding to one of the buildings ahead of him on the left side of the street. The club is located in a French styled building adjacent to a wide alley way. The building had a French styled balcony with columns, and a large square neon sign that stuck out on the front that read, "O'NEIL NIGHT CLUB".

Dugan stepped around the Rogers, "lets get in there."

Steve stopped him by quickly placing a hand on his shoulder, "Not that way."

James spoke up, "Which way are we going then?"

Steve pointed his thumb to the alley, "Through the back."

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**O'Neil Night Club**

The Rogers and the three Howling Commandos walked into the dim alley between the club building and its neighbor. The alley was dim and the bright lights in the street did little to illuminate much of the alley. The alley was cluttered with trashcans, trash, boxes, and discarded newspapers scattered all along the alley way. But the moment the group walked into the alley, they focused on the lone bright alley light on the right side of the alley that hung over a closed metal door and illuminated the far end.

After a moment of walking through the alley, they got to the door that belonged to the club. Steve nodded, "This is our way in."

James walked over and tried opening the door but it was locked from the inside, "Locked." He said plainly.

Steve nodded, "I got it." He gripped the door handle and pulled with a little force and yanked the door wide open, breaking the lock and the strike plate on the door frame. Steve went in first followed by Peggy, Dugan, James, and Jacques.
They suddenly found themselves in a large kitchen with everyone staring at them with surprised looks because the once securely locked alley door was suddenly forced open. The large numbers of cooks, waiters, and waitresses in the kitchen were all staring at them with blank and surprised stares. There was a tense moment between the Rogers and the three Commandos, and the people in the kitchen as an awkward silence overcame everyone. The kitchen was surprisingly quiet with only the faint sound of the swingy New Orleans jazz club music playing in the background. Steve nodded, "Good evening, everyone." He said awkwardly.

One of the cooks whispered, "Is that Captain America?"

The other cook nodded with a whisper, "I think so." Now suddenly everyone had a pleasant surprised look on their faces.

Peggy smiled disarmingly, "I'm sorry, but is this the O'Neil Night Club?" She said standing right next to Steve. A number of people in the kitchen nodded silently to the question.

Suddenly two men in black suits and ties entered the kitchen with serious looks on their faces. One man looked Latino while the other was white, but both men had very sharp clean haircuts and rough expressions on their faces. The men quickly made their way to the Rogers and the three Commandos then stopped right in front of Steve. Everyone in the kitchen started to look at each other with curiosity and concern with what would happen next. The Latino man spoke in a thick accent to Steve, "The entrance to the club is out in front." He said coldly.

Steve nodded, "Sorry about the door."

Peggy answered trying to sound intentionally dumb, "I'm Sorry, I just wanted to see the kitchen." She said failing to deescalate the tense situation.

The white man focused on Steve and spoke in a thick Irish accent, "better keep your fat broad on a leash before she finds herself getting hurt somewhere in this town." He started to run his hand up Peggy's arm, "If you understand what I'm saying."

Suddenly Peggy grabbed the Irishman's hand and at the same time punched the man square in the nose with a solid hit causing him to fall on his back and onto the dirty kitchen floor. Before the Latino man can react, Steve throat punched him causing him to fall to his knees, gripping his neck, and coughing in pain. He then kicked him in the chest sending him to the kitchen floor hard and knocking the wind out of him. The Irishman had a broken nose with blood pouring out of both nostrils like a fast flowing river but he was still conscious and a little dizzy from the hit and the fall. Steve squatted down, "I was going to try to resolve this peacefully but..." He looked up at his wife then back at the man, "But you called my wife fat." He smiled confidently, "Never call anyone fat... especially a woman. If you understand what I'm saying." The three commandos laughed silently to themselves behind Steve.

Peggy put her foot down on the man's chest, "As my wonderful husband said. Never call a woman fat. If you know what's good for you" She smiled devilishly.

Steve nodded, "Where's the private office?" There was no immediate answer from the Irishmen. Steve shook his head, "Tell me, and you won't end up getting reconstructive surgery after my wife beats it out of you in this kitchen."

The man groaned and started to ramble, "Out the kitchen, go straight down the hallway and turn left. There's someone in the office at the moment..."

"Thank you kindly." Steve said with a smile. He stood up and looked at everyone in the kitchen,
"Any rejections to letting us through?" Everyone shook their head. Steve smiled, "Great. Then we'll be going that way." He said nodding to the kitchen doors to the club. He turned to his group, "Let's go."

Peggy nodded, "Right behind you, darling." She said removing her boot off the Irishmen's chest. With that Steve and Peggy started to make their way through the kitchen.

The commandos paused for a moment before following the Rogers. Dugan squatted down at the groaning Irishmen, "She's pregnant by the way. Not fat." He shook his head then licked his finger, "Wet Willy." He said as he wiggled his finger in the Irishman's ear. The man shuttered from the unpleasant sensation. "Idiot." Dugan whispered as he started to follow the Rogers out.

James shook his head, "Wanker." He said as followed Dugan. Jacques spat on him as he followed the group out of the kitchen.

As soon as the Rogers and the commandos left the kitchen, the Irishmen sat up with a groan. His nose was still pouring out blood onto his suit and tie, and he felt incredibly dizzy. He slowly picked himself up off the floor and wiped his bloody nose with his hands then looked at his partner who remained unconscious on the floor as business in the kitchen started to continue as usual. Everyone in the kitchen went about their usual business and cared little about what just happened to the two club henchmen. The Irishmen groaned again as he slowly made his way to a phone on one of the metal kitchen counter tops. He quickly dialed the phone and got in contact with the operator, "Hello, Operator? I like to make a call to Camp Lehigh, New Jersey, please."

The Rogers and the three Commandos followed the directions the Irishmen gave them, and went straight out of the kitchen, down the hallway, then turned left to go down a small flight of stairs to the basement level. Once they went down the flight of stairs, they found themselves in a dull green painted short hallway that made a sharp right turn at the end of the hall. Straight ahead of the group at the end of the corridor is a single door with two men dressed in black suits and ties guarding the door with a tense posture. The two men instantly became more defensive at the sight of the Rogers and the three Commandos.

The two men quickly stepped away from the door and started to approach the Rogers with stern looks on their faces. One man spoke with a harsh tone, "this is a private area. Please return up stairs to the club." He said signaling the group to stop.

Steve, Peggy, and the Commandos did not stop nor did they look at all hesitant as they closed the distance with the two men. The second man spoke up, "Are you deaf? Go back up to the club." He said with an equally harsh tone as the first man.

Steve stopped just in front of the two guards while Peggy and the Commandos stayed just a few steps behind him. Steve gave an apologetic smile, "Sorry about this, fellas." He said to the two men. Before anyone knew it, he punched the man to his left in the throat then in a flash punched the other in the face knocking him to the floor unconscious. Just as the man who got hit in the throat went to his knees, coughing in pain, Steve punched him across the jaw sending his to the wall unconscious.

Peggy touched Steve's back and said softly with a hint of amusement, "Nice."

Steve nodded, "Right." He went to one of the unconscious men and kneeled down and started to search the body. After a few seconds of searching he grabbed the man's .45 pistol.

Peggy tilted her head and saw a silver ring on the ring finger of the man Steve was searching, "Steve." She said softly.
Steve unloaded the pistol and racked the slide back to eject a chambered round, "Hm?" he responded softly.

"Look at the ring he's wearing on the hand next to your foot." She said pointing to the hand.

Steve lowered the pistol and took a look of what she pointing at and saw a silver Hydra ring with the red skull. He nodded, "well, we're definitely in the right place."

Jacques spoke up, "What's next?"

Steve stepped over the two unconscious bodies to go peek around the corner to get acquainted with his environment. Around the corner on the other end of the hallway he saw a single unlabeled door that he guessed was either a bathroom or a supply closet of some kind. He looked back to his group, "The office door got to be right in front of us. Peggy, James, Jacques and I will go in and search the office for clues and some sort of safe."

Dugan spoke up, "What about me?"

"Hide these bodies in the room around corner."

Dugan sighed, "…you got it, sir."

"Fantastic." Steve said with a smile. He flipped the pistol around so he held it by the barrel.

James looked confused, "You already have your pistol, Cap."

Peggy too was confused, "Steve?"

Steve smiled, "All part of the plan." He stepped toward the door, "Stay behind me." He said as he gripped the door knob.

He quickly opened the door and stepped inside a green painted spacious private office. The room is accented by fancy wood flooring and wood crown molding, and complete with clustered file cabinets and bookshelves, and decorative paintings lining the walls. Directly in front of the door is a large cluttered desk with an expensive leather desk chair behind it. Steve noticed a very notable medium sized painting of New York hanging on the wall behind the desk as he stepped inside cautiously. His wife and his fellow commandos followed close behind. A part of him thought there would've been someone in the office, but he didn't immediately see anyone. Suddenly he saw a bald white man with round glasses in a plain black suit and tie get up from behind the desk. The man gasped, "Hey!" He yelled as he tried to reach for his gun on the desk. Steve reacted quickly and threw the empty pistol that was in his hand at the head of the bald mystery man with rocket speed. The pistol made contact with a ginormous thud, sending the man tumbling backward into the desk chair and back wall of the office. The man like his two guards outside became unconscious.

James gasped, "Nice throw!"

Jacques nodded in awe, "Oui. You should play sports once you get out of the Army."

Steve shrugged, "Well I'm not the pitcher for the '27 Yankees, but I think I did alright."

Peggy chuckled and shook her head, "Lets go, boys. Search the office, look for safe's and any documents relating to Hydra. There were Hydra guards in the hallway so there obviously some sort of value in this place. We just have to find it."

Steve nodded, "Yes, Ma'am." He said as he headed toward the desk.
James chuckled, "How come he gets to call you 'ma'am' while we can't."

Peggy smiled, "because he's cute when he does it."

Dugan walked in, "Hey, we can be cute too! Also, what are we talking about?"

"Nothing." Peggy shot back humorously. "But I will say this...that's why I'm married to him and not married to any of you." Peggy said with a smile as she joined Steve to look through the office.

Dugan sighed, "She's cold, man."

James laughed, "take care of those bodies?"

"Better believe I did. Those men will wake up with a massive headache in a broom closet." Dugan said happily.

Peggy stopped in the middle of the office, "Are you two just going to stand there and gossip or are you going to do your job?"

Dugan sighed, "On it!" He said turning around and closing the office door.

Jacques walked around the desk, "What do we do with this guy?"

Steve came over and picked the unconscious mystery bald man up and plopped him down on the office chair, "If he wakes up soon, we'll question him. He looks pretty important since I saw him sitting behind the desk."

Peggy joined them behind the desk and started to look through the clutter, "Looks like he was looking for something."

James looked at the trio as he fished through the file cabinets, "Looking for what?"

Peggy shrugged and shook her head as she went through the drawers, "I don't know." She shook her head again, "This office is a mess already. Everything is disorganized. Almost like they were looking for something in particular."

Steve turned and removed a medium sized painting hanging on the wall behind the desk and found a small safe. "Well that's a start" he said.

James spoke up, "Got the combination?"

"I don't think we need one." Steve said as he gripped the safe handle and pulled with all his. After a few seconds he tore open the door from the safe.

Peggy smiled, "Your strength will always amaze me."

Dugan nodded, "It will always amaze us."

Peggy chuckled, "Anything interesting?"

Steve shook his head, "No." He said as he searched through it, "Just money and a little black business book about financials." Steve shook his head, "Time to get messy." He looked at Peggy, "turn over every piece of furniture, tear open every book, go through every file, open any crevasse, look behind every painting. No stone left unturned." He nodded, "Wolf mentioned that we'll find what we're looking for here. Let's start by tearing this place apart"
Peggy nodded, "Got it."

Everyone started to do exactly what Steve said. The moldings and the other paintings on the walls were removed from their place but found no safe behind them. The filing cabinets were then moved from their place near the walls to see if a safe of some kind was located behind them. But there were none. Then the filing cabinets were dumped and searched for anything of importance which became a task for Jacques and James. The two of them searched through the mess of files looking for any documents relating to Hydra, but so far they found nothing but financial documents about the club. Peggy went through the desk and practically took it apart to see if there was anything hidden in it. At the same time, she checked any papers she found in and around the desk. Dugan and Steve went through and sacked all the of bookshelves to see if anything was hidden in them. They thoroughly searched through countless books and décor and found nothing useful. Dugan even tore apart the base of a bookshelf to only find he was chipping away at wood.

After an hour of ransacking the office they found nothing. Steve ripped off a shelf of a bookshelf and tossed it on the ground. The plank landed next to James who sat on the floor with his backs against a tipped over file cabinet on a little break, while Jacques continued to dig through the thousands of files on the floor. James sighed, "we found nothing so far."

Steve sighed, "This can't be it."

Peggy stopped looking searching through the desk for the millionth time. She stretched and rubbed her baby bump yet again, "I don't know, darling. We went through everything."

"So far all we found is club financials and club related items... Could Wolf have misled us?" Dugan said plainly as he stepped back toward James.

Steve sighed again, "No. This can't. Be. It." He said again slowly. He turned to walk away from the bookshelf, but just as he took his first few steps away from the bookshelf, the floor creaked unnecessarily loud. The room went quiet, and for some reason the floor creaked strangely loud this time.

"What is it?" Dugan asked curiously. James and Jacques looked at Steve to see what he was doing.

Steve shifted his weight on his foot again making the floor creak once more. The creaking floor caught Peggy's attention causing her to stare curiously at her husband. Steve looked down and paused for a moment as he started to think. After a brief pause he decided on his course of action. He quickly stomped down on the creaky planks causing a small square segment of two different wood floor planks to break. The square hole he broke was too small for his entire foot go down, but he struck the planks in the right spot with his heel to make a clean break. What he found was not just a random hole in the floor, but discovered was a small hidden square compartment of some kind.

Peggy stepped forward, "What is it, Steve?"

Steve shrugged, "I don't know." He said as he bent down. Everyone approached Steve as he slowly reached into the hole. He gripped something that felt like a handle, "I feel a handle down here." He said as he twisted it then suddenly the bookshelf to his right made a loud metallic click, followed by the left side of the bookshelf slightly moving open about two or three inches like a door.

Steve stood up and scanned the bookshelf up and down for a moment then slowly gripped the left side of the bookshelf and cautiously swung it open like a door. As the thick bookshelf swung open it revealed a man sized opening at the center of where the bookshelf used to be. Steve chuckled, "of course..." He said as he stared into a dark secret room behind the bookshelf. He approached the opening and leaned into it, "A secret door..." He chuckled again. He turned around, "Dugan, James. Stay out here and make sure no one disturbs or us. And make sure our new friend doesn't wake up."
James nodded, "Got it."

Dugan looked over at the unconscious man, "I think you might've killed him."

Steve didn't respond as he slowly stepped into the dark room. As he entered the room, the room became dim rather than dark as his eyes adjusted to the minimal light coming from the private office behind him. As he slowly walked in, he looked to his right and flipped the light switch on the wall to turn on the lights in the small room. The room became lit up with a single light bulb hanging from the ceiling that illuminated the majority of the compact square room. In the center of the small room are a chair and a square table. On the table, is a projector facing the far right wall that had a standalone white projector screen in front of it. On the table next to the projector are several film reels, film reel cans, and papers. On the wall to Steve's immediate right is a metal shelf carrying ammunition, explosives, and a variety of other objects. Immediately to his left is a vertical gun rack holding high powered rifles of different makes and models and submachine guns of various origins. Next to the gun rack is a large cork bulletin board with various pictures of people, letters, and documents pinned to it. Below the bulletin board is a desk with a lamp, cardboard box loaded with more film reel cans, binders, books, papers and other clutter that occupied much of its surface. The wall in front of Steve had another vertical gun rack with all Thompson submachine guns, and next to it is another large cork board with random papers pinned to it. Under the cork board are metal containers, filing cabinets, and base cabinets that spanned the rest of the wall with a mess of clutter on top of them. The room ultimately looked entirely disorganized.

Steve silently stepped deeper into the room and started to make his way around to look through everything. Peggy and Jacques followed and started to scan around the room with curious looks. Steve turned back around and walked to the metal shelf on the wall to search through them. Jacques turned and joined him to look through the clutter on the shelves while Peggy slowly made her way over to the desk to look around it. She stopped in front of the desk and looked at the cork board and felt sadness sweep over her once she realized what the photos that were pinned to the board were. She saw a series of black and white photos consisting of Mattäus Wolf, a woman, and a little girl. Peggy felt sadness take a deeper hold on her as she covered her mouth with her hand. She inferred that the woman and the little girl in these photographs was his family. But when they went to the cabin earlier in the day, they didn't find a trace of anyone else in the cabin. The family either left or their dead… either or it wasn't a pleasant thought.

Steve was oblivious to what Peggy was staring at as he grabbed a small stack of messy papers from one of the metal shelves and started to go through them, and found nothing of interest. He put them back in their place then turned around to head to one of the filing cabinets on the opposite wall while Jacques continued to go through the shelves. Steve stepped to one of the filing cabinets and opened the top drawer and started to fiddle his way through the files and found out that the files all had names of people written on them. As he went through them, two names caught his eye, Brett Hall and Charles Dafoe. Two people who were no doubt murdered by Hydra. Steve removed Brett Hall's file and opened it to see a red stamp that said, "TERMINATED" on the front page next to Hall's photograph. The entire file was a complete dossier of the man, complete with numerous pictures taken on different times. Steve put Hall's file back then grabbed another one. This file was of a woman and was formatted just like Hall's with a red stamp on the front page that said, "TERMINATED" as well. Steve put the file back and spoke up quietly, "Mattäus Wolf has a bunch of files of terminated targets…a lot of files… This has to be his field office of some kind." He looked around the room and took in everything he saw, "He had to be an assassin."

Peggy turned to him, "An Assassin?"

Steve closed the drawer of the filing cabinet, "He had to be. These weapons, files, maps, and explosives. It looks like he could wage his own war." He nodded, "And the Hydra agents who came
Jacques spoke up, "looked like Wolf couldn't live with himself anymore." He said as he spotted a black notebook under a box of ammunition. He removed the notebook and start to go through it.

Steve nodded and kneeled down to open the bottom drawer of the filing cabinet, "Who could blame him." He opened the drawer and saw a lonely thin file occupying the drawer. He took it out and stood up then walked to the table in the center of the room to go through it. He put it down on the table and started to go into the thin file and saw a series of black and white photographs of a certain mountain. He looked through them and saw that the photos were of different angles of the same mountain. But the very last photo of the series was different. The photo was of thick forest with a red circle drawn over the center of the photo in marker. Steve looked at the photo closely and saw a concrete looking structure barely visible in the picture.

Peggy was still busy focusing on the cork board when a small paper pinned to the bottom right corner of the board caught her attention. The paper had 8-digits written on it in black pen that read, "9724-6440". She removed the paper from the board and turned to Steve, "Darling." She handed the paper to Steve, "Found coordinates."

Steve took the paper and nodded, "Hm."

"why does he have random coordinates?" Peggy asked curiously.

Steve shook his head, "I don't know." He said as he went through more of the file in his hand. He turned a page in the file and saw writing in pen that read, "Frequent places in the past year: New York City, Camp Lehigh, D.C., Maryland, Virginia." Virginia was circled multiple times with black pen. Steve thought out loud, "He was tracking someone..." He came to a sudden realization, "He was tracking him. He was tracking Zola... And he sent us here to stop him."

Jacques lowered the notebook and spoke up, "Since Wolf used to be active in Hydra, wouldn't he know where Zola would be?"

Peggy shook her head, "Not if Zola was intentionally trying to remain hidden, and only exposing himself during certain meetings like yesterday."

Steve nodded, "It makes sense. Hydra calls him 'Number 1' and they barely use his name, or not at all if anything. Which makes him harder to track." He looked at the file and stared at the circled word, "Virginia". He took a deep breath, "But he managed to track him somehow. To Virginia." He saw a small note on the bottom of the page that read only one thing, "Project Insight." Steve knew of Project Insight but not enough details to fully comprehend

"Where in Virginia?" Peggy asked.

"Those coordinates." Steve said thinking out loud again. He took the paper with the coordinates written on them and started to look around the room for a map.

As Steve looked for a proper map with grid lines, Jacques understood the Hydra notebook he found, "Capitaine, this notebook I found has more than just financial information."

Steve stopped and looked at Jacques with a curious look. Peggy asked the question that was both on their minds, "What is it?"

"This notebook has a long list of individuals and businesses that invested or donated money to Hydra. It has how much money these people have invested in Hydra, what date, and the date of the next payment." Jacques closed the notebook, "But, I don't know whether the people and businesses
in this notebook were forced to give money or were willingly giving money to Hydra, but this is hard
copy proof of how Hydra is gaining funds."

Steve nodded, "That's a good catch, Jacques. Take that back with us." Jacques nodded in response.

Steve found a proper map that was folded into a square. He returned to the table and unfolded the
map and started to search where the coordinates pointed to. Jacques and Peggy stepped forward to
the table and started to look at the map as Steve plotted the coordinates. Peggy spoke up, "So where
was he heading?"

Steve pointed to the middle of a mountain range in Virginia, "No where." He paused, "The middle
of the Shenandoah Mountain Range in Virginia."

"What's the plan?" Peggy asked.

Steve turned to the door, "Dugan, James, get in here!" He called.

Dugan and James entered the small room with haste. Dugan spoke, "What's up, sir?"

"Got our next destination. We're going to take the head off the snake. Hopefully for good this time."

"Where are we going?" Asked James.

"Right in the middle of the Shenandoah Mountain Range in Virginia."

Dugan groaned, "What is with Hydra and mountains?"

"So how do we get there?" James asked.

Steve nodded, "There's no straight overland route so the fastest way is by air."

Peggy spoke up, "Any airports nearby that we can land on?"

Steve shook his head, "We're not landing."

Peggy looked at him with concern, "What?"

"James, Jacques, and I are going to drop from the sky while you and Dugan head back to New
York." Steve responded calmly.

"I want to go with you." Peggy said hesitantly fully knowing Steve's counter. Dugan didn't protest
and knew the reason for Steve's decision.

Steve shook his head, "No." He said softly.

"But, Steve…"

Steve cut her off softly and leaned toward her, "I know you can take care of yourself, but… I need
you to go back to New York…"

"But…" Peggy interrupted softly.

"I don't want to argue with you… but if something were to happen and I couldn't…" He couldn't say
what he was thinking so it was his turn to hesitate, "I would never forgive myself…Just please trust
me on this."
Peggy nodded, "I do." She said quietly.

"You need to go back to New York..." Steve repeated with a bit of desperation in his voice.

Peggy conceded and nodded, "Okay..." She said hesitantly. The three commandos understood the position of both Steve and Peggy. They knew their Captain wanted to make sure Peggy and the unborn baby stayed safe and out of harms way, and they knew Peggy wanted to make sure the Captain wasn't alone and vulnerable.

James came up and reassured Peggy, "Look, Peggy... We're going to be with him so you have nothing to worry about." Peggy nodded.

Jacques nodded, "We'll watch out for him. We promise."

Peggy smiled at the two of them, "Thank you."

Steve nodded at Peggy, "I'm not sending you back to New York to put you out of harms way. I'm sending you back because you have an important part. I need you to go with Dugan and patch in Colonel Phillips and the rest of the Commandos. Because we still have SHIELD to take care of."

Steve turned to his commandos, "James, Jacques. Are you in?"

James nodded, "Wouldn't miss it." He chuckled, "Like we have a choice."

"Oui." Jacques replied.

Steve smiled confidently, "Outstanding. We're going to need parachutes. Hopefully Stark has some on the plane or the very least the airport has some."

James nodded, "When do we go?"

"Tonight. Try to beat the sunrise and drop in the cover of darkness." Steve said plainly.

Dugan nodded, "Don't worry, Captain. I'll watch Peggy's back in New York." Steve nodded at Dugan.

Steve smiled, "I have a feeling she'll be watching yours." Peggy looked down and gave a smile.

Peggy stepped closer to him and wrapped her arm around her husband, "We better leave now then..." She said with a hint of worry in her voice. She couldn't help but worry even though she understood the reason for his planning. Steve couldn't blame her, and to be honest he was worried about her returning to New York too, even though Dugan was going with her. That was the main reason why he tasked Dugan to go back with her because he didn't want her to be alone with the threat of Hydra being everywhere.

"Let's go." Steve said confidently. "Grab anything of importance and let's go." He said as he folded the map and closed the file. He turned and handed the map, the coordinates, and the file to Peggy, "Hold onto this for safe keeping, please." Peggy nodded in response as she took the items and folded them again so they could fit in her purse.

Just as they left the small secret room Steve spotted the man he threw the pistol at start to bob his head up and down, signaling that he was returning consciousness. Steve turned to Peggy, "Looks like our friend is up."

Peggy nodded, "Question him?"
"Yeah." Steve nodded. He held up the file, "Wolf mentioned Project Insight in this. Obviously it's a Hydra initiative in SHIELD but I think we need to know more. Let's see if this guy knows anything."

Peggy nodded, "Right."

The man got a series of gentle pats on the cheek from Peggy so he could finally compose himself after being unconscious for sometime. The man finally composed himself and found himself on the office chair and in front of the desk with Jacques, Dugan, Steve, Peggy, and James all standing in front of him. The man recognized Steve, "Captain America..."

Steve nodded and spoke calmly, "I need some questions answered." The man remained defiantly silent. Steve started to rattle off all his related questions, "What is Project Insight?"

"Never heard of it." The man said.

"What is the algorithm it uses?" Steve asked quickly.

"I don't know what you're talking about." The man said quickly. Peggy knew the man was lying. Steve stepped forward and forcefully gripped the man's collar. "Is this gesture supposed to mean you're going to try and beat it out of me? Because that really isn't your style, Rogers." He said defiantly.

Steve chuckled, "Yeah, I get that a lot." He smiled at him, "But it isn't me you should be worried about." He stepped aside and looked at Peggy, "Its her."

Peggy stepped forward and slammed her heel into the man's groin area causing him to scream in high pitch in pain. Dugan whispered, "Now that's just wrong." He chuckled, "Funny how she went for that first."

The man hunched forward with tears building up in his eyes, "I'll talk, I'll talk."

Peggy nodded, "You sure? Because I found that quite entertaining."

The man put his hand up in distress, "Project Insight is a program that uses an algorithm created by Doctor Zola." He took a deep breath, "For choosing, Insight's targets..."

Steve spoke quickly, "What targets?"

The man quickly recited what he knew, "You!" He nodded to Peggy, "Her! the radio host in San Francisco, the Secretary of War, the FBI director, the high school valedictorian in Iowa City, Howard Stark, General MacArthur... anyone who's a threat to Hydra." He composed himself, "Now or in the future."

"The future? How could it know?" Steve asked confused.

The man chuckled evilly making everyone feel uncomfortable. He quickly turned serious, "how could it not? Everything people do nowadays has a paper trail, hardcopies, and official records." He started to list examples, "tax records, bank records, voting pattern, medical history, personal files, employment, your god damn social security." He became serious, "Zola's algorithm evaluates people's past, to predict their future."

"And what then?" Steve asked.
The man shook his head, "They're going to kill me…" Peggy stepped forward and put her heel on the front of his chair in between his legs.

"What then?" Steve asked with a little bit more force in his voice.

"Then Hydra loyalists around the world will begin to scratch off people on the list to assure Hydra dominance in the future… no matter the cost to themselves."

Steve stepped forward and punched him across the jaw, knocking the man unconscious again. "That should keep him out of it for an hour or two." He turned to his team, "We got to go. And we need to hurry."

Steve opened the door of the office, slowly, and peered out to check the stairs ahead of him and the corridor to his left. He scanned multiple times and determined that the coast was clear, "Coast is clear." He said as he swung the door open and stepped out. Peggy and the three Commandos followed close behind as they all walked out. Jacques held the black Hydra notebook securely in his hand so he wouldn't lose it. The faint sound of swingy New Orleans band music filled their ears as the group reached the stairs. Once the group calmly made it up the stairs to the ground level, they were on their way to exit out through the kitchen that was straight ahead down the hall. The music was much louder now and had quite a lively beat to it. But as they walked passed an archway, Steve spotted something suspicious when he turned his head.

He quickly stopped and pushed the group back behind the archway then pressed against the wall. Peggy looked confused, "What is it?"

Steve said plainly, "Suspicious looking men weaving through the dance floor between the crowds." He said as he peered around the corner of the archway to see the main club floor. Everything looked lively as usual with a large amount of patrons in the club still enjoying themselves. From his vantage point, he could see the half-circle elevated stage on his left with the band playing energetic and lively tunes, the dance floor just in front of the stage with the large amount of well dressed patrons dancing energetically, and numerous circular dining tables behind the crowd with people enjoying their meals. But he spotted a series of suspicious men weaving through the crowd. Numerous shady single men dressed in various types of suits and ties walking through the crowd slowly, while checking the faces of everyone they passed. The crowd didn't seem to notice them, but Steve sure did. Steve leaned back toward his group, "Group of men searching the crowd in the club. Most likely looking for us."

Jacques whispered, "Hydra or SSR?"

Steve shook his head, "I don't know. Might even be SHIELD at this point. Can't see any badges."

He then slowly peered again and saw a man with a nice clean cut walking toward the archway. He looked back at Peggy, "One is coming this way."

Peggy nodded, "Well we'll find out who he's with."

After a moment of waiting the man rounded the corner. "Sorry about this." Steve quickly said as he punched him square in the mouth sending the man to the floor. He then dragged his body behind the archway and toward the dimly lit corner in front of the stairs. Steve stood up and returned back to his position next to the archway, "Check the body."

Dugan and James started to search the body for anything. Dugan pulled out a side arm, "He's carrying a standard issue M1917 Revolver, .45 ACP."

He pressed the cylinder latch and dumped the rounds onto the floor then put the pistol down.
James dug into the man's pockets and found a small black leather wallet. He opened it, "Agent Dean Marshall of S.H.I.E.L.D." He tossed the wallet down on the unconscious man, "Is he Hydra?"

Peggy shrugged, "I don't know." She looked up at Steve, "What do you think, darling?"

Steve quickly turned around, "Hard to tell." He peered around the corner again, "Someone must've tipped them off that we're out here. I don't know how else to explain how they got here."

"But what are S.H.I.E.L.D agents doing all the way down here? I didn't think they were that active yet let alone that widespread yet." Peggy said.

Jacques shrugged, "Limited operational authority does sound a little vague."

Steve nodded, "Convenient." He observed the crowd on the club dance floor, "its best we keep our distance and try to slide out through the kitchen like our usual plan." He nodded, "But I think we can use a little distraction."

"Like what?" Peggy asked.

"A loud one." Steve said with a smile as he pulled out his pistol. He kept his smile, "When you hear the signal, make a break for the kitchen, slip out to the alley, turn right out of the alley, and get us a ride out of here." Everyone nodded.

Peggy spoke up, "Be careful, Steve."

"I will." With that Steve pressed his pistol to his side with his finger straight and off the trigger, and slipped around the corner into the energetic crowd. He eyed one of the men he was sure was another S.H.I.E.L.D agent. As he got deeper and deeper into the crowd he angled his pistol to the floor and away from his foot. Once he was sure he wouldn't shoot anyone in the foot, he pulled the trigger twice, shooting off two incredibly loud .45 caliber rounds into the floor. The moment he pulled the trigger, the two loud consecutive bangs made people instantly scream in surprise and duck for cover in fear all at the same time. Steve ducked like everyone else and at the same time pointed to the suspected S.H.I.E.L.D Agent, "Oh my God, he has a gun! He has a gun!" He yelled over the screaming people. The S.H.I.E.L.D agent recognized Steve yelling and reached for his side arm in his holster but lost Steve in the crowd of chaotic frightened people as the hysteria and chaos quickly escalated.

Everyone started to make a desperate break for the front door in fear of a shooting. Peggy smiled, "That must be the signal. Come on." She said taking the lead to the kitchen with the three commandos close behind her. Just as they left, Steve stayed hidden in the crowd as he made his way to the front door. The chaos provided excellent distraction and cover for the escape.

Peggy and the three commandos came out of the kitchen and into the alley without a hitch. The kitchen staff and the waiters in the kitchen also rushed out into the alley and into the street. Thanks to Steve's little distraction the street was flooded with people so it would make it incredibly difficult for anyone to find them. But just as Peggy and the Commandos walked out of the alley into the chaotic and busy street, two men in suits and ties stepped in front of her.

One of the men spoke over the screams of frightened people, "Agent Rogers. You need to come with us."

Peggy just tilted her head and smiled. Then after a moment she quickly slugged the man across the jaw then instantly turned to the other and did the same before he could react. The two men turned and fell onto the concrete unconscious. She turned to the commandos, "Let's go." She said as she stepped over the bodies and turned right, and walked onto the sidewalk.
Dugan stepped over the bodies and said in a loud voice, "You brought this upon yourself."

James laughed, "When in doubt punch your way through everything."

Jacques quickly caught up to Peggy and called out to her over the sounds of chaos in the street, "Where's the Capitaine?"

Peggy spoke evenly, "He'll catch up."

Sure enough Steve found them and caught up to them. He ran up to Peggy and said, "You all get out okay?"

Peggy smiled, "Oh yeah." She said confidently.

"Peggy drove her knuckles into two SHIELD agents." Dugan said amused.

Steve looked proud, "Atta girl." He said with a chuckle.

"Lets get out of this tight street and get a cab back to the airport." Peggy replied.

Steve nodded, "Sounds like a plan."

After taking a cab out of Bourbon Street back to the airport, the Rogers and the three commandos were soon back in the air heading to Virginia. Stark's silver dual engine Beechcraft was fueled and fully capable of making the flight to the Shenandoah Mountain range which should take roughly four hours. Just after taking off from the New Orleans Moisant Field commercial airport, Steve, James, and Jacques got changed into their gear minus the parachutes. Steve got into his complete "Stars and Stripes" combat uniform, but left his helmet, gloves, and shield off to the side so he can relax on the flight a little. James and Jacques changed into dark green combat blouse, trousers, and black combat boots then conservatively painted their faces with black face paint to better blend in the night. Once the trio changed over, it now became a waiting period before they jump.

0300

(03:00 AM)

The interior of the plane was dimly lit with the plane's interior lights barely illuminating much of it. Everyone in the plane was operating on very little sleep if none at all. Steve sat in the back of the plane with his commandos as Peggy piloted. He couldn't help but worry about Peggy because she was pregnant, and he knew from basic knowledge that sleep is very important while pregnant. He hoped she was doing okay and that everything would turn out alright. He knew that Peggy was probably concerned about him as well, and he couldn't blame her. Being married is great, but now whatever you do concerns another person no matter what it is. But if anyone asked him or Peggy, they'd both say being married with one another was the best thing that has ever happened to them. Being married was by far the best thing to Steve than gaining the serum, but without the serum he wouldn't be with her now so… it's a little complicated to say.

He looked out the window of the airplane to the dark night sky and sighed as his mind wandered again. He thought about wanting to live a simpler life. Finally settle down and raise a family with Peggy. Yes, he got everything he wanted in terms of being a Soldier, but he wanted more. Always want more. He chuckled and shook his head as he continued to think to himself. He fought tirelessly through the war with years of continuous fighting, he made a name for himself, he saved countless lives, and even took them. He had his fair share of bad decisions, bad dreams, and sleepless nights. But now with the war over, instead of peace and quiet he found himself still fighting. He's fighting a
secret war with hidden enemies. It almost seems that all he does is fight and fight some more, but now with a little bit more breaks in between. And he's currently outside the law fighting an enemy he thought he destroyed. He couldn't help but want a simpler life…

The plane rocked from turbulence bringing Steve back to reality. Steve shook his head and saw his commandos sprawled out on the seats, fast asleep. He chuckled silently to himself. Suddenly he heard Peggy call him, "Steve!"

Steve stood up, "Yeah?" He asked as he slowly walked up to the cockpit while guiding himself to fight against the turbulence. He reached the dimly lit cockpit and leaned in, "I'm here."

Peggy quickly turned to look at him and for a second took in his calm and confident look on his face. Even with the dim lights she could see every detail of his handsome face. She looked forward and said, "We're about twenty minutes out."

Steve nodded, "Got it. Do you know what time it is?"

Peggy nodded, "It's about 0300."

Steve chuckled, "Thanks. Those flight lessons Stark gave you sure came in handy. I didn't know what we'd do without them."

Peggy shrugged, "We didn't 'fondue', Steve."

Steve sighed, "Oh boy. I grew up poor, okay? That was a new thing to me."

"It's okay, I'm just razzing you, darling." Peggy said with a small smile.

Steve nodded, "Right."

He said as he turned around to make his way back to the passenger compartment. He got to James and Jacques who were sleeping next to each other and gently kicked them awake. The two commandos jolted awake in surprise. Steve nodded, "Gear up. Drop in twenty."

Both James and Jacques nodded in silence as they both sat up. The two commandos grabbed the two duffel bags near them and opened them up to get ready. They both took out a US Army canvas Musette bag, pistol belt with suspenders that had a gun holster and Thompson Submachine gun ammunition pouches clipped to them, a Thompson submachine gun, and explosives. Once both James and Jacques loaded the Musette bags with explosives of various types and extra ammunition they loaded their weapons then started to get their parachutes on. Steve strapped on his helmet, checked his war belt, put his leather gloves on, and then he too began to put on his parachute.

Dugan was awake as well, and he was watching his three brothers in arms gear up. "It's a good thing we found those parachutes in here."

James tightened his harness, "Why would Stark need parachutes anyway."

Steve chuckled, "I don't want to know." He said as he adjusted his helmet.

Peggy called from the cockpit, "ten minutes, boys!"

Steve nodded, picked up his shield, then approached the cockpit to talk to his wife. He leaned into the cockpit, "Alright."

Peggy quickly glanced at Steve, "Alright."
Steve gave a small smile, "Another jump out of a Stark plane."

Peggy looked back at him, "I'm pregnant, Steve…"

"huh?" Steve asked confused.

"We're raising our baby together. So don't even think about not coming back alive." Peggy said softly.

Steve smiled, "I love you."

"I love you too." Peggy replied truthfully but gave a worried smile. Steve leaned in and kissed her for a moment. The kiss felt like an eternity but Peggy broke the kiss to make sure the plane was still on course. She turned to him again, "Remember you promised you're always coming back."

Steve kissed her briefly, "Always." He turned around and headed back to his commandos.

Peggy whispered to herself, "Go get him, tiger."

Steve returned to his team and nodded to Dugan, "Open it."

Dugan complied and walked up to the aircraft door and pulled it open. The air pressure in the cabin dropped as the door swung open. Dugan yelled over the sound of the roaring engines and the fast flowing air, "Good luck, Captain!" He called out as he stood by the door to keep it open.

Steve nodded as he walked up to the door to get ready to jump, "Déjà vu." He said to himself as he gripped his shield to his chest as he started remembering his first drop to a Hydra compound during the war. James and Jacques walked over and stood behind him and got themselves ready. Steve turned his head to the cockpit and waited for Peggy's call. After a long intense moment of waiting at the door, Peggy yelled back, "Go!" Steve instantly jumped out of the plane followed by James and Jacques in rapid succession. Dugan popped his head out of the plane and squinted to fight the fast flowing air and saw three parachute canopies pop up far below him. He smiled then closed the door. He called out to Peggy, "Three canopies!"

Peggy gave a relaxed smile to herself as she flew the plane.

On the ground, Steve regrouped with his two commandos after burying his parachute in the dirt. The forest and sky were incredibly dark and it was extremely hard to see in this pitch black atmosphere. But thankfully, the trio landed within a few yards of each other so it was easy to regroup. Having no strong winds to push them about also made it extremely helpful. Talk about luck. Steve gripped his shield as he crouched down next to his two commandos who were busy burying their chutes in the dirt. "Everyone make it down, okay?" He asked.

Jacques nodded, "Oui, Capitaine."

James shook his head, "Those trees didn't make it easy…"

"Next time we'll drop in a clearing." Steve replied cheekily.

The two commandos picked up their weapons and chambered a round. James whispered, "Where to?"

Steve pointed to a mountain that was barely visible in the dark, "North East. We got quite a hike, let's go." The two commandos nodded.
In the dark morning of New York City, the outside of the Empire Diner was lit up by a large neon sign. The 24-hour diner in the middle of Downtown Manhattan illuminated the dark New York City streets with its bright neon sign and its interior lights. The architecture of the building was modeled as a "Sterling Streamliner" and resembled that of Burlington Zephyr train with its sleek looking exterior and comfortable interior. Inside the diner was a typical layout for diners with booth tables and counter seating, and provided a casual atmosphere with the feel of characteristically typical American culture.

For now, Colonel Phillips was the only guest in the diner. He sat alone in a small booth table in a 24-hour Diner while drinking a cup of hot coffee. He was back in civilian clothes consisting of a black suit dress pants, a white dress shirt, and a dark blue tie. His black suit jacket was folded neatly next to him as he stared out into the dim morning sky. He doesn't even know when the last time he slept. The last few days started to blur together.

He took a sip of hit hot coffee and heard diner front door open behind him. He didn't turn around and sat silently drinking his coffee. Suddenly he heard Peggy's voice, "Good morning, sir." He turned around and saw Peggy, Dugan, Stark, and Sousa walking into the diner. Peggy adjusted her leather jacket as she stopped by Phillips, "Sorry to interrupt your coffee, but we have some news."

Phillips looked surprised to see Peggy, "Peggy…its such a relief to see you."

Peggy gave a warm but tired smile, "You too, Colonel." She said as she sat down in front of the Colonel.

Sousa spoke up, "Peggy recently informed Stark and I about what's going on." He unfolded a map and pointed to the Shenandoah Mountains Range, "Captain Rogers and two of the Commandos are heading toward this mountain, here."

Stark nodded, "As you may know with your security clearance, Colonel. In that area is a secret mountain military installation with a series of underground bunkers that was built to store information, classified technology, and can be used as a fortified head quarters for top leaders in the event of enemy attacks on the mainland."

Peggy nodded, "Steve, and Howling Commandos, James Falsworth and Jacques Dernier are on the mountain right now…"

The Colonel interrupted her, "We can't help them…" He said regretfully.

Dugan jumped into the conversation for only a brief moment, "Sir…"

Peggy was completely shocked and interrupted Dugan, "But, Colonel, we know where they're going. Hydra is probably…"

Phillips took a sip of his coffee then nodded, "Weyland and SHIELD is watching everything we do." He looked up at Sousa and Stark, "We're only handing them more information." He put a tip on the table then scooted off the booth.

Peggy stood up too, "Colonel, we can't just abandon Steve."
Phillips put his suit jacket on, "We have to. We'd only make him more vulnerable."

Stark interrupted, "But, Colonel, we know exactly where he is."

"Yes, I know, but if we suddenly mobilize right now then we tip our hand." Phillips buttoned his suit jacket, "Just make sure the other Commandos are ready just in case. We're going to need all the help we can get." He paused, "Steve is on his own…for now." He then turned and walked out of the diner.

Peggy sighed lightly and bit the bottom of her lip in worry. Stark patted her on the back gently, "He'll be fine, Peg. Trust me."

Peggy rubbed her baby bump again, "I know he will."

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Shenandoah Mountain Range

0900 (09:00 AM)

Steve with his shield in hand, walked alone on a small flat dirt road that cut through the trees on a relatively level part of the mountain side. The road he traveled on was just barely wide enough for a truck to get through. The tall trees of the mountainous forest provided relieving shade from the hot sun that was already shining high in the sky. The gentle mountain breeze whispered through the trees as Steve walked down the road alone. He looked up at the trees canopies and watched the sunlight flicker through the tree tops. He adjusted his helmet as he rounded the bend in the road and saw in the distance two concrete bunkers with gun slots flanking the road with a metal razor wire gate in between them. The both of the bunkers also had tall razor wire fences that stretched and disappeared into the forest. Behind the bunkers and the razor wire fences, Steve could see the mountain turned rocky and quickly steeped up at a sharp angle. He couldn't see much else behind the bunkers and fences, but he did get a good feeling of déjà vu.

He smiled to himself, another Hydra mountain base he has to go through. His plan of going through the front door hasn't changed either. It's a tried and true strategy with the least amount of questions and problems for him. As Steve got closer to the gate, he started to pick up the pace with a light jog. He was surprised as he got closer that no one was trying to attack him, which put him on edge. He started to feel like it was a trap so as he ran he gripped his shield a little tighter and brought it a little bit closer to him. Something seemed really off…

As Steve got within ten feet of the gate, the gate suddenly opened automatically for him like he was expected to be there. Behind the gate, he could see only three men in well pressed black suits and black ties standing still in the middle of a small court yard. He could also see a large airplanes sized armored door attached to a concrete bunker that was built in in the rock behind the three men. Steve slowed down and came to a slow walk as he cautiously passed the gate. He walked slowly into a small court yard and approached the three mystery men in black suits and ties. The court yard behind the bunkers and razor wire fences was completely empty leaving only him and the three men alone in the middle of the gravel court yard. Steve slowly approached them and came face-to-face with the three men.

Steve remained silent as he tensed and gripped his shield. The man in the middle slightly bowed his head to him and spoke in a formal tone, "Good morning, Captain Rogers. I want you to know how excited we all are to finally meet you, and for you to come and see this advanced facility." Steve didn't know what to say because he was expecting a little bit more chaos, not a formal welcome party. Steve just stared at the men defensively. The man gave a disarming smile, "Please, I don't know what caused your defensiveness, but we are on the same side, Captain. We are just excited to
meet you. You'll find that everything is in order." Steve nodded silently then holstered his shield on his back. "Your host wishes for you to relax and join him in the interior facility."

Steve nodded, "Of course." This whole thing is disconcerting to him. Everything feels wrong.

"One last thing. Since this is a secure facility we must respectfully ask you to remove your firearm. Only authorized personnel may carry a weapon, I hope you understand." The man said respectfully.

Steve countered, "It's my policy to keep my gun."

The man repeated, "I apologize, Captain Rogers. We don't mean to create hostilities; this is for security purposes."

Steve thought for a moment then nodded, "Of course." He complied and removed his pistol slowly then flipped it around so the pistol grip was toward the man. The man gave a disarming smile and gently took the pistol from Steve then slowly handed it to his partner on his right. The partner took the pistol and slipped it into his pants in the back. Steve figured that he could handle any situation with his shield alone, so he calculated that handing them his firearm wasn't a problem. He also figured that he got his easy ticket into the facility without fighting through the entire complex by complying with these men. If he stays on guard, then he should be fine.

The man nodded, "Splendid. Now..." Just as the man turned, the armored door behind the three men slowly opened in with an extremely loud metallic sound. The man spoke over the screeching metal, "If you will follow me." Said the man as he turned and walked toward the opening door.

Steve nodded and followed closely behind the man. The two other mystery men then turned and flanked Steve and stayed closed behind him as the group walked into the mountainous facility.

As soon as the group entered the mountain, the armored metal door began to slowly close. The group were now in a large aircraft hangar sized room with a number of military vehicles, including tanks, parked in an organized manner. Steve looked around but kept a composed and unreadable expression on his face as he walked with the group. The man he followed veered to the left and went through a man sized armored door with him and the other two mystery men following close behind. For the next few minutes, Steve walked in silence with the group through a series of spacious well lighted subterranean hallways. But as they walked, Steve was surprised at the lack of people walking through the plain hallways of this facility. All of the hallways didn't have any variety and they all looked exactly the same.

Finally, the group came to a stop in front of another door. The lead man opened another door but held it open for Steve instead of entering the room. "Your host is in here, Captain." The man said respectfully.

Steve looked at the man who gave a warm but uncomfortable smile. He then turned to look at the two men behind him and saw that they had emotionless expressions plastered on their faces. He turned back to the lead man and gave a nod, "Thank you." He said then entered the room.

As soon as Steve walked inside, the man closed the door behind him. Steve found himself in a pitch-black room with only one bright light illuminating one thing at the center of the room. At the center of the room is a circular pedestal with a thin rod attached to a small blue orb glowing brilliantly. The blue orb shines so bright that it looked like it could've been brighter than the light shining above it. Steve was confused and scanned the dark room around him. After gauging the atmosphere in the room, he slowly approached the blue orb that looked like it was almost floating above the pedestal.
The small orb looked strangely familiar. After staring at the orb for a moment, Steve heard a familiar German voice coming from the shadows behind it, "Do you recognize it?" Steve tensed. The new mystery man continued, "I'm sure you recognize it. Do you know what it is?"

Steve knew, "its from the cube… the Tesseract."

"Yes exactly." The man said as he appeared from the shadows. The man is none other than Doctor Armin Zola. Zola looked relatively unchanged, and wore his usual circular glasses and a pressed grey suit and tie. He stopped behind the orb but in view of Steve, "An impressive unlimited source of power. The power of God's if you will…"

Steve responded calmly, "You sound awfully a lot like Schmidt."

Zola slowly smiled, "I'm glad not much has changed with you since you went into the ice, Captain. Still head strong."

Steve nodded, "Well I can say the same for you. Not changing at all."

Zola kept his smile, "I can't tell you how much I've been looking forward to this. Me and you…a reunion. I'm so glad you came here, Captain Rogers." Steve tensed and heard the door he came through open behind him. Zola nodded, "Shall we?"

Steve stepped into the hallway once again and found himself surrounded by six men in black suits and ties. He figured they were armed, so he remained calm and did nothing to show any form of hostilities. For now, he needed Zola alive. Since he's face-to-face with him, he has questions he needs answered. So, Zola being dead does little for him to understand the "why". Steve remained quiet as he turned to face the door. He turned his back toward the six men so it showed his vulnerable side as a way to assure them that he wasn't going to show any immediate hostilities. After a moment, Zola finally joined him in the hallway. Zola nodded, "Follow me."

The group started to walk down the seemingly never ending hallway. Zola took the lead with Steve right behind him, and the six men following in two columns behind Steve. After a silent moment of walking, Steve spoke up, "What is this facility."

"Information." Zola responded quickly. He kept looking forward, "Information is all. Is it not?" He spoke with confidence, "Information can be secret, and secrets can be dangerous. Secrets that can turn the populace of a country against its government, or make a country plunge into civil war like, Greece." He paused, "Another example is private information. Private information can be used incriminate an individual." He paused, "But even better… that information can be manipulated to be used to frame another." He chuckled, "Or the contemporary usage of information is to determine possible threats." Steve became shocked as a sudden realization swept over him. Zola chuckled as they continued to walk, "Another example, you must know is that your beloved SSR is now officially dead." He started to slow down as they approached a pair of steel double doors, "Which that leads me to speculate as to why you came." The group stopped at the double doors, and Zola turned to face Steve, "So, Steve, why did you come?"

Steve replied plainly, "I came here to stop you…"

Zola smiled, "And I thought you came here to die."

"Well its all a matter of perspective."

Zola chuckled, "Speaking of perspective…" He then composed himself and nodded toward him, "You should've stayed dead."
Steve returned the smile, "Now that's a matter of perspective."

Zola kept his confident smile and signaled to the door, "Come." Two of the men in suits stepped forward and approached the doors. The man on the right side typed in a code on the keypad on the wall unlocking the doors. Once the doors were unlocked, the two men together opened the pair of metal double doors for the group.

The group walked into a very spacious well lighted room that was filled with rows upon rows of bookshelf sized computers. The room almost seemed to stretch indefinitely with these computers. Steve noticed that these large computers were similar if not the same type of computers as the ones in the SHIELD section of Camp Lehigh. Steve continued to follow Zola quietly with the group of guards walking close behind them. The atmosphere became tense the deeper they walked into the room. All these computers in a single room gave him a bad feeling. The group continued to walk in silence as they got to the dead center of the room which is the central control point. The central control point of this room looked awfully similar to the one in the subterranean bunker in SHIELD. This central control point also had an array of large computer terminals forming a backward "C" with the opening of the inverted "C" facing in line with the main double doors.

Zola stopped and turned around, "How is this for perspective…Everything you worked for amounted to nothing. Everything you given for your country was for nothing. Hydra still exists because your government recruited us…us your former enemy. Now we thrive under the freedoms of your country, free from our atrocities and crimes in order to strengthen your country against the Soviet Union." He smiled, "The principles of your once isolationist country is now changed into one of intervention. Your country now spends more money and resources in other countries, for what? To be an unelected global power in the name of freedom?" He chuckled evilly, "Then there's you…an enhanced individual who doesn't know when to stop. A man who incites challenge whether it be from Hydra or the Soviets…or even perhaps your own people. Americans hunting the famed Captain America." He laughed, "Now that's interesting topic." He stared directly into Steve, "An enhanced individual who they can't control. A dangerous combination. And a tale of a hero turning into a villain." Zola continued in a dark tone, "Then there's your beloved Peggy." He chuckled and shook his head, "She would have been better off without you returning into her life." Steve cringed again. "Now she has everything to lose. She can lose you, and your baby…all because of you. You made her vulnerable. You. You'll be the architect for all her pain." Steve began to grow in shock with that information Zola mentioned about Peggy.

There was an intense pause for a moment. The Zola laughed again, "I must be honest with you, Captain. I did not anticipate you ever returning. If your dear Peggy was alone without you, I calculated that she would've been a bigger problem to deal with alone. But your return made everything, and especially her much more vulnerable. Again, you should've stayed dead."

Steve nodded and refused to be phased, "How did you know I was coming?"

"We calculated that it was only a matter of time before you found this place, so we waited for you to come." Zola chuckled, "And here you are… Captain Rogers. Brave and alone."

Steve tensed, "Hydra should've died with the red skull." He still couldn't fathom that Hydra survived.

"Cut off one head…two more shall take its place." Zola continued, "Hydra was founded on the belief that humanity could not be trusted with its own freedom. What we did not initially realize is that if you try to take that freedom, people resist. The war taught us much. Humanity needed to surrender its freedom willingly. Since the war ended, SHIELD was founded, and I and many other Hydra scientists were recruited. The new Hydra quickly grew a beautiful parasite inside SHIELD. It was rather easy since your people and the Soviets were easy to manipulate." Steve listened intently,
"Because of the clashes between ideologies of both the United States and the Soviet Union, Hydra was able to secretly establish a substantial influence in many parts of the world. Including your country and the Soviet Union. This Cold War that your countries are now engaged it gave us the catalyst to feed crisis and instability. And When history did not cooperate…history was changed."

"How?" Steve said in shock.

"Accidents will happen. Do you think it was coincidental that influential people around the world ended up dead. Calvin Chadwick who was a powerful businessman and a senatorial candidate who was conveniently murdered. General George S. Patton said to have died because of a 'car crash', and General Alexi Zhukov who was once a popular general to the Soviet people and the Soviet Army died from Soviet secret police. Coincidental is it not?" Zola smiled, "The clash between democracy and Communism is making the world so chaotic that the people are willing to sacrifice personal freedoms to gain more security or independence. Once this purification process is complete, Hydra's new world order will arise. Our footholds in the two world's superpowers already gave us what we needed for us to complete our goals..."

Steve clenched his fist prompting the guards to prepare to draw their weapons. Steve spoke urgently, "How are you going to do this?" He held back so he could get more answers.

"It requires…Insight my dear, Captain."

Steve nodded and understood the tangent, "I know Insight is part of SHIELD and means you orchestrated it."

"That is correct." Zola responded with a smile.

Steve responded, "SHIELD is controlled by Hydra, so Weyland must be one of yours."

Zola nodded, "You could say that."

Steve nodded, "How is it possible that you managed all this?" He asked sternly.

"A good story…” Zola smiled, "But unfortunately for you, you won't be around to here it." He nodded.

Steve then looked to his left and saw the man in the suit pointing a gun at him. Before Steve could move, he saw a bright flash and a loud bang...

Have something this up coming few weeks, but should update soon.

Reference to NCIS Agent Gibbs

Uncharted 4 reference (Great game)

The Mountain Complex I made was like a cross between two military installations built during the Cold War except this one was built during the Second World War.
I don't own Captain America

Again its follow the basic trajectory of James Bond: Spectre just fair warning.

Part 4 of 4 for the Paranoia series

Previously

Early July 1947: Steve, Peggy, James, Jacques, and Dugan made their way to a cabin in Square Lake, Maine to talk to a dying Mattäus Wolf who shed some light on Hydra's infiltration. The dying ex-Hydra man told the Rogers that Hydra is now lead by Doctor Armin Zola and is supported and funded by the Council of Nine. The Council of Nine is a group of powerful and influential individuals, mostly businessmen, who seek to seize power and control of the United States government through manipulation of politics and the economy. When Zola was recruited at the immediate end of World War II, he took the opportunity to please the US government with his ideas, all the while plotting to regrow Hydra within the government. He quickly heard about the Council of Nine through an American businessman who invested in the Nazi war machine in 1939. From there he quickly persuaded the Council to become loyal to the ideology of Hydra. With Zola in the government and a powerful group like the Council of Nine at his disposal, Hydra's sphere of influence in the economy and the federal government increased significantly making them incredibly powerful and influential. Wolf told Steve to go to his private office in the O'Neil Night Club in New Orleans and vaguely told him that he'll find what he's looking for there…

While Steve, Peggy, and three of the Howling Commandos followed the trail to Hydra, Colonel Phillips discovered that Director of SHIELD, John Weyland, actively watches everyone including members of the government. This revelation gave Phillips the feeling that SHIELD is trying to establish a sort of police state in the US that was very much like the Soviet Union, who has a constant eye on every citizen with the help of the secret police. With that Colonel Phillips felt a strong urge in his gut that Steve was 100% right that SHIELD and Director Weyland are Hydra. He didn't know how far Hydra's influence went into the government, but all he knew and all that matters is that Hydra is still around. He just hoped he wasn't too late to act. So as soon as he could, he secretly met with Howard Stark and Daniel Sousa to inform them on the discovery and to figure out a course of action to bring down Hydra, and to do their best to help the Rogers in any capacity.

Following the secret meeting, Colonel Phillips and Sousa went to Washington D.C. to attend a security meeting in the White House, but once they got there they found out that the meeting was changed so it would take place earlier, so the two of them missed the meeting entirely. The two of them did end up meeting with Director Weyland just as the meeting ended and found out that the President authorized Project Insight. On top of that the President and the Secretary of War asked Weyland to take charge of the new Intelligence community which makes Weyland one of the most powerful men in the country. Weyland then told both Sousa and Colonel Phillips that the SSR will be closed down immediately and that the Rogers will be arrested in conspiracy to commit treason. Steve, is now perceived as dangerous in the eyes of the government.

The Rogers and the three commandos traveled to O'Neil Night Club in New Orleans, Louisiana and captured a Hydra agent who told them that Project Insight uses an algorithm made by Doctor Zola that chooses Hydra's targets. The algorithm evaluates people's past to predict their future by weighing
factors like tax records, bank records, voting pattern, medical history, and employment history. Then depending on the results, Hydra loyalists and sleepers would eliminate anyone on the target list that threatens Hydra's future according to the target list. Additionally, the group also found out that Wolf left evidence directing them to a place Zola frequented in the middle of the Shenandoah Mountain range in Virginia. The place turned out to be a massive mountain facility built for the US military during the war to store information, classified technology, and can be used as a fortified head quarters for top leaders in the event of Nazi attacks on the mainland during the war. After a brief brush with SHIELD agents in the club with no innocent people getting hurt and very little fighting, the Rogers and the three commandos made it out of the club with little problems. Following the expedient exit from the club, Steve, James, and Jacques parachuted out of a plane to get to the mountain facility while Peggy and Dugan remained on the plane to head back to New York and get Colonel Phillips clued into the current situation.

Back at New York City in the early morning, Peggy, Dugan, Stark, and Sousa surprised Colonel Phillips at a diner to inform him about the whereabouts of Steve in the hopes to get help for him. But the Colonel reluctantly refuses to help him because he's afraid that they will tip their hand to Hydra and do more harm to Steve than good. So Steve is on his own.

That same morning at the mountain facility, Steve was separated from James and Jacques and approached the facility alone. There he came face to face with Doctor Armin Zola who told him more details to the story. He reveals that Hydra has been funding and operating SHIELD while staging crisis' around the world and in the US, creating a need for Project Insight and setting the foundation for the rise of Hydra's new order. But, before Zola said anymore he ordered the hit on Steve…

Shenandoah Mountain Facility

Steve slowly woke up and felt like he was constantly spinning with an incredibly loud ringing noise in his ears. His breathing was heavy like he was exerting himself physically as he fought to open his eyes. As he slowly began to open his eyes, he cringed sharply at the intense bright white light shining down on him that seemed to completely blind him. As Steve regained more consciousness, he noticed his vision was still immensely blurry. He softly groaned while he fought the room to stop spinning. He tried to focus, but he noticed that he was in a strange bright white room of some kind. He felt dizzy, uncomfortable, and lost in this whole situation. He doesn't even remember what happened to him. Everything is blank like there's a hole burned into his memory. As the room steadied to a slow sway, he saw that there were three blurry people standing about five or ten feet in front of him. The ringing in his ears were starting to slowly fade away just as the room started to steady. He blinked hard and started to hear a familiar male German voice speaking with an echo. He couldn't exactly tell what the voice was saying, but he figured the voice was saying something to him. He shook his head and finally realized he couldn't move his arms and legs. He finally became more aware of his surroundings and started to regain more of his vision, focus, and other senses and realized that he was strapped to some sort of metal chair. He looked down and saw his arms were attached to the arm rests of the chair with large steel braces covering his forearms and wrists. He clenched his fists and tried with all his might to move, but he couldn't. The room finally stopped completely swaying, and his ears stopped ringing and his vision completely cleared. He heard Zola's voice, "Captain Rogers, can you hear me?" Steve looked up and finally saw a clear view of the three men who stood in front of him. Zola stood directly in front of him and was flanked by two Hydra Agents in black suits.

Steve didn't initially respond as he started to look around the room with clear vision. He was in a medium sized bright white room with a large bright medical examination lamp hanging over him. On his right he saw a large cart with a long metal tray on it with a variety of specialized medical tools
and equipment. He noticed the whole room was medically themed with counters and cabinets loaded with a variety of medical supplies. He heard Zola repeat the question, "Captain, can you hear me?"

Steve finally responded coldly, "Unfortunately." He said as he tried to fight his way free, but found that it was useless to even try again. He was secured tightly to this chair, and there was no way he could break free.

Zola smiled confidently, "Don't worry, Captain. You're not going anywhere."

"Where am I? What did you do to me?" Steve replied urgently.

"You don't remember?" Zola chuckled and remained still, "We simply put you to sleep with a couple of horse tranquilizers. For where you are, you haven't left." He chuckled again, "I must give you credit, Captain. You awoke faster than I thought you would. You were only sleep for four hours."

Steve gritted his teeth, "Why am I here? Why didn't you just kill me?"

Zola walked over to Steve's left and placed his hand on Steve's shoulder, "You're going to suffer." He smiled, "But you will not die." Steve gritted his teeth again. "When we're done with you...you'll no longer be Steve Rogers. You'll be the new arm of Hydra. We're going to control you..." Steve tensed again and tried to fight to get out again, but again it was no use, the braces on his arms and legs were too strong. Zola clenched Steve's shoulder, "No use in trying, Captain. Save your strength for when you need it." He laughed.

"I'll never work for Hydra... Never." Steve emphasized coldly.

"I'd be disappointed if you came willingly. No matter, torture is only for entertainment." Zola nodded to the tray on Steve's right, "Science will be the instrument of your conversion." Steve looked over to his right to the metal tray and saw medical tools and a strangely large syringe loaded with a clear bubbly fluid in the center of the tray.

Steve looked forward, "Get on with it then. Nothing can be as painful as listening to you talk."

Zola smiled, "Alright then." He chuckled, "Let us begin." Zola stepped behind the chair where Steve couldn't see him. Steve started to feel a series of slight shudders in the chair and heard the sounds of wires and plugs connecting to something metallic. He didn't need to know what was going on because his gut told him something bad was about to happen. He closed his eyes and took a deep breath.

It turns out that the chair he's on, is actually an electric chair with high enough voltage to extremely hurt him but not high enough kill him if used properly. The metal chair itself and the metal braces on both his arms and legs are the conductors for the chair to carry out the painful dose of the electrical current. The series of wires connected to the back of the chair, armrests, and braces on Steve's legs were all connected to a large circuit breaker on the wall that provided an infinite amount of electricity to the chair, which means infinite torture.

Steve opened his eyes and saw Zola walking around him carrying a small metallic square object with a long black wire attached to it that dragged on the floor. Zola placed the metallic square object down on the floor right in front of Steve then smiled at him, "So, Captain Rogers. Before we start... I think you'll find most interesting that Project Insight will produce its first list at midnight." He chuckled, "Very pleasing, no?" Steve clenched his teeth and steadied his breathing. "Ready?" Zola said with a raised brow. Steve relaxed and took a deep breath as he closed his eyes to prepare for the coming pain. Zola gently stepped on the metal object which activated the electric chair. Steve shook violently in the seat with his muscles flexing uncontrollably as the electrical current shot through his body.
continuously. He gritted his teeth as the excruciating pain intensified. The pain surged throughout his body and it started to feel like he was there for an eternity.

Zola smiled in content as he saw his old adversary rattle and growl in extreme pain, completely satisfied with watching his enemy suffer. He didn't let up on the electric chair and simply watched in entertainment at Steve's suffering. Steve continued to shake violently as blood started to pour out of his nose. He continued to clench his teeth together and fought the excruciating pain shooting throughout all parts of his body. Zola finally let up and removed his foot from the metal object, stopping the electrical current going through the chair. Steve gasped in relief and panted heavily as his body slowly relaxed from the pain. He slowly opened his eyes and shook his head gently. Zola smiled, "Had enough?"

Steve shook his head again, "I can do this all day…"

"I'm sure you can," Zola said with a broad smile. He walked over to Steve and kept an evil smile on his face, "You're going to be a tool. Not much different than you are now, but this time…you'll be our instrument." He chuckled, "You'll go…and destroy everything from the inside, and no one would ever suspect that America's champion was the cause for all their suffering. You'll help us reestablish Hydra's dominance in the world." Steve weakly glared at Zola. Zola leaned closer to him and spoke in a soft whisper, "And your wife…the famous Agent Peggy Rogers will be just another passing face that you caused pain. But she'll feel it more than anyone else…"

Steve shook his head, "You don't know Peggy. She…" He said defiantly.

"She will break and never recover." Zola kept his evil grin, "We know her well enough, Captain Rogers, we are aware that she can't lose you a second time. Like you…she can only do so much… Everyone has a breaking point. Even you and even her." Steve glared at him. He chuckled evilly then stepped around the chair and walked to the medical tray on Steve's right. He picked up the syringe and examined it for a moment, "This will hurt a little, and it'll be pleasant to watch. At least for me." He chuckled. Steve leaned his head back and took a deep breath. "Isn't science marvelous, Captain?" Zola asked rhetorically. Steve didn't respond and remained defiantly silent. Zola laughed, "But you're not ready for this yet. Your pain needs to be more severe." He put the syringe down then walked back over to the metal object on the floor to give Steve another dose of electrical therapy. "Are you ready?" He asked calmly.

Steve sighed, "Get on with it already…" Zola smiled evilly again.

But just as Zola was about to press down on the metal object with his foot, the center of the ceiling suddenly exploded behind him. The sheer concussion of the immense blast tossed Zola off his feet toward the back wall behind Steve like a rag doll. Steve cringed immediately and shut his eyes to protect himself from the debris and dirt that immediately burst into the room. Almost instantaneously after the explosion a large part of the room caved in and buried the two confused Hydra Agents on the opposite end of the room from Steve. Following the explosion and subsequent cave in, a large cloud of dust filled the room as small pieces of debris continued to fall into the room from the new hole in the ceiling. Seconds after the blast, Steve opened his eyes slowly to see a dark thick cloud of dust filling the room, so thick that he can barely see in front of him. His ears rang loudly again, but this time it was from the huge sudden blast in a tight confined room. He regained his composure and tried again to wrestle his way out of his restraints but it was still no use. But that didn't stop him from trying.

As Steve wrestled in his electric chair, he heard a familiar male English voice call out to him, "Captain Rogers!" The English Voice called out to him.

Steve recognized the voice, "Falsworth! I'm in here!" He called out.
As the dust settled in the room and visibility started to clear, Steve saw Falsworth drop into the room from the large hole in the ceiling. Steve sighed in relief and happiness at the sight of his friend and teammate. After jumping into the room, James Montgomery Falsworth scanned the room with his Thompson Submachine gun raised to make sure no hostiles were waiting to surprise him. After a brief scan around the room, he quickly saw Steve strapped to a metal chair, "Cap, what sort of mess did you get into this time?"

Steve chuckled, "I'll tell you all about it later." He smiled, "You're a sight for sore eyes."

James nodded with a smile then looked around the room and spotted Steve's helmet and shield on a counter top. But before he could do anything, two men in black suits and ties kicked the door in with pistols raised. James didn't miss a beat, and quickly turned, got down on one knee, and fired a burst of .45 ACP into the bodies of the two men before they even had a chance to fire off a single round. One man fell to the floor dead, and the other fell back to the wall then slumped down onto the floor dead. James paused for a moment and scanned the open door to make sure no one else came in. He knew more Hydra agents were on their way so he needed to free Steve quick. "More will come," He said lowering his weapon then quickly making his way to the counter and grabbing the shield and helmet. Once he got the items, he quickly made his way back to help his Commanding Officer and friend. James put the items down next to the chair then began to free Steve from his restraints, "What would you do without us?" He asked jokingly as he expediently started to unlatch the restraint on Steve's forearms.

Steve smiled, "I don't want to find out." Once James freed his arms, he quickly massaged his uncomfortable wrists, "also…don't tell Peggy."

James chuckled as he started to unlock the leg restraints on Steve's legs, "Wouldn't dream of it, Cap." He suddenly saw Zola's motionless body laying on the floor in a twisted posture against the wall, but figured that Zola was most likely dead so he was the least of his worries as of now.

Once Steve's legs were free, he quickly stood up then accidentally stumbled onto the ground. His body felt painful and sore after the long dose of shock therapy from Zola, so he felt sluggish and tight. James quickly came over to help him out, but Steve simply shook his head and said, "I'm fine. Just a little disoriented...only need a second." James nodded at him then brought over the helmet and shield. Steve nodded in silent thanks then grabbed his helmet and put it on as he stood up. But just as he got up, two more Hydra agents came into the room with Thompson Submachine Guns. In the split second before either James or the two men reacted, Steve quickly bent down, grabbed his shield, then threw it at lightning speed at the two men. The shield hit the first man in the face then ricocheted into the head of the other then returned to Steve. Steve caught his shield instinctively and strapped it back onto his left forearm then turned to James.

James lowered his submachine gun, "Just need a second, huh?"

Steve shrugged, "initially." He nodded, "Where's Jacques?"

"Getting ready to blow this place to hell. We lost contact with you so we improvised," James replied.

"Good call. We need to make sure to destroy the computers here..."

James smiled, "That problem should take care of itself."

Steve smiled, "Sounds good." He started to step forward and was about to make his way out of the room but paused for a moment to see if Zola was still alive. He turned around and observed Zola's motionless body on the floor against the back wall behind the electric chair. James patted Steve's shoulder, "He's dead, Cap." He started to run over to the door, "Let's go!"
Steve nodded, "Right. Lead on." He said as he walked over to one of the dead Hydra agents on the ground and picked up a discarded .45 pistol to replace his lost one. He holstered his new pistol in his thigh holster then continued to the door with James in the lead.

The moment James peaked out the door, the hallway erupted with automatic weapons fire. James leaned back into the room and let out a sigh of relief, "My entrance didn't go unnoticed. Don't know how many are out there, but they're all on our right down the hallway."


Steve held up his shield and hunched forward, so the shield protected his head and upper body as he lunged out of the room and into the hallway. The moment he exposed himself into the hallway, the handful of Hydra agents immediately focused their fire on him. Rounds from the Hydra agents Thompson Submachine guns dinged and pinged off the shield as Steve charged toward them. James took this opportunity and stepped into the hallway then opened fire on the Hydra agents who were too focused on Steve, killing two of them. Steve reached the Hydra Agents at the end of the hallway just as they had to reload their weapons. He swiftly hit one agent in the face with his shield sending him flying into the wall, then quickly punched another in the ribs with so much force it threw the man off his feet and into the back wall. Steve then turned and threw his shield at a short distance to the last agent standing who was trying desperately to reload his weapon. The shield hit the man in the face then ricocheted back into Steve's hands. He again instinctively slid the shield back in its place on his left arm. Steve turned and was about to walk away then noticed the man, he just hit in the face with his shield, was still standing. He turned his head slightly and saw the last Hydra agent standing shakily with weak legs, head down, and blood pouring out of his nose and mouth. Finally, after a second of standing there, the last Hydra agent fell forward and onto his face. Steve nodded in satisfaction.

James reloaded his Thompson Submachine Gun as he ran up to Steve. Steve turned to James and nodded, "Now where?"

James paused then turned around to look at the opposite end of the hallway to make sure Hydra agents weren't trying to attack them from the rear. He turned back to Steve, "Now we link up with Jacques then leave through the main vehicle garage. Follow me, Cap," he said as he took off down another corridor.

James and Steve continued to run down the long plain hallways inside the Hydra mountain facility on their way to meet up with Jacques. They passed an open door that exposed a small office that the two of them briefly got a glimpse inside as they ran down the corridor. But in that brief look inside, something caught Steve's eye prompting him to immediately stop in his tracks. "Wait a second," said Steve softly.

James slowed down and turned around to face Steve, "Cap, we have to go. Every Hydra agent in the mountain is coming for us." He said bouncing on his toes impatiently while gripping his Thompson Submachine Gun nervously.

Steve nodded silently then turned around and walked back toward the office. As he walked through the open door, he immediately saw a map of the SHIELD section of Camp Lehigh pinned to a cork bulletin board over a desk that was against the opposite wall from the door. The office was tiny and was roughly about the size of a broom closet with a single desk on the opposite wall from the door. Next to the doorway and desk is a small row of file cabinets, and on the left wall is a short vertical gun rack that held Thompson Submachine Guns. As Steve slowly walked deeper into the broom
closet sized office, he briefly checked the room to make sure no one was waiting to ambush him then proceeded to walk over to the map that hung over the desk. Steve looked at the map carefully and saw that it detailed the location of everything in the SHIELD section of Camp Lehigh, and noticed that the map showed a hidden route that cut directly to the SHIELD section of the base through the forest surrounding the base. The importance of this route is the fact that it's the secret backdoor to SHIELD and possibly the easiest way to get in. Since the SHIELD compound is on the far edge of the main Army base, the hidden route on the map bypasses the Army Base entirely and thus is the path of least resistance to the compound. Steve walked up to the bulletin board and snatched the map right off the board then stuffed it into one of his pockets. Although the SHIELD compound was originally the old SSR training field where Steve trained, SHIELD transformed much of it, so he no longer recognized it. So the map he acquired will prove very useful in the immediate future…

James watched him from the doorway, "Cap…"

Steve nodded, "Lets go," He said as he turned around and made his way out of the office.

"Right," James responded then turned to continue running down the corridor with Steve close behind.

A few minutes later the two men rounded a bend in the hallway and immediately saw Jacques Dernier with a Thompson Submachine Gun taking cover by the corner closest to them at a four-way hallway intersection. Both Steve and James instantly heard the distinct sound of Thompson Submachine Guns echoing throughout the hallway intersection and rounds snapping through the hallway. James called out over the gunfire to Jacques loudly, "I got the Captain!" He called as he and Steve stopped immediately behind Jacques as the sounds of bullets snapped past the intersection.

Jacques turned around and quickly lowered his Thompson, "James, Captain. Its good to see you two." He said with his thick French accent with a hint of relief in his voice.

Steve nodded to Jacques with a smile, "Thanks for getting me out."

Jacques nodded, "Of course, Capitaine." He flinched as rounds zipped close by the corner.

Steve gripped his shield and nodded, "We need to hurry up and get out of here."

James spoke quickly to Jacques, "You set the explosives?"

Jacques nodded, "Yes I did. We don't have much time," he said urgently.

"Wait how much explosives did you two fellas bring? There's no way a few explosives can bring down this place." Steve said curiously.

James nodded, "Not a lot… but we found."

Jacques turned to Steve, "We found a Fat Man type atomic bomb hidden deep in the bottom of the mountain complex. We reassembled it and rigged it to blow. We figured the government distributed atomic bombs to secret facilities around the country so the bombs would not be in one place at any given time."

"Lucky, Jacques has a real knack for explosives…and understanding complex instructions," replied James casually over the gunfire.

Steve sharply turned to the two of them, "You did what and you found what?" He asked in shock over the gunfire.
"Hydra has an Atomic Weapon inside the mountain." Jacques said plainly.

"That was the only way we could destroy this facility entirely," James responded.

"What will the Bomb do to the towns around these mountains?" Steve asked urgently.

Jacques responded, "I don't know. But this mountain should be able to defuse the blast and contain all radioactive material from being sent into the atmosphere."

"How sure are you?" Steve asked.

"very," Jacques replied confidently.

"How much time do we have?" Steve asked.

"We have less than thirty minutes to get out of here and get to a clear distance." Jacques responded quickly.

Steve sighed, "I wished I asked that first." He quickly brought up his shield and stepped into the hallway intersection which drew the attention of all the Hydra agents on the other end. Almost instantly, the Hydra agents began to focus all their fire on him. "What is the quickest way to the garage?" He called over.

Jacques nodded, "Follow me!" He called as he pushed himself off the wall and ran down the hallway with James close behind. Steve followed by back peddling with his shield up to cover their escape. Hydra gunfire pinged and ricocheted off his Vibranium shield as he closely followed the two commandos out of the hallway.

After a while of sprinting frantically through the Hydra mountain facility, Steve, James, and Jacques pushed through a set of armored double doors and into the aircraft hangar-sized primary vehicle garage with a large group of Hydra agents close behind them. Steve spoke up urgently, "Now we need a ride." Suddenly gunfire zipped through the still open doorway and past the trio causing them to quickly disperse. James and Jacques dove to the right and took cover behind one of the crates while Steve quickly rolled to his left and took cover behind a different crate.

The primary vehicle garage main door was wide open and provided the most obvious exit out of the mountain. But before the trio can get out of the mountain, the trio had to fight through dozens of armed Hydra soldiers in the garage and countless Hydra reinforcements that were surely coming throughout the mountain. The garage was filled with hundreds of unknown crates, and a wide array of military vehicles parked and arranged in an organized manner along the garage floor that the trio could use in a variety of ways. But just as Steve, James, and Jacques took cover behind the crates, the Hydra soldiers in the garage instantly opened fire on them pinning the trio down and surrounding them. James slumped down to the ground and leaned his back on the crate and fired his Thompson Submachine Gun down the hallway they just came through to suppress the incoming Hydra forces coming through the corridor. James yelled over the gunfire as bullets zipped past the trio, "We need to get out of here ASAP!"

Jacques peaked out of his cover and opened fire on the pressing Hydra soldiers in the garage. Suddenly his Thompson Submachine Gun made a loud metallic click signaling that its bolt locked to the rear. Jacques quickly dipped behind the crate again and performed a dry reload, "We're running out of time!"

Steve nodded then peaked over his cover and spotted a row of green Army jeeps parked close by. Suddenly Hydra rounds snapped within inches of his head causing him to dip back behind cover.
"Row of jeeps about twenty meters!"

Jacques peeked over for a second and saw the jeeps then dipped back behind cover again, "I see it."

"I'm running low on ammo!" James yelled over the gunfire as he reloaded his Thompson Submachine Gun quickly. He continued to fire down the hallway again, killing more Hydra agents trying to rush toward him. "A fast exit is preferred!" He yelled over the gunfire again. There were dead bodies of Hydra agents strung out along the floor who failed to rush the trio. Although James has stalled the Hydra advance in the hallway, they were creeping closer and closer.

Steve nodded to his two Commandos, "I'll draw the attention of the Hydra guards in the garage. You two get the jeep."

Jacques nodded, "Got it!" With that Steve hopped over the crate and automatically drew the attention of the Hydra soldiers in the garage.

Steve rushed into the middle of the advancing Hydra soldiers making it hard for them to shoot at him without killing one of their own. Steve was close enough to the Hydra soldiers to engage them with his shield and hand-to-hand. He quickly hit a Hydra soldier in the chest with the rim of his shield with such force that it sent the man flying into a crate. Steve then instantly turned and hit another in the face with the convex surface of his shield sending the other man tumbling. He then swiftly moved and punched another soldier in the throat then kicked him into a group of pressing Hydra soldiers. Steve rushed forward and again engaged the Hydra soldiers in close hand-to-hand combat.

Jacques nodded to James, "Lets go!" He yelled over the gunfire and fighting then vaulted over the crate.

James responded, "Right behind you!" He yelled following Jacques.

As Jacques and James rushed to the parked jeeps, they opened fire on the Hydra soldiers in the garage to help cover Steve fighting. Before the two commandos made it to the jeeps, they managed to kill a couple of Hydra soldiers before taking cover. "Get the jeep started; I'll cover!" James yelled over the chaos to Jacques. Jacques nodded then quickly vaulted into the driver seat of the jeep to get it started. While he did that, James leaned out of cover and opened fire on the open doors that they came through moments earlier and killed a handful of Hydra agents pushing into the garage.

Jacques found the keys of the jeep under the seat and started the jeep, "Jeep is running!"

James stood up and continued to fire his submachine gun at the Hydra forces pushing through the doors then vaulted over the hood of the jeep. He then hopped in the passenger seat next to Jacques and yelled to Steve, "Cap! We got the jeep!"

Steve was still engaged in fighting, "Punch it! I'll be right behind you!"

Jacques yelled, "Capitaine we're running out of time!"

Steve hit another Hydra soldier with his shield, "Go! I'll cover your exit!"

Jacques looked back at James confused and conflicted. James shrugged, "He's wearing the bars." He said referring to Steve's Captain's rank. Bullets started to ping and impact the jeep causing the two commandos to flinch and duck their heads in a futile attempt to avoid getting shot. As gunfire continued to snap passed the two commandos, Jacques stepped on the gas, turned the jeep, and started to accelerate.

The exit was a straight path for them, but Jacques suddenly stopped the jeep in the middle of the
fight. He stopped because he noticed that the doors started to slowly close, "the doors are closing!" He yelled frantically. The doors closed slowly with a loud mechanical noise echoing throughout the garage and over the gunfire. The doors moved slow but they moved fast enough to warrant haste.

James turned around and yelled at the top of his lungs, "Cap! The doors are closing!" He then quickly fired his Thompson Submachine Gun at a pair of advancing Hydra soldiers rushing toward them.

Steve heard James loud and clear, and quickly disengaged from the fight and sprinted toward the jeep. As he ran, he holstered his shield on his back and used it to cover his upper body and head from incoming fire from the Hydra forces. While Steve sprinted at lightning speeds to the jeep, James and Jacques turned around in their seats and covered him with their Thompson Submachine Guns. Within seconds, Steve jumped into the back seat of the Jeep, "GO!" He yelled.

Jacques turned back around and slammed his foot on the gas and gunned the jeep toward the closing exit. James did his best to cover Jacques with his submachine gun while Steve quickly drew his shield and used it to protect Jacques's back. As Hydra agents and soldiers fired at the jeep, Jacques maintained his focus on gunning the jeep through the closing exit window. After an intense few seconds the jeep squeezed its way through the closing doors and out to the gravel court yard and into the sunny Virginia early afternoon. Jacques kept his foot on the gas as he accelerated past the court yard toward the windy dirt road. The trio were surprised to see no one was outside in the gravel court yard to stop them. Hydra probably planned to stop them in the garage and committed everyone to it, but the trio was too quick in their exit before Hydra reinforcements could affect them.

As Jacques sped down the windy road, Steve leaned forward, "How much time do we have?"

Jacques looked at his watch for a moment then back up at the twisting road, "less than five minutes."

Steve nodded, "Gun it. There's no telling what the A-Bomb will do underground." He shook his head, "Hope you're right about it."

James nodded, "me too. But its too late to go back."

After a while of driving at crazy fast speeds through the twisting dirt road, the mountain where the Hydra base is located was still clearly visible behind the trio. The massive mountain loomed high and mighty with its sheer size making it look closer than it was. Suddenly the trio felt a huge rumble underground making the jeep wobble uncontrollably causing Jacques to slam on the brakes of the jeep bringing it to a complete stop. The massive rumble that seemingly felt like an earthquake caused the trees to rattle and sway dangerously. Many of the trees quickly lost its footing on the ground and even collapsed entirely from the sudden earthquake-like tremor. But after a mere second, the deadly shaking seemingly stopped. James, Jacques, and Steve all turned around and watched the mountain with curious looks. The trio hoped that they were safe enough, because if they weren't, it would be no use to try and escape the blast now. Suddenly the trio felt the earth shake again as they spotted the mountain started to move. The mountain seemed to lift up off the ground then slowly sink into the earth. In mere seconds, the mountain started to collapse downward, crumbling, fragmenting, and even shattering on its way down to the earth. After a few seconds of the mountain collapsing, massive explosions of dust and debris erupted along the sides of the falling mountain indicating the nuclear blast vented its energy through the path of least resistance. The three men in the jeep finally heard a loud boom after a mere few seconds of the mountain collapsing. After another few seconds the mountain finally collapsed entirely onto itself leaving a large cloud of dust and debris floating in the air over where the mountain once was like a volcano just erupted. The whole scene took mere seconds.
James turned to Steve, "Well we're not dead."

Steve smiled, "Not yet at least." He turned serious, "This isn't over yet."

Jacques nodded, "Where we heading, Capitaine?"

"First, get us out of here so we can ditch the jeep. We don't need to attract the wrong attention. Then get us to a train station." Steve responded calmly, "Time to get Peggy into the fold." The two commandos nodded.

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2100 (09:00PM) Trenton, NJ

The night sky hung low over the city of Trenton, New Jersey, and the darkness was only partially illuminated by the bright moon hanging high in the sky, and the nimble lights coming from the numerous city buildings and street lights. The city streets were quieting down, and the city became quieter as the day came to an end. It looked like just another average night in Trenton, New Jersey for the inhabitants of the city. But for a select few individuals, it's the start of a very long night.

Colonel Chester Phillips walked ahead of Daniel Sousa, Howard Stark, and Peggy Rogers through the dark city streets in a run-down part of the city. Phillips was still dressed in civilian clothes and wore a black suit, white dress shirt, and a dark blue tie. Daniel Sousa wore a dark blue suit with a white dress shirt, a red and white diamond tie, and carried a small duffel bag by the handles. Howard Stark wore a well-pressed gray suit, white dress shirt, and silver tie. Margaret "Peggy" Carter Rogers wore her wavy brown hair down and wore a brown leather jacket zipped up to just below her collar bone, white collared button up maternity blouse, a pair of maternity black business suit pants, and a pair of black lowered high heel shoes. The four of them looked out of place walking through the run-down part of the city, but it didn't bother them in the slightest. After a while of walking in silence, the group came to a dark, run-down three-story building that was located next to two large deteriorating brick four-story buildings. The dark alleyways between the buildings and the surrounding deteriorating structures gave a very foreboding feeling to everyone but the usually stoic Colonel.

Colonel Phillips calmly walked up to the front door of the decaying three-story building and looked at Sousa, "do it," he said calmly. Sousa stepped forward and quickly removed a set of keys from his suit pocket and unlocked the old dark green wood framed windowed door.

Peggy stopped behind the Colonel and observed the decaying three-story building, and saw that it had a large fading yellow sign with fading big black letters that was placed over the first-floor windows that read, "Ballard House." She whispered to the Colonel, "What is this place?"

Once Sousa unlocked the door, Colonel Phillips quickly opened the door which made a loud creaking sound, "safe house," Phillips said plainly as he walked into the building with Peggy, Sousa, and Stark following him calmly into the dark interior. Stark who was the last to enter quickly closed the door behind them before returning to the group. Phillips expertly navigated his way through the dark, dusty, and cluttered first-floor toward another wood door. The dim street lights that shined through the dirty windows and cracks of the building gave the group enough light for them to walk through the inside of the run-down building with minimal trouble. Phillips quickly opened the door and walked in toward a set of stairs and hastily started to make his way up the long dark flight of stairs with Peggy, Sousa, and Stark close behind him.

As the group neared the top floor, Stark spoke up quietly, "How exactly safe is this?"

Phillips stepped onto the top floor and walked to the door, "We're about to find out." He quickly opened the door to reveal a small room and instantly saw Steve with his hands crossed over his lap
on the far side of the room illuminated by the dim city lights coming through the dirty windows. Steve wore his Captain America stars and stripes combat uniform with his shield on his back, and helmet strapped to his war belt. Even in the dim light, it's clear that it was him. Phillips turned around and told the group, "Its safe." He then walked in and spotted Jacques Dernier and James Montgomery Falsworth leaning against the wall in the shadows with their Thompson Submachine Guns in hand and their gear by their feet. The room was quite barren but had a small square table in the center of the room and five creaky wood chairs spread out around the room.

Phillips nodded to Steve, "Its good to see you, Captain Rogers," he said as Peggy, Sousa, and Stark entered the dark room.

Steve nodded to the Colonel, "Likewise, sir," he said as he walked to the table in the center of the room.

Peggy instantly walked around the table and hugged Steve tightly, "I'm glad you're back," she said softly with a hint of worry in her voice.

Steve eagerly returned the embrace like he hasn't hugged her in months, "We're not done yet though…” He said evenly.

Peggy pulled back gently, "You alright, darling?"

Steve nodded, "I'm fine…just tired. Ready to finish this," he said refusing to mention to his wife that he was almost brainwashed by Hydra to do their bidding. Peggy sensed he was refraining from telling her something but decided not to push the issue because there were more pressing matters to attend to. She was just happy he was back in her sights again. She let him go but stood close by.

Phillips walked up to the table with Sousa and Stark flanking him, "What do you got for me, Captain Rogers?" He said as Sousa placed the duffel bag on the table and opened it up to take out a map. Sousa automatically unfolded the map and placed it on the table.

Steve nodded, "the recently deceased new head of Hydra, Doctor Armin Zola." Phillips didn't look surprised, ever since he got word of Hydra's return he always suspected Zola being a part of it. He had a bad feeling about Zola from the moment he got recruited, but since Phillips didn't have much say on who was allowed to get recruited, Zola entered the government with a clean slate. Steve continued, "And his Director of SHIELD, your new best friend John Weyland, who's about to take control of a very in-depth kill list that was designed right under our noses." Everyone tenses, especially the Colonel.

Phillips nodded, "Then we better hurry. Project Insight and its first target list goes on at midnight."

"SHIELD will likely use its agents and any Hydra sleepers to execute the list as soon as possible," Steve said plainly. "We can't let the list get out. We miss the deadline at midnight then we run the risk of the list being moved which will lead to a lot of innocent people dying. So we need to destroy the entirety of the Ghost Eye Bunker." Peggy nodded silently and agreed with Steve fully.

Phillips nodded, "My thoughts exactly."

Steve looked at Peggy, "Did Peggy tell you about Zola's Algorithm?"

Phillips nodded, "She told us everything"

Stark shook his head, "Weyland got the government to approve of Project Insight under false pretenses…” He sighed, "Hydra is making us all look stupid…”
Peggy shook her head, "No. Hydra was able to expertly conceal their actions from us for this long. There's no way we could've known."

Phillips disagreed, "There were warning signs but I didn't think anything of it…"

Steve raised his hand, "That doesn't matter now." He said in a confident voice that drew everyone's attention to him. "What matters is that we stop Hydra now. Stop them for good this time. We stop Hydra here, and they won't have any trump cards left to play. We stop them tonight and we significantly cripple what's left of their organization."

Peggy smiled, "Right."

Phillips nodded, "Its good having you back, Steve."

Steve nodded with a small smile. He paused, "one other thing. James, Jacques, and I were in a mountain facility in the Shenandoah Mountains that was operated by Hydra."

Phillips interrupted with a nod, "We know. Peggy and Dugan informed us that you were at the 'Castle' facility."

"We found a lot more computers similar to those in SHIELD." Steve paused, "Hundreds of them."

"They must be an extension to Ghost Eye and most likely operate the same way by using Zola's Algorithm." Phillips said evenly. "Those computers you found were probably being used to generate more targets."

Sousa spoke up, "What stopped Hydra from executing their target list before Project Insight was approved? They already killed numerous people already."

Peggy answered, "Project Insight lets Hydra eliminate their threats with the backing of the US government and lets them eliminate them a lot faster and easier without the interference of the law because they're sanctioned by the government. Without the government backing Project Insight it would be much more difficult and it would take a lot longer to destroy threats posed to them." Steve nodded at Peggy fondly.

Stark nodded, "That makes sense."

Phillips looked up at Steve, "Did you destroy those computers?"

James nodded in the shadows, "We destroyed the entire facility."

"How?" Peggy asked genuinely shocked.

Steve smiled confidently, "We dropped the mountain."

Stark was genuinely surprised now, "How?" He asked a little louder than he wanted to.

"Jacques found a reserve Atomic Bomb in the base of the mountain and detonated it in the mountain." Steve responded evenly.

Jacques spoke up, "The major part of the explosion was contained inside the mountain, and we know for a fact that the radiation from the blast was contained inside the mountain."

"Only now. The mountain collapsed with everything in it," Steve said casually.

Phillips smiled, "That's one way to do it."
Stark raised a brow, "I never thought about detonating the A-Bomb underground." He became fascinated and started to fiddle with his chin, "And the blast was contained with no release of radioactive material to the atmosphere?"

Steve nodded, "We were sure the blast and radiation was contained. But, you and other scientists can check for yourself when we're done here."

Peggy spoke up, "I think we got more pressing issues as of now." Steve nodded in agreement.

Sousa nodded, "Got a plan of attack on the SHIELD compound?"

Steve nodded, "SHIELD will be waiting for us. How many people do we have?"

Phillips spoke up, "We got the rest of the Howling Commandos and Peggy's SSR team in civilian stake bed trucks waiting on the side of the road toward Camp Lehigh," he said reaching across the table to the duffel grab to grab a flashlight with a red light. He took the red lens flashlight and shined it on the map and pointed to the road he was referring to, "here," he said plainly.

Peggy nodded, "We also have three cars parked on the street."

"Perfect," Steve said as he reached into his pocket and removed the crumpled map he obtained from the Hydra facility. "When we were running through the mountain facility, I noticed this map that showed the SHIELD compound in detail," he said as he unfolded it on the table. Phillips automatically illuminated the map with the red light so everyone could see. Steve pointed to the map, "it also includes a secret supply route that cuts through this forest here," he said tracing his finger along the road on the map in the dim light. "We can bypass the entire main Army base."

Peggy spoke up, "Like a backdoor."

Steve nodded, "Exactly. This road is the literal backdoor of SHIELD." He smiled confidently, "I say we go through there."

Phillips nodded, "Agreed. I'll get on the radio when we get in the cars and get our boys to meet us here just off the main road and close to the insertion point," he said pointing at the map.

"As you know, the main SHIELD Admin building is about hundred meters away from the bunker. I'll take the Ghost Eye bunker while the rest of the commandos and Peggy's field team hold a pocket between the main admin building and the bunker to watch for Hydra counter attacks," Steve said.

Peggy spoke up, "We know Weyland is going to be in the compound to supervise the first target list, so while you handle the bunker keep on the look out for him." Steve nodded. She continued, "Stark, Phillips, and I will keep an eye out for him while we assault the administration building. We're going to grab as many classified documents as we can from Weyland's safe."

Sousa spoke up, "I'll handle repelling any Hydra counterattacks with the commandos and SSR field team."

Stark came into the conversation, "What about the Army?" He looked around the room, "Obviously there will be shooting, and obviously the Army could hear it. How do we handle them?"

Phillips smiled, "Leave that to me."

Steve nodded, "Guess we got all our ducks in a row." He smiled, "lets do this."

Stark interrupted, "One last thing." He nodded to Sousa who took out a medium sized bag and
gently placed it down on the table. Steve looked confused. Stark spoke up, "In order to assure the
destruction of the Ghost Eye computers and the bunker, you'll need special explosives."

Steve nodded, "Right." He gently took the bag and opened it to see a large amount of black
rectangular explosives.

"These explosives are a seismic and high energy explosive." Stark smiled, "Put these all together in a
tight confined space like the bunker and you have the Atom bomb without the Atom. So to speak." He shrugged, "I designed these myself so I know it works."

Peggy whispered, "wow…"

"Smaller bomb, but the confined underground space will amplify the blast."

Steve nodded, "Then this will surely get the job done."

"One other thing. It has a time fuse that varies from three, five, and ten minutes. So once you set the
timer get out of there," Stark emphasized.

Steve smiled confidently, "Not a problem. Let's finish this," he said as he slung the bag over his
shoulder. Stark nodded and grabbed the duffel bag.

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A moment later, the group quickly exited the "Ballard House" safe house and hastily walked down the
dim street toward a line of three black four-door cars parked at the curb. Phillips spoke up, "Captain Rogers with me in the lead car. Sousa take the two commandos in the last car."

Sousa nodded, "Got it. I'll call the team on the radio."

"Sounds good," Phillips replied calmly.

Once the group got to the cars, everyone started to splinter off to their assigned vehicles. Sousa
hastily limped toward the last car with James and Jacques close behind with all the gear they brought
with them. But before Peggy went with Stark in the second car, she stopped and turned around to
face Steve, "Darling," she said softly.

Steve wrapped his arms around her waist, "we'll be okay."

Peggy gave a confident smile, "I know." She leaned up and kissed his lips gently, "I just wanted to
kiss you before we go."

Steve smiled, "I'll see you on the other side." He let go of her and watched her turn around and walk
toward Stark's car. Steve turned and looked over at Colonel Phillips who was just about to get into
the car.

Phillips smiled and shook his head, "I'm not kissing you." He said evenly. Steve chuckled and
opened the passenger door of the car and got in.

The trio of cars drove quickly with large gaps between them as they traveled through the city streets
under the dark night sky. Stark and Sousa made sure they kept their dispersion from each other and
the lead vehicle at the same time maintaining visual contact with Phillips' car while they drove
through the city on their way to rendezvous with the strike team. In the lead car neither Steve or
Phillips were talking because they were busy on focusing on what they needed to do. As Phillips
drove down the various Trenton, NJ streets, he reached behind his seat and grabbed a military
handheld radio. He then pressed the button on the side and talked into it, "Sousa, you make contact with our team?"

Jacques who sat in the front passenger seat handed Sousa the handheld radio. Sousa took the radio and responded, "Made contact. They'll be waiting for us at the rendezvous point."

Phillips nodded, "Good," he said as he turned the car at a corner and drove down the road to go under a bridge. Steve turned around to check if Stark and Sousa were still following them and didn't miss the turn they just made. Phillips started to accelerate toward the underpass as Steve turned back around to face forward.

Suddenly a large black box truck slammed into the right side of their car sending their car onto the sidewalk and slamming into a wall. The seemingly undamaged and unmarked black box truck reversed then turned right and stopped in front of Steve and Phillips' wreckage. Once the truck stopped, the back doors of the truck swung open, and three men in dark clothes poured out the back. The three men quickly made their way to the car crash and saw Steve in the passenger seat, and Phillips in the driver seat looking to be both unconscious. The three men hastily forced open the severely damaged passenger door and violently removed Steve from his seat. The three men then struggled to lug Steve's heavy mass toward the truck. But as the men got closer, two more men in dark clothes hopped out of the cab of the truck and helped them get Steve to the truck. Once they got to the truck, the men quickly removed Steve's pistol, handcuffed him, and put a dark sack over his head. The men then shoved Steve into the back of the truck then turned around and went back to the car crash to get Colonel Phillips. Once the group of men got to the crash they were surprised to see the drivers side of the car was empty. The men quickly started to fan out and look for any signs of the Colonel. Suddenly they saw a car down the street turn toward them and suddenly screech to a grinding halt. The men all faced the car then slowly reached for their pistols in their pockets…

Stark saw what was going on and whispered, "What the hell?"

Peggy spotted the men reaching for their weapons, "They saw us! Reverse!"

"What about Steve?" Stark said in confusion. The men quickly drew their pistols and started firing at their car. Peggy and Stark ducked their heads in a feeble attempt to avoid getting shot as pistol rounds hit the hood of their car.

Peggy yelled, "We can't help him if we're dead! Reverse now!" Stark instantly put the car in reverse and stepped on the gas as pistol rounds hit their car. Stark quickly turned the car around and started to accelerate down the road they just came as bullets impacted the side of their car. As they drove away Peggy spotted Sousa's car quickly coming their way, "Stop the car!" she yelled causing Stark to slam on the brakes grinding the car to a halt. Stark instantly looked up at the rearview mirror to check if the armed men were trying to follow them.

Sousa's car stopped in the middle of the road next to Stark's facing the opposite direction. From a distance, Sousa saw Stark's car take fire then quickly reverse and turn around back toward him, so Sousa knew that car was Stark's. Sousa and Stark both rolled down their windows. Sousa spoke up first, "What happened?"

Peggy answered calmly with a hint of distress, "They got Phillips and Steve."

"Who?"

Stark answered, "Hydra."

"Shit…" Sousa whispered under his breath. Suddenly the radio in his car came to life with Phillip'
"Hold on. I got Phillips on the radio," he said quickly. He picked up the radio, "Colonel! Where are you?"

Phillips responded quickly and clearly out of breath, "They got Captain Rogers. I barely escaped… Meet me at Monmouth Street."

"Got it," Sousa said in the radio down. He put the radio down then turned back to Stark and Peggy, "We have to get Phillips at Monmouth Street."

Stark looked back up at his rearview mirror, "Hydra isn't following us. I think they're main targets were Steve and the Colonel."

Peggy knew what needed to be done, "let's get the Colonel and take down Hydra and SHIELD. We'll worry about getting Steve back after." As much as she wanted to get her husband back, she knew the most important thing to do was to take down SHIELD and Hydra, and she knew Steve would agree.

Stark looked at her with surprise, "Peg, that's your husband and father of your unborn child." He knew Peggy was a tough gal and he knew that she was extremely scared and worried about Steve.

Sousa responded calmly, "And we don't know where they'll be taking him."

"SHIELD and Hydra is still the bigger problem," Peggy said reluctantly. "Steve would agree."

Stark sighed, "You're going to need to get him a leash after this…"

Sousa nodded, "Let's go. We don't have much time."

The unmarked black box truck was driving quickly out of the city and weaving through the limited amount of cars still driving at this hour of the night. Inside the dim interior cargo space of the truck, Steve sat on the floor and leaning against the wall of the truck with his shield still attached to his back and the bag of explosives lying lazily on his lap. The three thugs that grabbed him stood around him holding bright flash lights in one hand that illuminated the darkness in the truck and loaded pistols with the other. Steve still looked motionless and even with a black sack over his head, he still looked unconscious, but the thugs around him didn't want to take any chances, so they were ready to shoot him if need be.

Sousa's car drove down Monmouth Street slowly with Stark's car close behind. Both cars were on the look out for Colonel Phillips somewhere around the dark road. Phillips was quickly walking down the sidewalk and instantly recognized two cars approaching him slowly along the road. He knew in his gut that those two cars were Stark and Sousa. Phillips whispered to himself with a relieved smile, "right on time."

In Sousa's car, James spotted Colonel Phillips quickly walking toward them and said, "Phillips on the sidewalk," he said pointing at the sidewalk. Sousa quickly pulled the car over to the sidewalk, Stark following.

Phillips hastily walked to Sousa's car and hopped in, "Go!" he said called urgently. Sousa stepped on the gas and accelerated with Stark's right behind him.

Inside the cargo space of the black unmarked box truck, the three men started to shake gently as they felt the truck beginning to decelerate. Steve finally began to move as he felt the truck stopping and could hear the sound of high pitch brakes screeching through the vehicle walls. The men shuttered
for the last time as the truck came to a complete stop. The back doors of the truck swung open causing Steve to turn his covered head slightly toward the sound of the doors opening. The first thug started to get out of the truck while the last two dealt with Steve. One of the men violently grabbed Steve by the back of the neck then threw him face down onto the floor of the truck, but he remained silent and didn't make the slightest sound. The men again violently grabbed him under his shoulders and struggled to toss him out the back of the truck. Steve hit the dirt hard but again didn't make a sound and didn't move. He was merely waiting…

The two men in the cab jumped out and rejoined the group making all five thugs present around Steve. One of the men called out, "Get him inside!"

Two thugs picked Steve up onto his feet by grabbing him under his armpits and hoisting him up. The man to Steve's right started to shove him, "Get walking!" Steve didn't move. The man repeated, "Move!" But Steve still didn't budge. Finally, the man got fed up and pointed his gun at Steve's head, "Move!"

Steve, with his head still covered, instantly pulled his head back, and with his handcuffed hands, he grabbed the pistol that was pointed at his head and elbowed the man who held it. The surprise caused the thug to loosen his grip on the gun giving Steve the opportunity to take control of the pistol instantly. Steve then instantaneously discharged a round into the chest of the thug on his left then quickly repositioned and shot the thug on his right. He quickly removed the sack from his head just as the other three thugs finally reacted. With his hands still handcuffed, Steve quickly shot all three thugs in the chest with deadly accuracy and in rapid succession. The whole fight took less than fifteen seconds. He calmly breathed as he settled down from the quick fight then effortlessly broke the chain of his handcuffs by moving his arms apart while flexing.

Steve finally focused on where he was and found out he was standing in the SHIELD compound in front of the Ghost Eye bunker. He holstered the pistol then unbuckled his helmet that was on his war belt then put it on. He then removed his shield from his back and stepped toward the bunker. It's time for him to go to work

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Camp Lehigh

SHIELD Section

Wheaton, New Jersey

SHIELD: GHOST EYE BUNKER

Steve walked into the bunker while gripping his shield cautiously. As he entered the bunker, he noticed that the main office level of the bunker had all of its lights on, but the whole level had no one in it. The absolute silence and the atmosphere of the bunker gave him a bad feeling. As he walked toward the first couple of desks inside the bunker, he repositioned the bag of explosives that hung on his shoulder, so it rested more comfortably on him. He started to walk cautiously down the main pathway at the center of the bunker between two columns of desks. He didn't know what it was, but he really did have a bad feeling about what might happen.

Steve accurately remembered the way down to the Ghost Eye section of the bunker. He knew he had to cut through the back file room and through there he could find the hidden elevator tucked between two shelves. But as he reached the back file room, he saw a piece of paper pinned to the door that read, "CAPTAIN AMERICA." Steve cringed then turned around to check behind him and saw nothing. He paused for a moment then pushed the door open cautiously and stepped into the back file room slowly. He slowly walked into the small file room, and like the rest of the office level, no
one was in it. Steve proceeded to walk cautiously to the very back of the file room past the two empty desks that were placed one in front of the other. As he turned left at the last shelf, he expected the secret elevator to be hidden behind the wall of shelves, but he was surprised to see it wide open. To make matters more strange, the shelf on the left had a piece of paper pinned to it that read, "STEVE ROGERS" in big red letters with a red arrow pointing to the exposed elevator. Steve felt suspicious, but he didn't have much choice but to proceed with his mission.

Steve took a deep breath and walked into the small hallway toward the waiting elevator.

2300 (11:00pm)

In the dark New Jersey forest, a long column of vehicles numbering three cars and two stake bed trucks disturbed the quiet forest with roaring vehicle engines as they quickly drove down an unpaved dirt road. The column of vehicles swiftly navigated the dark twisting, bumpy road on their way to their destination. The surrounding forest was pitch black, but the headlights on the vehicles pierced the dark veil and illuminated the darkness. In the lead car, Peggy drove with Sousa in the front passenger seat and Dugan in the back armed with his trench gun. In the car behind them, SSR Agent Jack Thompson drove while Agent Ramirez sat in the front passenger seat and Li sat in the back. The three SSR agents were geared for a fight, and all wore black combat blouses, OD green combat trousers, and black boots, and armed with Thompson Submachine guns. In the third car, Stark drove while Colonel Phillips sat in the front passenger seat. Lastly, the two stake bed trucks taking up the rear of the column carried the entire Howling Commando team divided into the two trucks, which included Junior Juniper, Pinky Pinkerton, and Happy Sam Sawyer. The entire vehicle column spearheaded by Peggy are on their way to breach the back entrance of the SHIELD Compound. But only a few moments earlier, the entire strike group finally met up at the rendezvous point a little behind schedule. The group did a hasty battle plan then quickly redistributed themselves into the vehicles for better distribution of forces before pushing out to the SHIELD Compound. They were running out of time and needed to the SHIELD Compound quickly.

After a while of driving through the dark twisting, bumpy dirt road, Peggy followed the turn of the road and spotted the SHIELD Compound back gate straight down the road. From a distance, she saw a small guard shack with a small window on the front that was placed on the left side of the road behind a barbed wire chain link gate and fence. Behind the guard shack are two tall bright light poles flanking the road to illuminate the area around the guard shack. Peggy put her foot down on the gas pedal, accelerating the car down the straight path toward the back gate of SHIELD.

Behind the back gate, the four SHIELD guards wearing all black combat fatigues standing their post were going through their usual routines for the night. One guard sat on a chair behind the desk in the small guard shack, one paced back and forth behind the gate, and the other two walked up and down the road as a pair. The SHIELD guard at the gate heard the familiar sound of a car engine accelerating prompting him to turn to see a column of headlights resembling vehicles approaching them from a distance. The man spoke up curiously, "Are we expecting delivery today?"

The guard in the shack who was busy looking through a dirty magazine responded calmly, "I don't think so. Why?"

The guard at the gate replied, "There's a column of vehicles heading our way."

"What?" The man asked confused as he put down his magazine and stepped out of the shack instinctively. As soon as he stepped out of the shack, he saw a column of headlights rapidly approaching them from down the road. "we aren't supposed to be getting anything today," the man said confused. He turned, "I'm calling this in."
In the back of the first Howling Commando truck, Gabe Jones stood up with a Springfield M1903 Sniper Rifle and carefully aimed it at the window of the guard shack as they quickly approached the gate. The truck bouncing along the dirt road made it tough for him to steady his aim, but he wasn’t just an average shooter. Gabe knew what to do. Then the instant he spotted the guard step into the guard shack, Gabe focused, recalibrated his aim, and quickly pulled the trigger.

Just as the SHIELD guard got in the shack, the back of his head suddenly exploded outwards followed by the tell tale echo of a high velocity round snapping through the air. The moment the shot echoed in the air, the three guards flinched then rushed to the gate and drew their pistols to start firing at the rapidly approaching vehicles.

In the lead car, Sousa ducked his head as bullets hit the car, "Ram it," he said evenly.

Peggy smiled, "My thoughts exactly." Peggy kept her foot down on the gas and accelerated to the gate. The three remaining SHIELD guards quickly tried to jump clear but one was hit and was killed instantly the moment Peggy’s car rammed straight through the gate. The instant Peggy’s car breached the gate, she slammed on the brakes causing the car to skid along the dirt as it came to a stop.

Dugan cocked his trench gun, "Wahoo!" He opened the right rear passenger door, hopped out of the car, and shot his trench gun at one of the disoriented guards killing him instantly.

Peggy pushed her door open, "Out!" She commanded as she stepped out, grabbing her Thompson Submachine Gun that was next to her. Sousa nodded then pushed his door open and got out of the car as fast as he could.

Just as Sousa stepped out of the car, he saw a disoriented SHIELD guard quickly getting up off the ground. Sousa pointed his pistol at him, but the second car driven by Thompson hit the guard sending the man tumbling over the car. Sousa smiled and shook his head at Thompson. Soon the third car and the two stake bed trucks drove through the open gate and stopped just passed the first two cars. Shortly after all the vehicles parked, everyone started to disembark the vehicles quickly and regroup.

Thompson cocked his submachine gun as he walked over to Sousa, "Saved your life, Chief. Think that makes us even."

Sousa took out his pistol with his free hand and gripped his cane, "In your dreams. I had it under control"

Thompson chuckled, "Sure you did."

Peggy rolled her eyes as she locked and loaded her submachine gun, "Boys... focus, please."

Thompson nodded, "Yes, Ma'am."

Sousa too responded, "Yes, Ma'am." Even though he was the SSR Chief for the New York City Branch, Peggy always had the biggest command presence.

Phillips took out his pistol and cocked it, "Commandos establish a parameter. Dugan with me." The commandos acknowledged and dispersed themselves in front of the vehicles in a half-circle parameter for security.

Colonel Phillips, Stark, Peggy, Sousa, and the SSR Agents gathered in a tight circle to discuss what’s next. Phillips spoke calmly, "Alright listen up, all SHIELD guards and agents are assumed to be hostile."
Ramirez nodded, "I hope so. We just killed three of them."

Phillips nodded, "Same plan as before. Agent Rogers, Stark, and I will handle the main administration building." He turned to Dugan, "Dugan, we need two of your commandos to handle the bunker."

Stark interrupted, "Mind you, I don't have any more explosives to destroy the bunker, so you'll have to improvise." He said slinging a relatively empty duffel bag over his shoulder.

Dugan nodded, "Jacques and Gabe Jones got explosives. I'll send them in."

Phillips nodded, "Perfect. The rest of the commandos and SSR agents maintain a parameter between the bunker and admin building and provide security. Got it?" The group acknowledged quietly. Phillips nodded, "Let's move."

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**Camp Lehigh**

**SHIELD Section**

**Wheaton, New Jersey**

So far the strike team hasn't faced any major resistance which was surprising, to say the least. Granted the strike team stealthily eliminated a handful of guards past the back gate, and more or less had a seamless entrance through the back door of the compound that didn't end up in a prolonged firefight. As the large team cautiously rounded a barracks and continued on to the Ghost Eye bunker, they could barely make out the main admin building in the distance because of the dark, but the moonlight above provided them some liberation from the night. Suddenly, Peggy spotted the black box truck that took Steve hours earlier parked idly in front of the bunker. She suddenly broke formation and quickly ran to the truck leaving the rest of the strike team behind. It took a moment for the remainder of the group to realize what happened before they followed her. For being four months pregnant, she can still manage to move that fast.

Peggy made it to the truck and carefully scanned the truck with her Thompson Submachine Gun. She walked around the back of the truck and spotted five dead bodies lying on the dirt. She lowered her weapon as she looked down at the scene. Colonel Phillips quickly approached her, "Agent Rogers…" Peggy didn't answer as she walked over to a pair of dead men lying next to each other. Even in the dark she was able to spot a black sack on the ground between the two men. She put her weapon down on the dirt as she squatted down to pick up the black sack. Phillips asked curiously, "Peggy?"

Peggy looked up at the bunker and stood up, "Steve's in the bunker."

Sousa limped to the Colonel and asked, "You positive?"

Peggy smiled, "I know my husband. He's in the bunker." She looked back at them, "He's doing his job."

Phillips smiled, "Atta boy." He chuckled, "At least we know he's here." He turned around to Dugan, "Dugan, Captain Rogers got the bunker." He pointed to toward the other target building, "Begin forming the parameter over there."

Dugan didn't hesitate, "Got it." He then signaled the commandos to double time to the objective.

Thompson spoke up, "Shouldn't we send two of our guys into the bunker anyway to make sure he's
alright."

Peggy dropped the sack and picked up her weapon, "He's okay. Believe me."

Stark nodded, "Also. We don't want to get in his way. Especially if he's almost done." He looked down at his watch, "And not a moment too soon. Its almost midnight."

Thompson nodded, "Right."

Phillips looked over at the admin building, "Lets go. We're not close to finished."

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**Camp Lehigh**

**SHIELD Section**

**Wheaton, New Jersey**

**SHIELD Main Administration Building**

Shield Director John Weyland walked toward his office on the top floor of the two-story building, clearly frustrated about something. He opened the door to his office and walked into the dark office without turning on the lights. As he got to his desk his phone started to ring. He quickly answered it and spoke with a frustrated tone, "Report." After a moment, he raised his voice that was borderline yelling on the phone, "Go back and find the Colonel!" He was about to put the phone down then brought it back up and yelled, "We need them both!" He slammed the phone down on the receiver and sat down on his chair with a "humph." He sighed then suddenly felt like someone was watching him…

Phillips' voice pierced the silence in the room, "Not a good feeling being watched is it?"

Weyland turned to the right toward the source of the voice and saw Phillips sitting on an arm chair against the wall with Peggy and Stark flanking either side of him. Weyland spoke sternly, "What are you doing?"

Phillips responded with the same tone, "Shutting you down…"

Weyland shook his head, "Well…in case you haven't realized it… you and Mrs. Rogers are out of a job." He paused, "So you're trespassing."

Phillips spoke calmly yet confidently, "you got the wrong end of the stick, John. We're going to stop this project from going on, and…we're going to bring you in."

Weyland smiled, "On what grounds exactly?"


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**SHIELD: GHOST EYE BUNKER**

The elevator made a metallic ding then the doors slid open prompting Steve to slowly step out. He cautiously exited the elevator and stepped into the bright subterranean room. Like the room at the top of the bunker, the underground room also had no one in it. The Ghost Eye room was as usual incredibly clean with nothing looking to be out of place. Steve began to walk cautiously down the long center path to the central control point at the center of the room which was about thirty meters
away from the elevator. As he walked down the path, he could hear the numerous bookshelf sized computers running on both the left and the right of him. He knew time was running short so he had to blow the bunker and leave. He unslung the bag of explosives from his shoulder as he neared the central control point at the center of the room.

Once he got to the central control point, he walked into the backward "C" shaped computer terminals and placed the bag of explosives down on one of the computer surfaces. He holstered his shield on his back then opened the bag of explosives and started to wire all the explosives together. After wiring the explosives he started to prime a ten-minute fuse so he would have more than enough time to escape the bunker. As he set the fuse he couldn't help but feel like this was too easy.

**SHIELD Main Administration Building**

Weyland spoke coldly, "Take a look at the world…chaos." He shook his head, "Its falling apart even though the war ended. Our country is under the very real threat that is the Soviet Union…but people like you are too spineless to do what needs to be done. Unable to commit more to stop new threats because you rely on ancient principles and stupid codes." He grunted, "People like you are hurting this country's security…" He paused and turned to Phillips, Peggy, and Stark, "So I made an alliance to make this country and the rest of the world safer. But you want to throw it all away for the sake of personal freedoms…" Peggy watched Weyland intently as he continued to speak, "How typically naïve… I must wonder if all of you are all like that." He then calmly opened a drawer in his desk and drew a pistol as he stood up. He gave an evil grin as he aimed it directly at the Colonel.

Neither Stark, Peggy, or Colonel Phillips reacted to the pistol in Weyland's hands. Weyland smiled and pulled the trigger but only heard an audible click signaling the weapon was empty. Phillips turns over one of his hands and exposes a palm full of pistol rounds in his hand. He smiled, "Careless is a good word to describe you." Weyland cringed in defeat. Phillips looked up at Peggy, "look for his safe." He nodded to a tall cabinet on the opposite side of the room, "try looking in there."

Peggy nodded, "Right," she said as she and Stark started walking over to the tall cabinet on the other end of the room. Stark unslung his duffel bag as they got to the cabinet. Peggy then pulled open the two doors of the cabinet and saw a medium sized black iron safe with a fancy silver combination lock at the bottom of the cabinet.

Weyland shook his head, "You won't get the combination from me…" he said defiantly.

Phillips smiled, "We don't need the combination."

Stark smiled and removed a stethoscope from his pocket, "I'm actually pretty good at breaking into safe's." He bent down to the safe, "A trait I picked up from my youth."

Peggy shook her head, "I'm actually not surprised considering you."

Stark put the stethoscope on, "Ouch…" He said as he put the bell of the stethoscope onto the safe so he could start picking the combination. Peggy smiled. Phillips put the bullets he took from Weyland's pistol in his pocket and stood up as he drew his pistol with his other hand. Weyland simply sat defeated on his desk chair.

Outside the administration building, the Howling Commandos, Peggy's field team, and Sousa held a wide parameter between the main Shield administration building and Ghost Eye bunker. The commandos and the SSR field were all on one knee while they quietly scanned their respective individual sectors with their weapons at the ready for any threats. The bright moon above them made it easier for them to see if Hydra and or SHIELD agents were approaching them, but the continuing
silence made them increasingly uncomfortable. They've been in the compound for awhile now, and
didn't trigger any alarms. They also expected Hydra to be waiting for them, so this prolonged silence
grew even more disconcerting.

The youngest commando, Junior Juniper, quietly spoke up, "I thought they said that Hydra was
waiting for us."

Jim Morita shifted on his knee and shifted his rifle in his hand, "They did… but…"

Thompson spoke up, "Does this smell like a trap?"

Ramirez nodded, "Starting to feel a lot like it." Li and the commandos agreed.

Dugan scanned the team, "Just be ready for anything." Everyone nodded in silent agreement.

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**SHIELD: GHOST EYE BUNKER**

Once Steve primed the ten-minute fuse on his bag full of Stark explosives, he closed the bag and
prepared to make a quick exit. But the moment he turned around to go back to the elevator, the
elevator doors suddenly closed. He stopped in his tracks and cringed knowing he set off a trap. Then
seconds after the elevator doors closed, the lights suddenly went out leaving him in pure darkness for
a moment. But after a few seconds, red lights came on throughout the subterranean room producing a
red eerie atmosphere. Steve quickly drew his shield from his back and gripped it tightly as he
prepared himself for what's to come.

As his eyes quickly adjusted to the red light, he saw out of the corner of his eye a wall panel move
on his left. He quickly turned and saw a wall panel directly in line with him slowly moving upwards
with a beam of white light shining through where it once was. Steve tensed even more as the beam
of white light became bigger and bigger as the panel moved upwards. Soon the beam of light
enveloped him causing him to become temporarily blind. He cringed at the bright light as he brought
his right hand up to shield his eyes from the light.

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**SHIELD Main Administration Building**

Inside the main administration building of SHIELD, Stark, with his stethoscope on, was on both of
his knees as he focused on figuring out the combination lock of Weyland's safe with his right hand
while his left held the bell of the stethoscope. He cringed as he did his best to fiddle with the
combination lock. At the mean time, Colonel Phillips sat comfortably on an arm chair on the other
side of the room while keeping an eye on the defeated looking Director Weyland. Stark grunted in
frustration prompting Peggy who stood beside him to ask, "Howard?"

Stark shook his head, "This lock is more complicated than it looks."

Weyland grinned with a brief moment of victory.

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**SHIELD: GHOST EYE BUNKER**

Down in the Ghost Eye bunker, Steve's eyes finally adjusted to the bright light shining through the
open panel in the wall. The white light not seeming so bright anymore overtook part of the red light
in the subterranean room. Steve lowered his hand from shielding his eyes and saw a figure standing
just behind the open wall panel. He focused on the figure and quickly realized it was Doctor Armin
Zola. Steve instantly threw his shield at Zola at rocket speed. The shield impacted something
invisible before hitting Zola then ricocheted back to Steve's hands. Zola didn't flinch at all and stayed completely still with a grin across his face. Steve put the shield back on his left arm then quickly drew his pistol and shot four rounds at Zola. Zola again didn't flinch with the .45 caliber rounds never making it to him. Steve lowered his pistol and finally realized there was thick bullet resistant glass where the wall panel once was. Steve walked toward Zola and saw the tight grouping of .45 caliber rounds he shot impacted in the glass in line with Zola's head.

Steve stopped right in front of the glass and saw Zola with his usual styled glasses and wearing a black suit and tie. With further observation, he noticed that Zola had large gash going across the left side of his face and another gash about six inches long going over his right eye with the right eye completely white. Steve spoke softly, "You're a hard man to kill, Doctor Zola." He squinted, "Ouch… hope that didn't hurt."

Zola shrugged, "My wounds will heal. What about yours?" Steve didn't answer. Zola smiled smugly, "Look around you, Steve. When are you going to realize that what you stood for amounts to nothing. Everything you ever stood for, everything you ever believed in… only to be ruined by greedy men who possess the power. The ideals you thought you fought for… no longer exist. Its about power, money, and influence."

Steve shook his head, "Are you here only to preach to me?"

Zola smiled, "Oh, poor Captain Rogers. Your country was quick to fill the role of injustice in this world. By unknowingly accepting the doctrine to battle communism and your new… 'enemy' the Soviet Union." He chuckled, "Your country is not clean from the atrocities of war. Your people are just as unjust as the rest of the world… and you. You are just as guilty." He chuckled, "You think destroying this project will simply stop us? No… this is an only a set back."

Steve leaned forward, "Now why are you here?"

Zola smiled, "I came here to kill you."

Steve smiled, "Kind of hard to do that when you're standing on the other side of this glass."

"I'm not stuck in a room with high grade explosives," Zola said with a smile. Steve cringed. He almost forgot about the explosives he just set minutes ago. Zola calmly reached to his left and opened a panel on his side of the wall then took a moment to breath on the glass. He then slowly traced a heart on the condensation on the glass with his index finger and said softly, "You know, Captain… if she lives long enough, you and her might get to see each other some day."

He chuckled evilly, "Or even have a truly normal life in heaven."

Steve tensed again. "If you live, you'll orchestrate all her pain and in turn, she'll hurt you."

He chuckled, "As long as either of you live, neither of you will be from pain."

He smiled, "I only giving you the easiest way out."

"That's yet to be seen," Steve said defiantly.

Zola chuckled, "Really? As I recall, when Peggy thought you were dead, she bottled herself up and suffered everyday. Interesting isn't it? Since you're alive, there lasts a possibility of you disappearing again. You might've done more damage staying alive than staying dead." He laughed loudly, "But alas, you won't make it out of here tonight."

He flipped a switch on the panel, "In four minutes, this whole bunker will be buried just like the mountain facility." He shrugged, "Part of a failsafe incase you defuse your own bomb."

He laughed loudly again, "As I said… we can start again. So you have four minutes before your trip down to the grave."

Steve squinted, "You're bluffing."
"I can get out easily. I'll just get away through this escape tunnel and take the elevator to the surface then just simply watch the bunker blow up in the safety of my car...but you...you have four minutes," Zola said with a happy nod. He bowed, "I'd say auf wiedersehen, but I won't ever see you again. But I'm sure I'll see your lovely wife at your funeral. Let's see her survive you this time. Even the strong can break..." Zola then simultaneously pressed two buttons in the panel and suddenly the whole bunker erupted in high pitched alarms. Zola smiled, turned around, and left.

Steve quickly bolted and sprinted to the other elevator as he holstered his shield on his back. He looked down at his watch and saw he had seven minutes with his own bomb. There was no point in defusing it because he had four minutes before this bunker was a memory.

**SHIELD Main Administration Building**

Stark, who was still squatting in front of the safe, whispered to himself, "Come on..." Suddenly he heard a loud click in his stethoscope signaling that he finally cracked the safe. He smiled, "Yes! We're in." He turned the handle of the safe and opened it with ease then opened the duffel bag lying beside him.

Peggy smiled, "Perfect." She carefully squatted down with some minor discomfort because of her four-month pregnancy. She saw the entire safe was filled with documents and files of various sorts. Peggy then started to quickly load the files and documents into the open duffel bag next to her and Stark. As she put the files in the bag, she took a moment to observe a relatively thick bounded document. She paused as she saw that it had a large black Hydra symbol printed on the cover. She looked over at Stark prompting him to stand up and nod to Colonel Phillips.

Colonel Phillips stood up from his chair and pointed his pistol at Weyland, "Stand up and let's go." Weyland turned his chair then slowly stood up with a cold expression on his face.

The outside was loud and obnoxious due to the alarms blaring from bunker making it very chaotic. The commandos and the few SSR agents tensed from the sudden outburst of alarms coming from the bunker. The team went on full alert thinking that the alarms were masking some sort of attack as a distraction. On the far side of the Ghost Eye Bunker out of sight from the Howling Commandos and SSR parameter, there is a group of three Hydra agents waiting in all black suits. The bunker's rear armored door swung open with Zola quickly walking with a limp to his waiting group. Once he met up with his group, they all turned and quickly walked away from the bunker to an awaiting car at a safe distance from the Howling Commandos and SSR agent parameter. After a few moments of walking, they reached the awaiting black four-door Ford car parked in the dark with its engines running and no head lights on.

One of the Hydra agents opened the left rear passenger door for Zola while the other two agents went around the car and took the front passenger seat and the right rear passenger seat. Once Zola got settled in his seat, the agent closed the door for him then sat down in the driver's seat. From their vantage point about a hundred meters away, Zola could see an unobstructed view of the bunker and thus a good view to watch Captain America die.

Back in the main administration building, Peggy and Stark were busy shoving the enormous amount of files from the safe into the duffel bag. While the two were doing that, Phillips kept his pistol trained on Weyland as he intently watched him. Weyland slowly strolled passed the Colonel and sighed, "Why can't you just face it..." He turned to the Colonel, "You don't matter anymore."

Phillips shrugged, "Maybe I don't...but something has too." Suddenly the echoing sound of loud
alarms momentarily distracted the Colonel causing Weyland to make a grab for the pistol in his hands. The two started to struggle and grunt as they both wrestled for control of the gun. Peggy quickly stood up and drew her pistol but couldn't get a clear shot on Weyland because the two men kept twisting and turning. Suddenly the Colonel thrust the pistol up and accidentally discharged a round into the ceiling completely missing him and Weyland. Then the Colonel turned again causing Weyland to expose his entire back to Peggy. Peggy didn't hesitate and quickly pumped two rounds from her pistol into the back of Weyland. Weyland grunted and maintained standing for a mere second before he keeled over on his side, dead.

Peggy breathed calmly and lowered her pistol and said, "I really wanted to do that for a while.''

Phillips kneeled down and checked for a pulse and confirmed Weyland was dead. He looked up at Peggy, "He's dead." He looks over at Stark who was fiddling through documents, "What do we got?" Peggy turned around to look at Stark.

Stark looked up at the two of them, "He has a lot of classified documents from the US government and a large amount of documents on Hydra operations, operatives, and locations around the world. Director Weyland had clearance for a lot of important documents for both the United States and Hydra." Peggy slowly kneels down again and helps Stark to finish loading the remaining files into the duffel bag.

Peggy grabbed the last item in the safe which was a small black book, and took a brief second to open it to see what it was. Her heart stopped when she saw the picture on the front page. The first page had a picture of James Buchanan Barnes as the Winter Soldier. Phillips looked at her with concern, "What is it?''

Peggy whispered, "I think this book is on Barnes.''

"What?'' Stark asked confused.

Phillips nodded, "We'll look through everything later. Just grab it and lets get going.''

Peggy nodded, "Right.''

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**SHIELD: GHOST EYE BUNKER**

Steve had no easy way of escape from the bunker, but he knew the elevator was the most obvious way out. Unfortunately, the elevator itself was not functional and was in lockdown forcing Steve to pry open the armored doors before reaching the elevator. He quickly gripped the middle of the armored elevator double doors and with all his might began to pry them open. He grunted and strained as he slowly forced the doors open. Then slowly but surely the iron armored doors started to move inch by inch. Steve grunted sharply as he continued to use all his strength to force open the doors. "I'm not going to die here!'' Steve yelled through his gritting teeth. Time quickly ticked away as he muscled the tough doors open. The time was now three minutes before the bunker explodes.

Outside the Ghost Eye bunker, Phillips, Peggy, and Stark with the loaded duffel bag across his body linked up with Howling Commandos and SSR agent parameter between the bunker and the SHIELD main administration building. The sound of the alarms going off from the bunker produced a loud deafening atmosphere for everyone outside. The commandos and agents remained vigilant for any hostiles that may or may not come. Colonel Phillips walked over to Dugan and called over the sound of the alarms, "Any word on Rogers?"
Dugan kept his trench gun pointed down range, "No, sir." He looked over at the bunker, "But I can take a guess."

Peggy looked over at the bunker and finally gave a clear worried expression on her face. Sousa walked over to the group and said with encouragement, "He'll make it. I know it." He paused, "Steve doesn't know how to quit."

In the bunker, Steve finally forced the doors open with less than two minutes to spare. The doors proved tough, even for him. Nonetheless, he slid the doors open and quickly forced open the actual elevator doors. The elevator doors itself were much easier to open than the armored ones for obvious reasons. Once he got the elevator open he quickly stepped into the elevator than instinctively pried open the hatch on the ceiling of the elevator. He hastily climbed through the hatch to the top of the elevator then jumped as high as he could and grabbed one of the elevator cables to begin climbing the tall elevator shaft.

As Steve quickly ascended the elevator shaft, time seemed to pass by even faster than he could climb. By the time he got halfway up the shaft, he had less than a minute to get out of the bunker. Steve pushed himself harder as he climbed the cables at super human speed to get to the top of the elevator shaft.

In a black Ford four door car, Zola smiled at the bunker, "Goodbye, Captain America."

Steve reached the top of the over hundred-foot-tall elevator shaft with less than five seconds to spare. He quickly forced open the elevator doors and jumped onto the main bunker floor and started to sprint his way out of the bunker. four seconds. He was out of the elevator shaft and sprinting down the short hallway to the back file room. three seconds. He was about to get out of the small file room. Two seconds. He was now in the main office space of the bunker.

One.

Before Steve got to the exit door, the entire bunker shook violently and erupted in a massive explosion. As he sprinted the last few meters to the exit he was instantly consumed by a bright flash. The tons of explosives hidden as a security failsafe in the subterranean ghost eye bunker erupted, and at the same time the surface bunker which was also wired to detonate with the subterranean level, also exploded thus assuring complete destruction of the bunker system.

Outside, the earth shook as the bunker erupted in a sudden explosion. Everyone ducked and flinched as the bunker suddenly exploded with a brief orange flash followed by an eruption of dust and debris bursting upwards. The moment the bunker exploded, Peggy flinched in surprise and called out in a reaction, "STEVE!" Once the dust settled, the bunker fell apart and looked to be completely destroyed with small fires burning around the rubble. Everyone quickly composed themselves and watched the burning bunker in absolute shock.

As the seconds passed, Peggy breathed heavily but remained stubborn and didn't believe that Steve is dead again. He beat all the odds and always made it back. Every time a situation looks like Steve would have been killed, he always manages to break expectations and come back. She remained defiant to the reality she witnessed while she rubbed her baby bump. As the seconds passed, she still didn't count her husband out, but she seemed to be the only one. Colonel Phillips, Stark, Sousa, and even all the commandos and agents watched the burning bunker with heavy hearts believing that Steve didn't make it.
Zola smiled at the destroyed bunker as his car turned on its headlights and slowly accelerated down a small path that ran parallel to the burning bunker. He thought for sure Captain Rogers is dead this time. He closed his eyes happily and brought himself to sleep as the car drove away from the bunker.

Suddenly Peggy saw something move in the burning rubble. She was quick to recognize Steve stand up from the burning debris with his shield over his head looking to be relatively unscathed. It was almost surreal to see Steve slowly stand up from the destruction around him like nothing happened. She called excitedly, "STEVE!" Everyone quickly looked over at the bunker and saw Steve and they all felt relief swarm over them. Steve sprinted out of the rubble toward the group with a serious expression on his face as he holstered his shield on his back in its usual place. He had a few bruises and scrapes on the lower half of his face that wasn't covered by his helmet. But all of his wounds would heal over time, so he didn't have any concerns over them.

As Steve ran to the group, everyone watched him with surprise and relief on their faces. But something caught the corner of Gabe's eye causing him to turn and look down the road that ran past the bunker. In the distance, he saw a flicker of light that resembled the headlights of a car turning. He slowly raised his Springfield M1903 Sniper Rifle and looked through the scope and saw a dark car in the distance turn away from them and drive straight into a heavily forested road.

Steve ran up to Peggy, Phillips, Stark, and Sousa and said quickly, "Zola is still alive. He was in the bunker and got away long before the bunker was destroyed."

Phillips nodded, "We'll find him."

Peggy gripped Steve's arm affectionately, "You okay, darling?"

Steve looked at her and did his best to give her a small yet strong smile, "Ask me later." Peggy gave a small smile in return. In the moon light she could see the bruises and scrapes on the parts of his face that weren't covered by his helmet.

Gabe spoke up, "Captain, I got a car driving away from us about two hundred meters."

Steve quickly turned and saw Gabe pointing his rifle down the road and instantly sprinted toward him figuring that Gabe saw Zola's car. He completely bypassed everyone else and stopped next to Gabe, "Gabe, rifle." Gabe nodded and instantly handed him the rifle. Upon receiving the rifle, Steve quickly aimed down the scope and saw a car getting increasingly smaller in the scope. Through the scope, he could see the faint red tail lights and a dark silhouette of the car framed by the head lights shining ahead of the car. Steve aimed carefully and fired one round which ended up hitting the trunk of the car.

In Zola's car, Zola suddenly heard a loud and distinct bang on the trunk of the car. He slowly opened his eyes and looked momentarily confused from the sound, and didn't initially register what he just heard. The Hydra agents were quick to realize what just happened and were immediately taken off guard because they didn't expect to get shot at all tonight. The driver instinctively stepped on the gas and sped up.

Steve adjusted and fired again…

Zola flinched when he felt a spray warm fluid hit him in the face. He turned to his right and saw the Hydra agent to his right suddenly fall forward with blood splattering everywhere from the back of his head. Zola was in shock with his face splashed with blood. The agent in the front seat quickly turned around, "Sir, get down!" Zola quickly got low in the car by laying his body across the seats and wedging his upper body behind the dead man next to him. Zola knew deep down that the person who is trying to kill him is none other than Captain Steven Rogers. Zola had the look of absolute fear
because now he was in Steve's element and he didn't have anymore cards left to play. The driver floored the gas pedal again, but it wouldn't be enough…

Steve aimed straight and true once again, and adjusting very slightly. He waited till his natural pause between exhale and inhale then pulled the trigger at the end of his breath.

The driver in Zola's car called out, "We can't make a move in these trees! Our best shot is that turn up ah…" He was cut off by a loud snap and a bullet shooting through the rear window and into his head. The driver keeled forward with his foot remaining on the gas causing the car to accelerate out of control. Zola now looked pale and utterly fearful with what is about to happen next. The car suddenly swerved wildly to the left and slammed into a tree dangerously fast.

Steve witnessed the crash through the scope of the rifle. He slowly lowered the rifle and breathed easy. He turned and returned the rifle to Gabe, "Thanks," he said calmly.

Gabe took the rifle back gently, "Nice shot, sir." Steve nodded then took off sprinting down the road to the crash without looking back. Peggy watched him curiously and with some concern in her eyes.

Dugan turned to the commandos, "lets go fellas!" He said waving his hand forward.

Just as the commandos stepped off, Colonel Phillips called out to them, "Wait!" All the commandos automatically stopped and turned to face him with surprise on their faces.

Pinkerton spoke up, "Sir, Captain Rogers might need us."

Jim nodded in agreement, "yes, sir. We got his six." Peggy smiled at the commandos for their unwavering loyalty and enthusiasm to support Steve in everything no matter how serious or miniscule.

Phillips nodded, "I know. But that blast from the bunker won't go unnoticed." He looked over at Dugan, "Sergeant Dugan."

"Sir," Dugan responded quickly.

"Take four men and hold here with the SSR chief and agents. Wait for any US Army response forces," Phillips said calmly. He turned to Sousa, "Sousa, you'll be doing all the talking. Explain what happened then send the commanding officer to me." He nodded to the direction Steve ran, "I'll be with Rogers."

Sousa nodded, "Right."

Dugan also nodded, "Yes sir."

Phillips turned to Stark and Peggy, "Lets get our boy." Stark just nodded in return and adjusted the weighted duffel bag on his shoulder.

Peggy nodded, "Right behind you, sir."

"Peggy, take command of the commandos," Phillips said as he started walking. Peggy nodded then signaled the commandos to move out. The commandos without hesitation followed Peggy's orders and formed a horizontal line across the road as they walked behind Peggy, Phillips, and Stark.

At the car crash, Zola was in a bad position and was injured significantly. He was twisted in an odd way, and his legs were shoved under the front driver's seat of the car. He had a compound fracture of
his left leg with the fibula protruding through the skin in his leg, and a shattered femur. Blood was oozing out of his gashing wound and pooled on the floor of the car. His upper body was in far better shape but not by much. He had a few broken ribs, broken collarbone, and a broken shoulder. The possibly best reason why he isn't dead is because of dead body next to him acted as a useful cushion and kept him alive during the accident. Everyone else in the car was dead. The driver was shot in the head, the agent in the front passenger seat was sent through the window and into a tree, and the agent next to Zola was also shot in the head. Zola groaned in agonizing pain as he tried to adjust himself in the wreckage of the car. He cringed and gritted his teeth as he tried to move his legs, but they hurt so bad that he opted on using his arms. Even though his arm and collar bone were broken, they hurt far less than his mangled legs. Zola knew what was bound to happen if he stayed in the car so he dealt with the agonizing pain as he quickly composed himself to get out of the car.

Zola gritted his teeth in pain as he turned to his door and pushed it open with all of his strength. It took all of his might to fight the pain just to open the undamaged door. He knew he couldn't walk or stand so he tumbled out of the car with a painful groan into the dim night. He then started to use what little strength he had left and attempted to crawl his way to safety in the trees. A single headlight that wasn't destroyed during the crash and the tail lights of the car provided a dim light around his area. He groaned in absolute pain as he slowly crawled along the side of the dirt road toward the cover of the dark trees. As he slowly inched his way from the car, he left behind a fresh trail of thick blood that spanned all the way to the car. Zola suddenly saw numerous pairs of light from a distance around the area of the bunker which signaled vehicles were arriving. He didn't want to wait and find out who they were so he desperately tried to crawl faster, sucking up the pain with each pull of his arms.

Through the dim light that both the moon and the destroyed car provided, Steve could easily spot Zola crawling away from the car. He didn't need his enhanced vision that the serum provided to tell it was Zola. Steve slowed to a slight jog and drew his pistol as he neared the wounded Zola. Zola didn't initially see Steve at first so he kept crawling as fast as he could. Steve slowed to a gentle walk and gripped his pistol as he calmly strolled toward the desperate Zola. Zola finally looked up at and saw Steve walking toward him. He groaned and stopped crawling just as Steve was about two feet away from him.

Steve gripped his pistol and locked the hammer back with his thumb then slowly pointed his gun at Zola's head. A million dark thoughts ran through his mind as he stood there calmly holding a gun to an unarmed man. All the stress and pain he went through over the past few days finally accumulated to this moment. Steve tensed and gave an uncharacteristically cold stare at Zola. Zola smiled up at him, "Then, finish it," he said tauntingly.

Steve remained silent as he trained his pistol to point between Zola's eyes. His thoughts continued to race through his mind. Through the discovery of Hydra's sudden return, the revelation of their plans, and the knowledge of the possibly hundreds of innocent people that died by their hand finally put a massive psychological and spiritual toll on him that swelled to this very moment. He was tired and angry, and it all started to show. He was especially angry at his own people for allowing Hydra to infiltrate the government and nearly execute a plan that would've eventually shattered the lives of many innocent people around the world. If Steve and Peggy hadn't taken matters into their own hands, Hydra would've gone unchecked and most likely would've taken power of the US government in secret. The whole situation they're in now, and the scenario that could've played out in the future could've been avoided entirely if the US government hadn't been so quick to trust and forgive evil men who have committed all sorts of monstrosities during the war. Steve was all about forgiveness, but completely pardoning and trusting "former" Nazi and Hydra members was a mistake. Steve knew that ideology does not simply die with war, its merely goes into hiding. Steve didn't move as he stood in silence with his gun still trained on Zola. Zola smiled, "Finish it..." he urged again.
Steve continued to stare coldly into Zola's soul. He started to think about how Zola had told him that he would be the cause of all of Peggy's pain. Steve never wants to be the cause of her pain. He loves her with all his heart, and he never intends to see the day where he is the reason for Peggy hurting. Plus, he's starting a family. He wants to settle down with her and live a halfway decent normal life with her and kids. He wants to grow old with her and live a simple life someday. Steve couldn't imagine life without her... But right then, Steve realized Zola was right about something. Because he came back from the "dead", he made Peggy vulnerable in more ways than one. He more less painted a target on her back, on his unborn child's back, and his back. The thought of losing Peggy devastated him alone. He cringed at the thought of Zola being an architect for the pain Peggy and him will face started to occupy his mind. For the first time, Steve was considering shooting an unarmed man. He put his finger on the trigger and was ready to blow him away. Zola smiled, "Finish. It..." He said again. "I've won..." He said with a smile.

Suddenly Steve heard the sound of multiple fast paced footsteps on the dirt behind him. He didn't turn around right away as he heard the multiple sets of feet clamber to a halt. Steve finally turned his head to see Peggy, Colonel Phillips, Stark, and four of his commandos standing about twenty feet behind him. Steve quickly focused on Peggy, and even in the dim light he could see all of her beautiful features. Her hair lay elegantly on her shoulders even though she has been running along the road. Steve looked at her face and saw that she wore a look of worry and concern on her face. Steve again looked back down at Zola, still pointing the gun at him. Although Steve didn't directly look at Colonel Phillips, the Colonel also wore a look of concern on his face. Zola chuckled, "What are you waiting for. Kill me..."

It felt like an eternity as the seconds slowly passed. Then finally after an intense few seconds, Steve finally acted. He ejected the magazine of his pistol then pulled on the slide and ejected the round from the chamber without looking away from Zola. After a moment Steve finally spoke, "Out of bullets." He turned to Peggy and saw her relax a little. Steve turned back to Zola and smiled, "Besides," he nodded to his wife, "She wouldn't want me to." With that he turned and walked directly toward his wife. Zola simply watched in shock and awe as Steve walked calmly to Peggy. Zola honestly thought he was able to unnerve Captain America.

Peggy stood still as she watched Steve approach her calmly. She gave a relieved and loving smile to him as he walked to her. The moment Steve was within feet of her, she stepped forward and walked into his embrace and crushed her lips to his. Peggy didn't dare break the kiss at all like it was the first time she kissed him in months. She ran her hand through his hair and down his cheek as she held him close to her. Steve reciprocated both the kiss and the hug with equal fervor. Zola watched the couple kiss from afar for a moment then looked down in defeat. He slowly rolled to his side and rested, both tired and in pain as blood pooled from his leg. Phillips smiled at Steve and Peggy then started to walk over to Zola. He signaled the commandos to follow him which they followed him without hesitation.

As Phillips led the commandos to the wounded Zola, Steve and Peggy finally broke their passionate lip lock. Peggy rested her forehead against Steve's and gave a small smile, "Hey, soldier."

Steve smiled, "Hey, beautiful." He placed his hands on her pregnant stomach and caressed it gently. Peggy leaned her head back and whispered, "We're okay."

"I love you, Peggy," Steve said softly.

Peggy rested her arms on his shoulders and whispered, "I love you too." She started to lean in for another kiss but Stark interrupted them by clearing his throat.

Stark smiled, "Hello there, Captain."
Zola heard foot steps near him causing him to look up and saw Colonel Phillips looking down at him. Before the Colonel said anything, Zola looked over at Steve and Peggy again and saw them happily reunited. He sighed then slowly looked back up at the Colonel. Phillips spoke coldly, "Under Executive Order 9835, I place you under arrest for treason and espionage."

Zola frowned and looked down at the dirt in defeat.

Steve chuckled as Peggy shook her head. Steve gave a small smile at Stark, "Thanks for all your help, Howard."

Howard nodded, "Anything for the Rogers."

Steve turned and saw a row of jeep headlights coming their way down the road. Steve took Peggy's hand in his and spoke calmly, "looks like the Army is here."

Howard nodded, "They showed up not long after you took off." He smiled at the couple, "They aren't Hydra. Trust me."

Steve smiled, "Never thought they were," he said as he and Peggy started to walk down the dirt road. Stark just watched them with a relieved smile as the couple walked into the night.

As Steve and Peggy walked hand in hand down the side of the dirt road, the US Army Willy's Jeeps quickly drove past them. But as each jeep passed, Steve could see the soldiers in the jeeps all staring at him and Peggy with shock and surprise. The remaining commandos and the SSR agents by the bunker must've told them what had happened to earn that reaction. But neither Steve and Peggy didn't mind. Steve gave a small smile then wrapped his arm around his wife as they walked down the darkening road.

Peggy smiled and elbowed Steve in the ribs earning a grunt from him. Steve coughed, "What was that for?"

Peggy shook her head, "You almost dying for the third time since we've been together. You got to work on that."

"I am," Steve said with a tired smile.

Peggy shook her head and leaned into him. After a moment of silence, she spoke up with a humorous tone in her voice, "no you're not." Steve didn't say anything but simply smiled.

Directly following the incident in Camp Lehigh, Colonel Phillips, Howard Stark, and Chief Sousa took all the all the files, documents, papers, evidence, and anything connecting to Hydra they found and collected and took it back to the SSR office in New York City to photograph every little thing they found. The trio photographed every piece of paper and evidence in detail so they would always have a copy of it for their records and security purposes. They made sure that every word that was written or typed could be seen in the photos. Then in the following morning after the incident, Colonel Phillips, Howard Stark, and Chief Sousa delivered all the original files, documents, papers, and evidence concerning Hydra, to the President directly at the White House early that morning, so he could see the unfiltered truth behind SHIELD.

Immediately following President Truman seeing the dizzying array of evidence presented to him, he immediately called for a Senate hearing and an immediate FBI investigation concerning SHIELD and the infiltration of Hydra into the government. He then called for Colonel Phillips and Captain
TWO DAYS AFTER THE SHIELD INCIDENT

WASHINGTON D.C.

UNITED STATES SENATE COMMITTEE ON HYDRA AND SHIELD

Colonel Phillips, in full military dress uniform, approached the long wood table facing the half circle wood podium that the seventeen Senators were sitting behind, and placed his cover down on the table calmly before sitting down. Phillips sat alone with Steve no where to be seen even though the President had ordered him to testify in front of the committee. Philips gently placed his files of papers on the table in front of him and spoke calmly, "Good morning, senators. If I may, I'd like to make a statement for the record." He heard dozens of cameras snapping pictures behind him as he spoke, "As you see in the reports in front of you, Director John Weyland was working for the terror group known as Hydra. Hydra operatives and high ranking officials were allowed to easily infiltrate the government through Operation Paperclip and were seemingly left unchecked. These individuals then moved to conduct their ulterior motives while working for our government."

The senator in the middle of the podium spoke up sternly, "We believe recruiting former Hydra and ex-Nazi's was a necessary evil to further develop our countries military and technology against the communists."

Phillips leaned forward, "A necessary evil? Senators, you left them unchecked and if it wasn't for Captain Rogers and his wife, Hydra would've been left unchecked to fester inside the government. If the Rogers' didn't do what they did, how long would've it taken all you to realize Hydra's plans? My guess… it would be too late."

Another Senator spoke up, "That's an interesting thought Colonel, but speaking of Captain Rogers. Why haven't we heard from him? Where is he?"

Phillips shook his head, "There is nothing he has to say. The craters he left behind in the Shenandoah Mountains and the former SHIELD compound proved his point."

The same Senator spoke again, "Well he could explain how this country is expected to maintain its national security against the communists now that he, his wife, and you have laid waste to our prime intelligence apparatus."

"Hydra was selling you lies, not intelligence," the Colonel shot back. "Hydra was playing your fears of Communism all the while targeting and murdering hundreds of people that opposed them. All the evidence you need to see is in the files in front of you, all you need to do…"

A different Senator spoke, "But Captain Rogers…"

"Is this hearing about Captain Rogers or Hydra?" The Colonel said sternly feeling that some of the Senators wanted to accuse Steve of some sort of crime. "Did Captain Rogers go outside the law in this? Yes. But his actions might've saved this country from being destroyed from the inside. Regardless of your feelings toward him, the evidence is clear that Hydra infiltrated the government and were planning on targeting countless people around the country."

Senator Brandt leaned forward, "The Colonel is right. Captain Rogers is a hero and we should not slander him here. This hearing is about Hydra and SHIELD, not Captain America. We can agree now that recruiting Hydra was a total mistake." All the senators all nodded in agreement, even those who wanted to accuse Steve of some sort of crime. Brandt nodded, "Now, Colonel. How did Hydra
return? I thought we had defeated them during the war."

The Colonel spoke calmly, "we THOUGHT Hydra was defeated. I did and Captain Rogers did too. But in actuality no war is over until the enemy says it's over. We may think it over, we may declare it over, but in fact, the enemy gets a vote… and Hydra never declared their war was over." Everyone nodded.

"What of SHIELD? And what of our security?" Brandt asked taking the lead in the hearing.

"We can rebuild SHIELD. The concept is sound but the people you had to operate it were all Hydra and were working on different agenda's. We can reconstruct SHIELD with the existing assets of the Strategic Science Reserve and expand them to suit the role of SHIELD." Brandt nodded along with the other Senators who saw this as the best plan with the least amount of wrinkles. The Colonel spoke calmly, "As of security. We're indeed left vulnerable but that's because of Hydra crippling us from the inside. We can fix situations like this from happening again by assuring that people who work for the government are totally loyal to this country. We need a better system to prove loyalty is what we need for now."

Senators nodded again. Brandt gave a small smile, "Interesting proposition, Colonel." He leaned back, "For the sake of a quick discussion. Who's going to operate the new SHIELD?"

Phillips smiled, "I can do it because I have experience operating the Strategic Science Reserve, but will need a few others to act as deputy directors to assure operational success."

Brandt nodded, "Who do you have in mind?"

Phillips smiled.

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Hours later the first official hearing of the United States House of Representatives Senate Committee on Hydra and SHIELD came to a close. It was still early in the afternoon when the first hearing officially ended, but the meeting seemed to feel like it took all day for the old Colonel. Immediately after the hearing, Colonel Phillips walked out of the building and headed straight for the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool.

**Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool**

The Colonel walked briskly along the side of the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool with the Washington Memorial sticking straight out on the far end of the pool. He still held his files in his hand as he walked the peaceful reflecting pool. The day was peaceful in Washington DC and he couldn't help but to feel relieved that the madness that had occurred the last few days were finally over. At least for the most part. The area around the reflecting pool was relatively quiet with a handful of people strolling around the long reflecting pool. The Colonel enjoyed the rare peace in the area and absorbed the relaxing atmosphere presented by the beautiful Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool.

As the Colonel strolled along the pool he saw the person he needed to meet. He saw Steve sitting on a park bench dressed in a plaid collared shirt with the sleeved rolled up past his elbows, dark blue dress pants, black dress shoes, and sunglasses. The Colonel smiled and walked over to his subordinate and friend. As the Colonel neared his friend, Steve turned his head and nodded at the Colonel. Phillips smiled, "Captain," he said friendlily as he sat down next to him.

Steve nodded, "Good afternoon, sir."
"Cut the formalities, Steve," Phillips said with a smile.

"Sorry, I didn't go to the hearing. Would've told you, but I just didn't want to face politicians." Steve shrugged, "I hate talking to them."

Phillips nodded, "I do too." He chuckled, "Your friend Senator Brandt stood up for you though."

"He was there?" Steve asked shocked.

Phillips chuckled, "Yeah. He stood up for you while the committee tried to whitewash you."

"Well. I got to send him a thank you card I guess," Steve said calmly.

Phillips looked at him, "Other than that the hearing went well, but long. The FBI is rounding up everyone who had a hand with Hydra operations in the country, anyone who benefitted from it, and anyone who took part of it."

Steve nodded, "At least that's something. Can't say I'm surprise that no one tried arresting me yet though."

Phillips nodded, "I won't lie. The Senators weren't happy you detonated a nuclear weapon underground let alone in Virginia." Steve chuckled lightly. The two men fell silent for a moment.

Steve smiled, "Thanks for taking the lead on photographing all the documents and evidence."

Phillips laughed, "It only took us all night and almost all morning to photograph all the documents in detail so it was legible in pictures." He took one of his files out and handed it to Steve, "Speaking of files. Here."

Steve took the file and looked down at it and saw that the file read, "Sergeant Barnes: Winter Soldier" written on it. The Colonel spoke up, "This is what we got on Sergeant Barnes from all the Hydra files. This shows he's a victim... not the enemy." The Colonel leaned back on the bench, "Finding him will be the hard part."

Steve nodded in gratitude, "Thanks."

Phillips nodded, "Got a proposition for you. You can turn it down."

"Shoot." Steve said calmly as he looked at the cover of the file.

"SHIELD is being remade by completely transforming all assets of the SSR to SHIELD and expanding them. How would you like to lead SHIELD as a Deputy Director for me? You'll work along side Stark." The Colonel asked with a smile.

Steve looked up and smiled. He started to shake his head, "I'm not that type of guy, sir. I'm a soldier and a fighter through and through."

Phillips nodded, "I figured you'd say that, but I thought I extend the offer to you. Got any recommendations for me who is suited for the job?"

Steve looked at the Colonel, "You know who I'll pick."

"Just wanted to know if you would choose the same."

Steve stood up and smiled at his friend, "It'll mean a lot to her if you told her, Colonel." Phillips smiled up at him.
Peggy dressed in a white collared women's maternity blouse, dark blue women's business skirt, nylon stockings, and dark blue heels, stood in front of a table with a radio on it playing the day's news broadcast. Her team surrounded her along with every agent on the floor listening to the news broadcast including Chief Sousa. After the events of a few days ago at Camp Lehigh, the news talked about nothing but the incident. Now that the hearings are taking place, the SSR agents in the "Bell Co. Office" were especially interested in what was going on. Peggy crossed her arms over her chest as she listened intently to the news.

The male news reporter spoke calmly, "the president convened an emergency cabinet meeting to discuss the growing scandal over the alleged infiltration of Hydra into many parts of the government. Hydra, an organization thought to be defeated during the war, seemed to have went into hiding and infiltrated the government shortly after the conclusion of the war. Its not clear how Hydra infiltrated the government, but its clear that it took a lot of careful planning for Hydra to successfully fool the federal government." Peggy shook her head. "The recently deceased SHIELD Director John Weyland, was a member of the neo-Hydra organization and was responsible for approving a government assassination program that would've targeted American citizens." Peggy started to bite her thumb nail as she listened intently. The other agents too were listening with a lot of interest to see what was going on. "Multiple business owners, politicians, and other federal government officials were also arrested for conspiring with Hydra. Famed Hollywood actress Whitney Frost, and Roxxon Oil Corporation head Hugh Jones were also arrested." Peggy gave a small smile at the names given. She knew the list of people who were arrested and or going to be arrested is long, but she couldn't help but smile at that small bit of news with the two names. The reporter continued calmly, "The hearing today occurred with only Colonel Phillips with Captain Steven Rogers also known as Captain America, nowhere to be seen."

All of the SSR agents and Sousa looked at Peggy curiously at the mention of Steve's name. Peggy shook her slightly, ignoring the stares as she listened to the radio. The reporter continued to speak, "The hearing today revealed that Captain Steven Rogers was the main source of the exposure of Hydra. It is also reported that Captain Rogers was the one to apprehend the mastermind of the Hydra infiltration, the name of whom is left as classified. Captain Rogers was aided by the elite multinational unit known as the Howling Commandos and SSR loyalist Agents, but Captain Rogers was largely responsible for the death of former SHIELD director John Weyland and the destruction of two Hydra and SHIELD facilities." There was a pause, "At the end of the first day of the hearing, Colonel Phillips announced that the Strategic Homeland, Intervention, Enforcement, and Logistic Division also known as SHIELD will be remade." Peggy relaxed a little because the press didn't report her helping Steve reveal Hydra. Like other SSR agents, she wanted her role as an SSR agent to be secret, hence the cover of working in the "New York Bell Company Office" telephone company. It was alright for agents in the SSR to refer to themselves as "Federal Agents" to outsiders but not imply which agency unless it was to law enforcement, other federal agencies, and official business such as active cases. The SSR was still majorly a clandestine post-war agency, so she was glad that her name and her team's names weren't given in the broadcast. It was probably safe to assume that the government sensor the names but her husband and Colonel Phillips.

The reporter started to report other news outside of the hearing. Peggy stepped up and turned off the radio. All the agents but her field team and Sousa started to disperse and go back to their desks to return to work. Ramirez spoke up, "Hey, Peggy. Why do you think your husband didn't go to the hearing?"

Li nodded, "Yeah, wasn't he ordered to?"
Peggy shrugged, "I don't know. He thought about not going, but I understand why he didn't go."

Thompson chuckled, "Didn't want to deal with politicians."

Peggy nodded with a warm smile, "Yeah."

Sousa sighed, "What a long few days, huh?"

"Definitely," Peggy said with a sigh of relief.

"What are you two going to do now?" Sousa asked.

Peggy rubbed her baby bump, "Relax and have this baby, and hopefully the country won't fall apart," she said with a chuckle. Thompson laughed with her.

Sousa shrugged, "Want to take the next few days off? Go ahead."

Peggy looked at him curiously, "Really?"

"Oh yeah. You two been through a lot the last few days." Sousa gripped her shoulder friendlily, "You deserve it." He laughed, "I'm half surprised that you're even here today."

Peggy chuckled, "Thank you, Daniel. We'll greatly appreciate it."

Thompson was about to speak up but Sousa stopped him, "Not you, fellas. You only participated in the raid."

Thompson sighed, "What a downer."

Ramirez laughed, "Hey we participated in the raid and stuck our necks out for her."

Sousa and Peggy shook their heads. Suddenly the phone rang from the Chief's office prompting Sousa to excuse himself, "Excuse me, Peggy, fellas."

He turned around and limped back to his office to get the phone.

Peggy looked at her team, "Get back to work."

Thompson shrugged, "What are we supposed to be doing again?" Ramirez slapped the back of his head earning a laugh from Peggy.

Peggy walked over to her desk, "Thank you, Ramirez."

Just before Peggy sat down at her desk, Sousa popped out of his office, "Peggy, phone for you. It's the Colonel," he said with a straight face.

Peggy nodded, "Coming."

Peggy stepped into Sousa's office and picked up the phone at his desk, "Colonel?" Sousa stood by the door with a wide smile at Peggy.

Colonel Phillips spoke through the phone, "Peggy, how are you doing?"

"Good, Colonel," Peggy responded calmly.

"I take it you heard that SHIELD is being remade?"

"Yes, I did."
"I need another Deputy Director to work with me along with Stark. No one is more qualified than you. Do you want the job?" Colonel said calmly. Peggy was silent for a long moment, completely surprised at what she just heard. A Deputy Director position of an intelligence agency. She would be the first woman in history to have that job AND have that much responsibility placed on her. After a long moment of silence, the Colonel spoke up curiously, "Peggy, you still there?"

Peggy nodded, "I'll be honored."

She heard the Colonel chuckle, "I thought so. I'll get in touch with you with more details later." He chuckled, "Have a good day, Peggy."

"Thank you. Thank you, Colonel." She said with much gratitude. She hung up the phone and turned and saw Sousa smiling at her widely while he leaned up against the door frame.

"Congratulations, Peggy. No one deserves it more," Sousa said proudly.

Peggy smiled, "Thank you, Daniel." The two walked out of the Chief office together.

The moment they entered the main office space, Sousa called to everyone in the office, "Everyone! Listen up!" Everyone stopped what they were doing and looked to Sousa and Peggy. "I'll like everyone to meet our new Deputy Director of SHIELD, Director Margaret 'Peggy' Rogers!" Peggy smiled widely to everyone as the office erupted in applause and cheers.

Thompson called out over the applause, "You earned it! Atta girl!"

Sousa turned to Peggy and smiled, "I think Chief Dooley would be proud."

Peggy smiled and couldn't wait to tell Steve.

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**Steve & Margaret Rogers Residence, Scarsdale, NY**

It was early in the evening when Peggy stepped through the front door of her and Steve's house. She quickly closed the door behind her as she called out for her husband, "Darling!" She could hear the kitchen rattling and the aura of delicious food filling her nose. She smiled, "Darling!" She quickly walked into the family room and put her purse on the couch and draped her dark blue business blouse on the couch, "Darling!" She called again.

Steve walked out of the kitchen while he wiped his hands on a towel, "Hey there!" he said happily. He tossed the towel on the counter then walked into the family room, "Was cooking us dinner. Didn't hear you right away." He approached her, "Its almost done." Peggy ran up to him and hugged him tightly and kissed him on the lips excitedly. Steve broke the kiss and smiled, "What's up?" Peggy couldn't help but smile and took his hand and lead him to the couch. The two sat down on the couch. Steve chuckled, "You seem more excited than our wedding day and the news of your pregnancy."

Peggy chuckled, "That's not even funny, darling."

Steve laughed, "Well, spill then."

Peggy calmed down and spoke evenly, "Colonel Phillips put me as Deputy Director of SHIELD."

"Congratulations!" Steve tried sounding surprised.

Peggy called his bluff and gave a mock suspicious look, "Why do I feel like you knew this already?"
Steve chuckled and told the truth, "The Phillips originally asked me if I wanted the job but I refused. He knew I would." He shrugged, "He then asked me for a recommendation and I said your name. But I knew he already chose you, and offered me the position out of respect." Peggy smiled. Steve smiled back, "You earned it, Peggy."

Peggy smiled, "Thank you Steve." Steve leaned forward and kissed her. After a while Peggy broke the kiss and rested her forehead on Steve's, "What now?"

Steve put his hands on her baby bump, "We relax and have dinner."

Peggy leaned back and smiled, "I have the next few days off."

Steve chuckled, "Sounds perfect." The two leaned in and kissed again.

After a long few days, the couple can now relax. At least for now.

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**MIDNIGHT**

**SSR MAXIMUM SECURITY PRISON**

It was midnight in the SSR maximum security prison somewhere in the state of New York far from the city. This was the same prison Zola was placed in directly after the war when he was transferred to the United States. Zola was once again in the same jail cell as Doctor Johann Fennhoff also known as Doctor Viktor Ivchenko. Zola was back in a white jail jump suit but he was now restricted to a wheel chair do to his wounds sustained by Captain America. He was more or less patched up with a cast on his arm with a sling and two thick casts on his legs. He is now required regular doctor visits to check his injuries.

In the dark jail cell, Zola, who sat on his wheel chair, was sitting next to the wall carving Steve's name with a loose rock once again. Once he carved the name he crossed it off multiple times in anger. The wall was covered with carvings of Steve's name that were repeatedly crossed off. Doctor Fennhoff, who still had the wire cage around his face to prevent him from talking, approached him and handed him a piece of paper that he wrote on. Zola looked down and read it. The note read, what are you going to do now?

Zola smiled and handed the note back, "I'm going to get out of here. Believe me. We're not over yet."

Suddenly the thick metal jail door opened, shining the bright hallway lights into the cell. Zola and Fennhoff looked at each other curiously. The door swung open but no one came in. The two men looked at the open doorway then back at each other once again, unsure what to do. The doorway was open and still no one came in. Fennhoff stepped away from Zola and approached the seemingly open door slowly. Suddenly a shadowy figure stepped into the doorway with only his silhouette being visible as the light framed the unknown figure. It was clear the figure was armed with a pistol in his left hand that had a suppressor attached to the muzzle of the pistol. The intentions of the figure became automatically clear. Fennhoff stopped in his tracks at the sight of the figure with the look of fear appearing on his face. The figure raised his left arm and pointed the pistol at Fennhoff. At that moment both Zola and Fennhoff saw that the figure had a bright silver mechanical left arm with a large red star on the shoulder.

Zola whispered, "Sergeant Barnes." Suddenly the shadowy figure fired his suppressed pistol into Fennhoff's head. Fennhoff fell back onto the floor, dead. Blood poured out of the entry and exit wound of his head and pooled on the dark jail cell floor. The shadowy figure stepped into the jail cell
and approached the defenseless Zola. Zola raised his hands frantically, "No. No!"

The figure fired a suppressed round into Zola's head killing him instantly. The figure popped four more rounds into his chest before backing away. The figure stopped by Fennhoff's dead body then triple tapped him in the chest for good measure. The figure then left silently out of the jail cell....

HOPED YOU ENJOED THIS SERIES OF CHAPTERS

AGAIN IDEAS FROM JAMES BOND: SPECTRE

IDEAS FROM JASON BOURNE TRILOGY, MAN FROM UNCLE

QUOTE FROM USMC GENERAL JAMES MATTIS
On July 26, 1947, shortly after the incident with SHIELD and Hydra, the US underwent a restructuring of the government's military and intelligence. This restructuring was called the "National Security Act of 1947" and took partial effect on the 26 of July. The majority of the Act came into effect on September 18, 1947, the day after the Senate named James Forrestal as the first Secretary of Defense. Additionally, the Act merged the Department of War (which was renamed to the Department of the Army), and the Department of the Navy into the National Military Establishment (NME), which is headed by the Secretary of Defense. The Act also included the Department of the Airforce which separated from the Army into its own branch and merged into the NME. Outside of military reformation, the Act also officially established the National Security Council, Central Intelligence Agency, and reestablished the Strategic Homeland Intervention, Enforcement, and Logistic Division (SHIELD).

Though the majority of the Act took effect in September, the new SHIELD would not take operational effect until all of SHIELD’s subordinate divisions were all functional, and ALL SSR divisions and assets were transferred into SHIELD. Additionally, SHIELD was always meant to have a headquarters building outside of Camp Lehigh, so the government has been "constructing" the new headquarters in Time Square in New York City since the initial formation of SHIELD. The new SHIELD secret headquarters known by the government as "The Aegis" is being built within an existing non-description office building in Time Square to be used as a cover. The mentality was to hide in plain sight which seemed to work well for the SSR so far. But the overall hope was that The Aegis building would be ready by the time the newly reformed SHIELD became operational.

It's been four months since the "SHIELD Incident" as it became known by the news and the general public, but many in the SSR saw the incident as the "Hydra Resurgence." For the past four months, the government has been using the evidence obtained by Steve and Peggy to track down and arrest anyone who was involved with Hydra both directly and indirectly. Spearheading the arrests is the FBI and the SSR in a joint agency effort to remove anyone who was associated or working with Hydra. The primary goal is to eliminate Hydra's corruptive influence from the government entirely. The evidence obtained by the Rogers lead to the arrest of many influential and ranking individuals including politicians, high powered businessmen, and members of both the SSR, FBI, and the recently formed Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Additionally, many members of the organization known as the "Council of Nine" have also been arrested, mainly by the SSR. People who were only mentioned in the evidence but had very little information linking them to Hydra were listed as "Persons of Interest" and were further investigated and kept under surveillance. But the main problem both the SSR and the FBI encountered right after the "SHIELD Incident" was that many of the suspects they needed to arrest went into hiding which meant the FBI, and the SSR had to hunt for them.
But what kept the general public from sparking a mass witch hunt for Hydra infiltrators was the slowly growing fear of Communism. The news of Hydra infiltrating the government scared people, but the fear of Communists was still much greater than that of Hydra. The Cold War and fear of Communism spreading were the bigger topics most people were concerned. The public became more worried that if Hydra could infiltrate the government than the Communists could too. The US government was quick to use this growing fear of Communism to overshadow the damage that Hydra had dealt to the country. With this, the government raised concerns that Communists and leftist sympathizers inside America might actively work as Soviet spies and pose a threat to U.S. security making Communism and the Soviet Union the main attention of the public. The US government knocked out two birds with one stone by having public support for anti-communist and anti-Soviet sentiment while covering the vulnerability made by Hydra. Although the fear and apprehension of Communism didn't initially sweep the nation, the topic of the "SHIELD Incident" and Hydra took a back seat in the minds of many Americans. Although Hydra did deal significant damage to the U.S prime intelligence apparatus, the government and even the public viewed Communism and the Soviets as a much more substantial threat than Hydra. Hydra was just a parasite they needed to kill before it grew any larger and did more damage. It's true that Soviet influence grew as the Cold War progressed, but Hydra was far from truly defeated.

While the SSR remains as its own scientific and intelligence agency, it's currently conducting two major operations throughout the agency that focuses on the capture and elimination of Hydra and the continuing effort to counter Leviathan, the Soviet Spy agency. For the first few months following the "SHIELD Incident," Peggy lead her team and fellow field agents in their missions while staying in the office. Because of her pregnancy becoming more and more physically apparent, she and Chief Sousa found it unwise for her to commit herself to the field. So Peggy opted to do as much as she could while in the office to aid in the missions at the same time provide her agents with leads and logistical support. She considered her efforts with Steve during the "Hydra Resurgence" as her last field mission while pregnant. But as much as she loves her career and excited for her future guaranteed promotion as a Deputy Director of SHIELD, Steve and the family they will start are the first joys in her heart. Though Peggy isn't stopping her career, she is going to take it easy for the remainder of her pregnancy for the sake of her and the baby. To say she's overjoyed to be starting a family with Steve is a severe understatement.

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November 1947

Four Months After The "SHIELD Incident"

It's early November of 1947, and Peggy is now eight months pregnant and is on her third trimester of her pregnancy, and Steve and Peggy have been married for a little over a year. A year and four months to be exact. The couple celebrated their first anniversary in late July with a quiet day spent together combined with a fantastic night out at a fancy restaurant overlooking the East River in Brooklyn. It was a wonderfully romantic day just the two of them with no stress, no pressing missions, and no chaos. It was just perfect. Now, the Rogers are on a long transatlantic flight heading to Heathrow Airport in London, England to finally visit Peggy's family for a long awaited family reunion. A few weeks ago, Peggy took the unpaid Paternal Leave Chief Sousa talked to her about a few months ago now that she reached her eight month of pregnancy. With the due date nearing, and her baby belly now twice the size it once was, it was time for her to take time off to relax and get ready for the birth. Since Peggy has taken Paternal Leave, she left Agent Jack Thompson in charge of her field team while Chief Sousa absorbed the duties of Senior Field Agent while being the Chief of the SSR office in New York City.

Peggy couldn't lie; she used to dislike Thompson because not only was he extremely sexist, but he was also incredibly short-sighted and arrogant. But he warmed up to her and even became a friend.
He wasn't the man he once was when she first arrived at the "Bell Co. Office" in '45. He changed immensely for the better, and gotten a lot friendlier and became a lot humbler. It still surprises her that he resigned from the chief position to Daniel Sousa and relinquished his congressional medal to her though she didn't accept it. The reasoning for Thompson's surprising actions was because he felt guilty for all the wrong things he'd done to her. At the time she felt there was some other reason that stirred him to do those acts. Either he was feeling the guilt of the many previous actions he did in the past, or he was afraid of her husband and his close connection with many ranking people, or both. But whatever the reason, she didn't mind it because everything turned out great in the end. In fact, since the Stark Case and the encounter with the Winter Soldier, him and many of the agents in the office have warmed up to her and see her as their equal if not superior. Its quite a change since the war. For a woman in this time in a field dominated by men, she is extremely successful and fortunate. Of course, life always has its challenges, and she faced them like everyone else. But in the end, all those struggles were worth it. But the one thing she is sure is that after all this time, Steve continues to change her life.

Steve's extremely supportive of her and is patient, kind, and gentle to her. A complete gentleman. He's absolutely wonderful and she doesn't tell that to him enough. He means the world to her and she's sure that her life would be drastically different without him being here. Steve stuck by her when things were rough for her in the SSR and supported her when she had moments of doubt. Steve only made her life better. She wouldn't say life was easy but considering how everything turned out, she couldn't rightfully complain. As her husband often said, "every thing you have done, every choice, every good and bad thing you experienced lead her to these moments," and he's right. Through everything, she has a successful career, people count on her, she's happily married, and she's starting a family. Its almost too good to be true. Of all the possibilities life could've thrown at her, she's glad this is the one she has. Of course, there's always challenges, and being a federal agent and spy, and a soon to be director of an intelligence agency while starting a family would be a great challenge, Peggy knew that she and Steve could overcome anything, so she wasn't worried one bit.

Heathrow Airport London, England

A shining silver and red "American Overseas Airlines" four-engine propeller, triple tail Lockheed Constellation airplane finally touched down at Heathrow Airport in London after a long transatlantic flight from New York City. The plane landed a little after four in the afternoon with the usual London weather that accompanied this time of year with overcast skies and sporadic late afternoon showers. The passengers inside the plane could tell it was going to be a little chilly outside just by looking out the windows. In one of the pairs of seats in the middle of the passenger cabin, Peggy rested her head on Steve's broad shoulder as the plane began to taxi to the terminal. Peggy wore a maternity dark blue wrap, short sleeve, swing dress that went past her knees, nylon stockings, and dark blue flats. She also wore her wavy brown hair down and wore her usual makeup with red lipstick. She let her hair grow out just a little again, and now it was just a little past collar bone length. On her lap is her brown purse under a relatively neatly folded grey collared, button up coat. Steve on the other hand, cleaned up nicely to meet Peggy's family so he looked slightly overdressed. He wore a pressed dark grey suit, dark blue tie to match Peggy's dress, and black polished dress shoes. On his lap he had a grey fedora and a folded khaki colored trench coat.

As Steve felt the plane make a left toward the terminal, he looked to his left and smiled at Peggy who was still resting her head on his shoulder. She looked so peaceful, making him believe that she was still asleep. Even while eight months pregnant, Steve saw her as the most beautiful woman in the world. Everything about her is beautiful. He also admired that Peggy had been putting in a lot of effort to stay in shape during her pregnancy, though he was aware that remaining physically attractive to him wasn't her primary goal, Peggy DID emphasize that it continued to play a significant factor in her motivation to train. However, the primary reason for her training while pregnant was so
she wouldn't be too much out of shape when she returned to field work in the SSR. Whatever the reason, Steve admired his wife's determination and enjoyed seeing her overcome the obvious physical difficulties of being pregnant and the bothersome side effects that accompanied it. But interesting enough the side effects of the third trimester bothered Peggy more so than usual during the flight. She complained about back aches and frequently had to make trips to the lavatory throughout the duration of the flight. Steve chuckled at the memory of how uncharacteristic his wife was when she complained about the side effects of pregnancy during the flight. Peggy was never the one to complain about anything, so this was a big deal.

Steve smiled to himself as his mind started to think about having a family with Peggy once again. Just that simple thought made him smile from ear to ear. He knew Peggy would make an excellent mother. She's strong, kind, patient, and understanding and that's just a few good reasons. Although Peggy often griped about the side effects of pregnancy, she knew it's worth it. Steve's reverie was interrupted when he felt Peggy move. Peggy sat up in her seat and rubbed her belly with both of her hands.

Steve rubbed her back gently, "You okay?"

Peggy looked at him with a loving smile, "mhmm." She slightly cringed with a smile, "Baby is just kicking." Peggy been feeling the baby kick since her sixth month of pregnancy, and recently the baby has been kicking a lot more since then. At first, when she felt the baby kick, it surprised her and felt like something poked her from the inside. But now she welcomes the sensation as a beautiful reminder of the baby she carries within her. When the baby first started kicking Steve couldn't get enough of it and loved feeling Peggy's belly just to wait for kicks from their baby.

Steve smiled and put his hand over her belly and felt a gentle kick against his hand. He beamed happily at Peggy who was staring at him with a large smile. Steve leaned down slightly so he was closer to Peggy's belly, "We made it to London, little one," he said softly to the baby in Peggy's belly.

Peggy smiled as she felt another kick within her, "Our baby definitely takes after you. The baby got a lot of strong kicks."

Steve chuckled, "If anything he'll take after you. You're the one who enjoys kicking people."

Peggy laughed, "And how do you know we're going to have a boy, darling."

"Well. Call it a gut feeling," Steve said with a soft chuckle.

Peggy giggled and intertwined her fingers with his, "Well, forgive me, darling, but I'm not at all convinced we're having a boy," She said shrugging with a grin.

Steve smiled, "My gut is rarely wrong."

"Ha. That's debatable, darling," Peggy said jokingly.

"You'll see," Steve said confidently.

Peggy laughed at her husband's confidence in having a son. She honestly wouldn't mind if the baby were a boy or a girl, she'll love her child nonetheless. She had no preference what so ever, merely starting a family is a great gift in itself. Family. That word rang in her mind for a moment as her pleasant smile slowly faded into a look of worry. It's not that she's worried about starting a family with Steve, it's that she's concerned about her family. She hasn't seen them since the war, and the last time she saw her parents she didn't leave them on good terms. The loss of her brother, Michael
sparked her motivation to distance herself from her parents and family, and ultimately rekindled what she truly wanted to do. To pursue a life of adventure. The death of her brother in a way pushed her to take the field agent position in the British Intelligence thus thrusting her directly into the war.

When Peggy left home, the only one in the family she ever made any contact with, though rarely, was her younger sister, Victoria. Though the two sisters haven't seen each other since the war and rarely communicated, they were able to reestablish contact through the mail a while ago. Luckily, Victoria's address hasn't changed since she got married during the war. Victoria Carter Beck formerly Victoria Marie Carter is the only one in Peggy's family to know that Peggy got married and to whom, but what Victoria doesn't know is that her sister is eight months pregnant. Peggy hasn't told her that news because she fears that her sister will tell her parents, and this is the type of news that Peggy wanted to tell herself.

Peggy became increasingly worried with reuniting with her family. This whole trip to reunite with her parents was her sister's idea, not hers. She initially refused the letter proposal from her sister, but after some discussion, Steve talked her into it by stating that their child would love to meet his or her grandparents someday and since Steve's parents aren't alive anymore that leaves only Peggy's. Peggy had no other option but to accept. But she dreaded the reunion entirely. For starters, Peggy didn't tell her parents that she got married, didn't invite them to the wedding, and now she's showing up to reunite with her parents that she hasn't seen in years while eight months pregnant. So many life changing things happened to her since she left that all this news will come to them as a shock. There are so many things that can go wrong with this reunion. Peggy became confident that facing Nazis, Hydra, and Leviathan fared better on her nerves than reuniting with her parents.

Another strong kick from the baby within her brought her back to reality. Peggy ran a hand through her smooth brown hair then turned to see Steve looking at her with concern. She tried to give a warm smile, "Hey."

Steve wore a worried look, "You alright? I lost you there for a second."

Peggy nodded silently, "I just…" She couldn't find the words.

Steve knew what she was thinking so he wrapped a strong arm around her and brought her close, "It'll be okay." Peggy nodded as she rubbed her belly gently with a motherly touch. She closed her eyes as the baby began to gently kick within her again. Feeling the baby kick and move within her seemed almost like her child was reassuring her too. Steve smiled and kissed the top of her head reassuringly, "It'll be okay. I know it."

After a moment, Peggy turned and looked at her husband and smiled genuinely, "Thank you, darling."

"Anytime."

The plane finally came to a stop at the terminal in Heathrow Airport prompting everyone onboard to unbuckle their seat belts and gather their things to prepare disembarking the plane. Steve gave a friendly smile to his wife, "Shall we?"

Peggy nodded with a small smile, "Let's get on with it," she said referring to the impending reunion with her family that she was completely dreading.

Steve chuckled, "Atta girl." With that he and Peggy did the same as everyone else, they gathered their things and stood up to get ready to leave the plane. Soon they were out of the plane and carefully making their way down the mobile airline passenger steps to the tarmac.
After the Rogers had got their two suitcases from the crowded baggage claim, they left the terminal building and made their way to the sidewalk to wait for Victoria to pick them up. Figuring it might be a while, Steve sent Peggy to sit down on the benches a few feet behind him, so she didn't have to stand around the whole time. Peggy happily complied, not wanting to stand on her feet for too long. That left Steve to stand alone silently on the curb of the sidewalk. He stood in perfect stature with his gray fedora tilted to the side on his head, hands in his pockets, and his khaki trench coat draped messily over one of his forearms with the two suitcases on the ground on either side of him.

Peggy sat on the bench as straight as she could with her knees together, her purse on her lap, and her coat draping over it. She looked up at the cloudy London sky and noted that it wasn't raining, but based on how dark the clouds looked; there is a strong possibility of it raining very soon. As she continued to look up at the cloudy skies, she felt a sense of relief flow over her as if she returned home after such a long time. A strong cold breeze blew against her, but instead of shivering she couldn't help but smile. She then looked ahead of her and saw the characteristically British cars drive down the slick roads in front of her making her smile beam wider as she felt a wave of nostalgia overcome her. She couldn't lie; the weather, the atmosphere, the fellow Englishmen she encountered in the airport, and the familiar city architecture made her miss London greatly. It was good to be back.

Peggy looked at her husband who had his back toward her. He was looking up at the sky like she was a few moments ago. She smiled at him once again. He looked so carefree and relaxed even though he'll be meeting her parents for the very first time. Honestly, she thought Steve would be more nervous because he's going to meet her parents as her husband and soon to be the father of her child. But Steve doesn't look the least bit nervous. Looking at him made Peggy feel like that the reunion won't be so bad after all.

After waiting for some time, a black Austin sixteen four-door car slowly pulled up to the curb in front of Steve. Soon after, an energetic young woman with long brown wavy hair wearing a long gray overcoat over a blue hostess style wrap dress stepped out of the driver's seat of the car. The young woman instantly spotted Peggy on the bench and automatically smiled at her and happily called out, "Peggy!" She called in a youthful British accent.

Peggy slowly stood up from the bench and gave a questioning smile, "Victoria?" She asked unsure of herself. She slung her purse over her right shoulder and draped her coat over her right arm then stood still for a mere moment as she focused on the other woman in question.

Victoria quickly closed the door, "Yes, of course, it's me! Don't recognize your own sister?" She called out as she happily ran around the car to Peggy, completely unaware of Steve. Victoria collided with her sister in a strong embrace catching Peggy completely off guard and practically knocking the wind out of her. At that instant, Victoria realized her sister was pregnant. She was so excited to see her sister again that she didn't initially realize her sister was pregnant until they embraced.

Peggy gave a light chuckle and happily returned the loving sisterly embrace, "Its good to finally see you again, Vickie," she said genuinely.

Victoria pulled back feigned hurt, "Is that all I get after this long?" She gasped as she put her hand on her chest in fake hurt.

Peggy smiled and shook her head, "I missed you so much, Vickie. Happy?" It wasn't a lie; Peggy did actually miss her sister. She just didn't think about saying that initially.

"Yes," Victoria said happily. She stepped back and looked down at her sister's relatively large belly, "Well hello there," she said playfully.
Peggy smiled, "I'm eight months pregnant."

Victoria looked up and smiled at her sister, "Your first?" Peggy nodded quietly with a big smile. "It's well worth it. Believe me," Victoria said with a smile.

Peggy chuckled, "I know."

"May I?" Victoria asked holding her hands by Peggy's stomach signaling to feel her belly. Peggy nodded with a warm smile. Victoria placed her hands on Peggy's belly just as the baby started to kick again. "Oh me! He or she is a strong one!" Victoria said excitedly.

Peggy smiled, "Strong like the father."

Victoria smiled and hugged her sister again, "I'm so happy for you!" She expressed happily. After a while, she let her go, "Goodness, Peggy! I haven't seen you in years and now you're married and pregnant. My how things changed. Time flies!" Peggy nodded silently with a small smile. Victoria chuckled, "How long has it been since we last saw each other? Seven years?"

Peggy nodded, "Seven years. Last time I saw all of you is just after I called off the wedding with Fred." She sighed, "I didn't leave our family on good terms."

Victoria gripped her shoulder, "I don't blame you, Peggy. I miss Michael too; you know?" Peggy nodded quietly. "I know his passing hit you the most."

Peggy reached and gripped her sister's hand, "I'm sorry I didn't attend your wedding. I was… working."

"It's alright, Peggy. I invited you because you're my big sister. I knew you probably wouldn't be able to go because of your work and its importance to the war effort." Victoria laughed, "I would've gone to yours, but I never got the invitation."

Peggy shook her head, "I'm sorry, Vickie. I would've invited you, but I was afraid you'd tell mother and father. Though I knew you would find out eventually and tell them, but…"

Victoria gave an excited smile breaking the serious mood, "I found out in the papers here in London that you got married to the legendary Captain America, but I'm glad you eventually wrote me about it though. I kind of wished I could've seen you get married. Would've been exciting."

"I'm sorry, Vickie," Peggy repeated but with a small smile creeping on her face.

Victoria chuckled, "Don't worry. You can tell me all about the details later."

Peggy nodded then returned to her serious tone, "I will. I want you to know that I didn't invite all you because I just…I just wasn't ready to talk to mother and father then. I'm still not ready…"

Victoria's voice lowered to a serious tone, "Peggy, its been years..."

Peggy sighed, "I know. But they wanted me to change to be the perfect daughter by being a porcelain doll like all the other women nowadays." Peggy shrugged. "No offense."

"It's alright, Peggy. I know," Victoria said in understanding.

Peggy sighed again, "They didn't really like my sense of adventure. Especially mother and her constant nagging of, 'Peggy, be more like a lady' or 'Peggy, a proper lady does not do that.' It just got so tiresome. I had to distance myself." Peggy chuckled, "Good times, right?" Victoria stood silent
with a big grin on her face. Peggy shrugged, "I'm sorry, Vickie. I don't mean to bring all these back up again. It's silly and I feel like an immature and rebellious teenager."

Victoria laughed and shook her head, "No its not. That topic has been engrained in us all our lives by our parents. It's alright to feel that way. But, believe me when I say that mother and father have missed you so much. They've been waiting for this day since the day you left. They can't wait to see you. They can't wait to see the woman you've become!" Peggy nodded nervously. Victoria beamed energetically, "Relax, Peggy."

Peggy sighed, "So much things have happened since I left. I didn't call, I didn't write, and now I'm showing up married and pregnant. What are they going to think?"

Victoria smiled, "That you're home." She chuckled, "They're our mother and father, Peggy. They will always welcome you home. I'm not just saying so. You'll see." Peggy nodded.

Peggy smiled then spotted Steve looking over at them with a big grin on his face. She shook her head, "Sorry, where are my manners." She nodded over to Steve prompting Victoria to turn around. At that moment, Victoria finally recognized Steve and instantly blushed at the sight of the handsome man looking over at them with a warm smile.

As the sisters turned Steve's way, he simply smiled at them. He stayed silent when the two sisters reunited because he didn't want to be rude and interrupt. He knew that the two sisters hadn't seen each other in years, so it was best for him to remain invisible. He knew he could do that well. But when the sister met up, he couldn't help but chuckle at their awkward reunion. He figured their meeting was bound to be awkward because neither of the sisters has seen each other face-to-face in seven years. It was evident that the sisters needed more time outside of today to catch up, so one day wasn't going to be enough. Luckily he and Peggy planned on staying in London for a week, so he knew Peggy would have some time to catch up with her family though one week might also not be enough. But the very least, this reunion with her family would at least open the door for her to reconnect with her family more.

Peggy walked over to Steve with her sister close behind so she could include her husband into the conversation. Peggy stopped by her husband and smiled, "Victoria, this is my husband Steve Rogers," She said proudly with bigger and happier smile growing on her face. She then turned her attention to her husband now with a full smile on her face, "And Steve, this is my sister Victoria Carter Beck."

Steve was happy to meet his wife's sister. "Very nice to meet you. Thanks for picking us up," Steve said holding out a hand for a handshake. Victoria looked very youthful and her facial structure looked relatively similar to Peggy's though Victoria had more of a slimmer face than her older sister. Victoria's hair was also a lot longer than Peggy's and ended at the middle of her back. The younger sister was also a lot more energetic in a youthful sense than her older sister who was much more serious and reserved. Steve could instantly tell the big personality difference between the two. It wasn't rocket science.

Victoria blushed as she grabbed his hand gently and shook it, "Charmed to meet you, Captain Rogers." She noticed Steve's strong grip and blushed redder than before. Steve let go of her hand and gave a friendly smile as he wrapped Peggy in his strong arm. Peggy smiled and leaned into him and planted a hand on his chest.

Steve nodded and decided to address the topic he figured Victoria would bring up, "So I assume you know I'm…"

"Captain America," Victoria interrupted energetically. She bounced on her heals, "Yes, I definitely
know who you are. You're the Steve Rogers, you're Captain America!" She repeated excitedly.
Steve chuckled, "Yes, I am."
"You were all over the papers during the war! Big hero!" Victoria said as a complete fan. "I'm a big
fan!"
Steve chuckled, "I didn't notice," he said jokingly. Peggy chuckled and looked up at Steve joking at
her sister.
"When I saw on the papers that my sister was marrying you, I couldn't believe it. My sister is Mrs.
Captain America," Victoria said excitedly. She gasped, "How did you two get married?"
Steve shrugged, "We'll tell you everything about that later."
Peggy chuckled, "I just prefer 'Mrs. Rogers,' Victoria."
"I'm not going to lie; I was a little jealous," Victoria said with a big grin. Victoria turned serious for a
second, "Don't tell my husband."
Peggy nodded with a happy smile, "I promise we won't."
Victoria shook her head excitedly, "My sister is married to Captain America! I still can't believe it!"
Peggy whispered to Steve, "I'm surprised she kept in her excitement for this long."
Steve shrugged and whispered back, "She was more focused on reuniting with you than your
marriage to me." He chuckled lightly, "But, I'm sure she was ready to explode with comments and
questions about us while you two did your awkward reunion."
Peggy whispered back, "It wasn't that awkward, was it?" Steve simply shrugged earning a playful
eye roll from Peggy.
The couple was brought back to the conversation by a high pitch squeal coming from an ecstatic
Victoria, "EEEE! You two have to tell me how you two met and got married soon! I want details!"
Steve looked down at Peggy with a big surprised grin that silently meant, She's your sister? Peggy
understood the look and simply nodded with a happy smile across her face. Victoria bounced on her
heels, "When my sister wrote about you a while back, it didn't truly sing in. But now it did! Though I
still can't believe it!"
Peggy laughed, "You said that a few times, Vickie."
"I'm sorry. It's just…I'm so excited, happy, and a little jealous that you married the Captain America!
AND I got to meet him!" Victoria squealed about Steve. They were starting to draw attention to
themselves as people outside the terminal building started to look curiously over at them.
Steve laughed, "Victoria…"
"Vickie, please," Victoria responded eagerly.
Steve chuckled, "Vickie…I know you're excited, but you need to keep it down. Peggy and I don't
want to draw too much attention on ourselves."
Victoria nodded, "Understandable, sorry." She grinned at Peggy and pointed at Steve, "He's my
brother-in-law." Peggy laughed. Victoria looked at Steve, "My son will love you. He's quite a fan of
yours."


Steve smiled and genuinely responded, "I can't wait to meet him. Hope I don't disappoint him."

Victoria chuckled, "OH you won't. Believe me. He knows all about you."

Peggy rubbed her belly once again at the sensation of the baby kicking within her. Steve noticed what Peggy was doing which prompted him to grip her side affectionately. He smiled at his wife then looked up at Victoria, "Not to be rude, but…ready to get out here? I think we overspent our time here."

Victoria nodded, "Oh, yes, of course. I'm sorry for taking so long."

Steve let go of Peggy then turned and picked up the two suitcases on the ground. Victoria turned around and went to open the trunk of the car as Peggy walked over to the left rear passenger door to sit in the back. The moment Steve picked up the suitcases, he saw Peggy about to get in the back seat, "Peggy, go ahead and sit in the front with your sister," he said stopping her from getting in the back. Peggy turned and smiled at Steve silently. It didn't really matter where they sat, but Steve wanted Peggy to sit in the front because she would be closer to her sister to have a conversation. The action spoke volumes.

Victoria opened the trunk for Steve just as he arrived with the two suitcases. Steve easily swung the two suitcases in the trunk then took a step back so Victoria could close and lock the trunk. Once the two got all the suitcases secured in the trunk, the two got in the car to drive over to the Carter Residence.

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**Harrison & Amanda Carter Residence**

**London Borough of Hillingdon**

The ride to the Carter Residence in London Borough of Hillingdon took less than an hour. But even on the short drive, Victoria excitedly picked the conversation back up with Peggy and Steve. In a nutshell, Victoria was ecstatic to see her wonderful sister again and meet her dashing brother-in-law who's also Captain America. But before Victoria got too excited in asking the couple more detailed questions, they arrived at the Carter Residence too soon for her liking. But she knew she would have more time during the week to talk with both Peggy and Steve both as individuals and as a couple.

Victoria started to park the car at the curb in front of the house near the short driveway. Parked in the small driveway is a well maintained and polished green and red 1930s car which stood out like a thumb in the brisk cloudy November day in England. The house itself was located to the left of the short driveway and connected by a short mason path with a few stairs to the house. The house itself is a modest two story house with white walls, brown roofing, and brown painted trimmings. The house seemed to be framed and surrounded by a garden, many tall trees, and plants that spanned the parameter of the property. All the trees surrounding the house and even the neighbourhood showed the colorful and even bare effects of the autumn season. Many of the trees around the Carter House still had their red and orange colored autumn leaves hanging on their branches while other trees already lost their leaves. The fall season brought on a colorful display from the trees and even produced a warm feeling even if the temperature was a bit brisk. The Carter house and the surrounding neighbourhood looked rather cozy and beautiful this time of year.

The moment Victoria parked the car, the trio started to get out. Victoria got out and made her way to the back of the car to unlock the trunk so her brother-in-law could grab the luggage. Steve on the other hand, put his fedora on, grabbed his trench coat, stepped out of the car, and instantly made his way over to the front passenger seat to help Peggy just in case she needed it. For the last few months, Peggy was struggling to get in and out of cars due to her growing size due to her pregnancy. She
also found it hard to drive with the big baby belly so she opted to relying on Steve to drive her to places. Steve, of course, was more than happy to help. Peggy hung her purse across her body, grabbed her coat, then slowly pushed open her door. She slowly started to swing her legs out of the car with a quiet aching groan feeling the difficulties of trying to get up. The moment she moved she felt the baby kick within her. She chuckled, *Darling, mama has to move. I'm sorry I woke you,* she said in her thoughts to her stirring baby within her. As she managed to get both her legs out of the car, she spotted Steve offering a strong hand for her to take hold. Peggy smiled at him, "Thank you, my darling," she said taking hold of his hand.

Steve smiled, "My pleasure." He effortlessly pulled her out of the car without hurting or disorienting her.

Peggy smiled, "Thank you," she said again. She actually found it much more convenient if Steve just yanked her out of the car. It saved time and it was easier on her. Steve nodded with a grin. He turned and looked at the house and admired it.

"Is this…" Steve began.

Peggy nodded, "This is where I grew up." She chuckled, "Funny. It hasn't changed." She looked at her husband, "This is home." She paused, "Or…was."

Steve nodded then looked over at Peggy and smiled, "I like it." Peggy smiled at his statement. Her smile faded as she started to make a worried look as she looked down at the ground. Steve sensed her worry and took her hand to comfort her, "Hey. It'll be fine. I'm sure your parents are nervous too. Remember, they haven't seen you in years either," Steve said in a comforting tone.

Peggy smiled, "Thank you," she said softly. She leaned into him then stood on her toes to kiss her husband when Victoria's energetic voice interrupted them.

"OI! Love birds! We still have to get the luggage out!" Victoria called out with a grin.

Peggy sighed and shook her head. Steve shrugged, "I'll take care of the bags. You go with your sister."

Just as Steve turned, Peggy was about to protest when Victoria passed Steve and called out to Peggy, "Peggy, lets go greet the family," Victoria said energetically as she started to push Peggy gently toward the house. "my husband and son will love you!" Victoria yelled excitedly.

Peggy was resisting Victoria, "What about Steve?"

"He'll be fine. Those suitcases are like paper to him anyway," Victoria continued to push her until Peggy finally conceded. Victoria quickly stepped to the side to walk next to Peggy and link arms with her sister. Peggy chuckled, with all the years that passed Victoria still stayed the same for the most part. Like Peggy, Victoria changed. Victoria seemed to be a little more serious now, but she still had that same energetic and easily excitable attitude. To Peggy, that energetic and easily excitable attitude was one of the best features in her sister.

The two sister were walking up the driveway toward the house when the front door swung open revealing a well-dressed man with neatly combed light brown hair. The man wore a white dress shirt, maroon argyle pattern sweater vest, matching maroon tie, black dress pants, and black dress shoes. The man stepped out and smiled, "I could tell that was you from inside, sweetheart," the man said in a playful tone in a fluent English accent.

Victoria let go of Peggy's arm and sped up to meet up with the man. "I got excited," she said as she
walked up the two small steps to meet him. The two then embraced in a tight tender hug just as Peggy reached the two steps.

The man was the first to pull back from the hug, "I don't blame you. You haven't seen your sister in years." He gave a warm smile as he looked between Victoria and Peggy. He couldn't lie, the two sisters looked pretty similar in his eyes.

Victoria smiled happily, "Love, this is my sister Margaret 'Peggy' Rogers." She turned to Peggy, "And Peggy. This is my husband Edward 'Ed' Beck."

Ed smiled happily and bowed his head politely, "Pleasure to finally meet my wife's sister. Heard so much about you."

Peggy gave a warm smile, "Pleasure to meet you." She didn't know what else to say because she was more focused on seeing her parents very soon for the first time in seven years.

Victoria chuckled at her sister's uneasiness. Ed smiled breaking the awkwardness, "So you're married to…"

Peggy interrupted him knowing what was going to be said, "Captain America," She said with a smile. She nodded, "Yes, I am. Though I prefer just being mentioned as 'Peggy' and or 'Mrs. Rogers', not 'Captain America's wife'."

Ed chuckled, "I understand. I sense you must hear that a lot."

"You have no idea," Peggy said with a smile.

He clapped his hands, "Well, our son will love to meet their aunt for the first time and meet…Captain America. He's quite a fan of his."

Peggy chuckled, "I don't blame him." She smiled, "So how old is your son?"

Even though the war ended two years ago, the fan base for Captain America was still relatively large, especially in young adults, women, and children. The war may have ended, but Steve is practically a living super hero who fought in the war. His actions made him a legend which made him famous. Though his good standings were slightly tainted to the Federal Government after the "SHIELD Incident".

Victoria chimed in with a smile, "he's three. But when he was a baby and becoming a toddler, he was always fascinated by Captain America." She laughed, "We showed him one picture when he was a baby, and he instantly fell in love with him." She shrugged, "What can I say, he's Captain America's number one fan."

Peggy laughed, "That's adorable."

Ed nodded at Peggy, "Speaking of kids. How far along are you?" He said respectfully referring to Peggy's pregnancy. "If you don't mind me asking," he said with respect.

"Eight months. I'm expecting very soon," Peggy said happily.

Ed smiled, "Excited?"

Peggy nodded, "Very. We can't wait." She chuckled, "We've been preparing for months…and I can't wait to stop being so cumbersome."
"It's worth it. Believe me," Ed said proudly.

Peggy nodded, "That's what Vickie said. And I know it'll worth it all." She couldn't help but beam happily again at the prospect of starting a family, "Steve is going to be a great father, he's so good with kids."

Ed laughed, "Sounds like you two are ready for parenthood."

"I sure hope so," Peggy responded confidently. "We've been getting the nursery ready for a while now. Everything will be set for the baby," Peggy chuckled. "But when I say 'we', I mean mostly Steve. He's been very helpful and caring throughout this whole thing." She chuckled again, "I expected nothing less. As I said, he's ready to be a father."

"Steve sounds like quite the man people say he is," Ed praised.

"Oh he is and much more," Peggy said in admiration.

Victoria spotted Steve walking up the driveway with suitcases in hands and his khaki trench coat draped over one. Victoria turned and tugged on her husband's arm and pointed to Steve, interrupting the conversation Peggy and Ed were having, "That's him. Steve Rogers. That's Peggy's husband. And… Captain America"

Peggy smiled proudly at the mention of her husband from her sister. Ed's jaw dropped slightly for a moment, "wow. I never thought I'd meet him face-to-face to be honest," he said a little stunned. He couldn't help but feel honored to be in his presence. Like everyone else, he heard a lot about Steve, so Ed was no stranger to who he was. Ed chuckled, "He's a lot bigger in person." He shook his head, "Those stories about his size are true… He's a giant." Peggy chuckled.

"Go say hello, I know you always wanted to meet him in person. While you do that I'll take my sister to greet my parents," Victoria said calmly.

Ed nodded, "Got it." He smiled at Victoria, "Alex is in the backyard still, playing in the playpen," he said informing her of her son.

Victoria smiled, "Thank you, love."

Ed stepped to the side, "Excuse me, ladies," he said as he walked down the steps to meet Steve halfway.

Peggy suddenly became nervous again and dreaded the reunion with her parents that is about to take place. She was confident for a mere minute, but with the reunion being so close it shut down her confidence like a rookie who screwed up their first major field assignment. Peggy could face every Hydra, Leviathan, German, and Soviet agent in the world, and she'd still be more confident to do that than doing this reunion. Victoria sensed her hesitation, "Stop worrying, Peggy. It'll be fine." Victoria walked into the house while Peggy waited outside for a moment.

Peggy sighed nervously then walked up the steps to join her sister in the house.

Peggy stepped into the house and was hit by a wave of nostalgia. She could tell the smell of her mother's tea and cooking coming from the kitchen on the far side of the house. She smiled, the house looked the same since she left, but different at the same time. Of course, there were minor changes like new potted plants, new pictures, and some other new décor, but the house looked majorly unchanged since the day she parted ways. Peggy always remembered how her mother always cared about the state of the house, always wanting to make it look beautiful both on the inside and outside.
Hence the outside garden and the variety of décor inside.

Peggy slowly started to visually scan her old home she knew so well from her youth. The dark hard wood floors that spanned throughout the house were polished and clean like she remembered. Just in front of her and slightly to the left is the dark brown colored staircase that leads to the second floor. Directly to her left is the bathroom behind a polished wood door. Then over to her right is the spacious living room that connected seamlessly to the dining room. Right in front of her, past the stairs and the under stair closet is the kitchen which attached to the dining room. From where Peggy stood, she could look through the stretch of hallway and see the back door and parts of the kitchen and dining room.

Peggy gave a small smile at the nostalgia she was feeling. She remembered her youthful days when she was a kid running around the house like a tomboy with her brother and sister then getting immediately scolded for not being lady like by her mother. She let out a soft chuckle to herself at the old memories. All these memories made her feel like she never left home.

Victoria stepped toward the stairs and called out happily, "Mother, Father, Peggy's home!" There was no response and no sounds came from within the house. Only silence.

Peggy didn't move an inch and tensed at the silence. Suddenly she heard the faint sound of footsteps along the wood floor in the kitchen. Peggy took a nervous breath as the sound of footsteps got closer. With each passing moment, she became more and more nervous which was extremely uncharacteristic of her. It felt like an eternity of waiting for her, but what seemed like forever, was only a mere few seconds. Suddenly Peggy saw her mother slowly appear around the corner from the kitchen causing her heart to stop for a moment. This very second is the first time she saw her mother in seven years since her brother died. Peggy just stared at her mother in silence for what seemed like forever, observing how her mother looked. She was sure her mother was doing the same to her. Peggy found that her mother looked slightly older but not by much since the last time she saw her in the summer of 1940. Her mother still had the same gentle features on her face with the same warm look in her eyes as Peggy remembered when she was younger. Her mother's pure brown shoulder length hair didn't have a hint of gray and was rolled into large victory rolls which gave her a very youthful look. She had makeup on with red lipstick like Peggy and wore a maroon and green striped wrapped dress, a green apron, and dark green flats. Peggy gave a shy smile, happy at the fact that her mother didn't look like she changed much after all this time. That gave a very warm feeling in her stomach.

Peggy continued to lock eyes with her mother for what seemed like an eternity. After a while she saw her mother slowly produce a warm smile on her face. It was clear that her mother was in a little bit of shock to see Peggy again after all this time. At that second, Peggy felt the baby kick again causing her to break eye contact with her mother for a second and rub her belly with a big smile. It was almost like the baby was trying to say hi to Peggy's mother too. Peggy beamed happily then suddenly didn't feel nervous anymore. She then slowly looked back up at her mother and gave her a loving smile.

Peggy's mother spoke softly, "My dear Peggy…" she said in almost a gasp.

Peggy smiled and just as she was about to say something, her father rounded the corner from the kitchen and wrapped his arm around her mother. Peggy gasped again at the sight of her father then smiled happily at him. Just like her mother, her father looked relatively unchanged. He looked slightly older and slightly heavier but still looked the same since she left years ago. Her father still had that warm, loving look he had when she was a child, and it seemed like it never changed. The only thing that Peggy noticed that was significantly different in her father is that he had more gray in his brown hair than she remembered, but he still had a full head of hair. She knew how much he
loved how his hair looked. She chuckled at the fact that he still looked and dressed more or less the same. He had his hair combed nicely, and he wore a white dress shirt, white undershirt, black dress pants with suspenders on his shoulders, and black dress shoes. She smiled happily at her parents she hasn't seen in seven years. Her parents happily smiled back at her.

Her father, too spoke softly, "My beautiful daughter is home…” Peggy chuckled happily and rested her hands under her protruding baby belly. The warm, loving looks she's receiving from her parents diminished all fears and nerves of the reunion she had.

Peggy's mother and father slowly approached her together and with each step they took, Peggy's heart beat climbed. Once her mother was within feet of her, Peggy smiled, "Hello mother, hello father," she said greeting them softly.

Her mother burst into tears of joy and embraced her oldest daughter. "Oh Peggy! I've missed you so much!" her mother said in between tears. Peggy happily returned her mother's strong embrace with equal love and rested her chin in the crook of her neck. Her mother's embrace brought her back in time for a few moments. Nothing feels the same like a mother's embrace.

Her father quickly joined the hug and wrapped his arms around both his wife and daughter. He kissed Peggy's hair and whispered, "Welcome home, my beautiful Margaret." The trio held their hug for what seemed like an eternity. Victoria simply smiled at the trio and wished she had her camera to take a picture of it all. Her father pulled back and smiled at Peggy, "We missed you so much, Peggy. All of us."

The trio broke the hug and took a step back from one another to get breathing room even though Peggy's mother would've loved to continue hugging her oldest daughter. Peggy smiled, "I missed you too," she said. Although she had resentment before, a part of her always missed her family.

Peggy's mother composed herself and stepped forward again to place a gentle hand on her oldest daughter's cheek, "My, Margaret 'Peggy' Carter...you've grown so much since I last saw you. You're so beautiful." She chuckled, "I never got to tell you how proud I am of you, and what an amazing young woman you became." She held a warm smile as she took a step back and looked Peggy up and down, "And you are…"

Peggy interrupted with a smile and nod, "Pregnant," she said softly. "I'm eight months, mother."

Her mother placed a hand over her heart and gasped with the smile on her face slowly fading. "My oldest daughter is pregnant…" she said softly.

Peggy nodded, "I'm sorry I didn't tell you about any of this. About getting married and having a baby." She paused, "it's just...we didn't leave off on good terms the last time I…"

Her mother chuckled, "Oh hush, darling. Don't worry about that now." She chuckled again and starting tearing tears of joy again, "I'm just glad I have my daughter back..." She frowned, "I already lost my son, I didn't want to lose my oldest daughter too." She placed her hand on Peggy's cheek again and looked into her eyes, "And I can see you're happy just by how you smile at your unborn child… so that makes me happy too," she said giving an honest loving smile.

Peggy smiled at her mother. Peggy's father shook his head while taking deep breaths, "this is a lot to take in," he whispered while smiling. He laughed, "but this is nothing but good things, Peggy. Our oldest daughter got married, and now is starting a family." He gasped, "Lots to take in…” He chuckled, "but I'm happy." He laughed happily, "very darn happy!"

Peggy held her smile, "You're not upset?" she said in shock.
Her mother shook her head, "Of course not. We're a family again and that's what's important." She smiled happily, "Although this is a lot to take in… I'm happy to be a grandmother to your child." She shook her head, "I'm just so happy for you, darling. We're a family once again," she repeated.

Her father spoke up, "Why would we be upset, my dear?"

Peggy spoke plainly, "I got married and I'm pregnant."

Her father laughed, "You're an adult, Peggy. You don't need us anymore."

"It's just…"

Her father interrupted, "Telling us you're getting married and giving our blessings are just formalities. Yes, we didn't see you get married or offer our blessings, but it's been so long since we seen you. We understand why you shut us out after your brother died, and we had years to think about that. We tried our best to reach out to you, but we never could. We never got anything back. It was almost like we lost another child." Peggy frowned as her father spoke. Her father saw her mood change and placed a loving hand on her shoulder causing Peggy to look up at him, "You coming home…is a blessing, and you with child is another." Peggy smiled at her father's words. He continued, "Today on, we can pick up where we left off all those years ago."

Peggy's mother laughed, "Though it would've been nice to go to the United States and see our oldest daughter get married." She chuckled, "At least we got to see Victoria's," she said humorously. Everyone laughed including Peggy.

Victoria laughed, "I'm sure my wedding wasn't as fancy as yours, Peggy."

Peggy shrugged, "It was alright," she said jokingly.

Father smiled, "So is Captain America here?" Peggy sighed. She is about to have the same conversation she had with her sister, but this time with her parents. Steve is a public figure, less than Humphrey Bogart but he's still a popular figure nonetheless, so she knew her parents were going to find out just like how her sister did. It was always a matter of time until her parents got the news. The question on Peggy's mind was always, how would her parents take the news? But judging how her parents are acting right now, she thinks they took it pretty well.

Her mother smiled, "we know he's your husband, Peggy. Your sister wrote us all about your engagement and marriage to the famous war hero." She chuckled, "It was also all over the papers for a while." She raised a brow with a coy smile, "You probably didn't want to tell us, but we found out ourselves anyway," she said with a light chuckle. Peggy understood and laughed along with her mother. Her mother smiled happily, "I hear he's quite the man."

Peggy nodded happily, "He is. He is everything they say he is and more. Though I knew him long before he became a hero," she said in a loving yet praising tone.

Her mother smiled down and spoke, "You must tell us all about it later."

Peggy chuckled, "I will, I promise."

Her mother started, "So since you're married… that must mean you changed your name to…"

Peggy answered, "Rogers. I'm Margaret Carter Rogers."

Victoria leaned against the handrails of the stairs and chuckled, "It does have a nice ring to it."
Peggy nodded proudly, "yes, it does."

Her father spoke, "What's his full name?"

"Steven Grant Rogers," Peggy answered fondly.

Her father joked, "That's a strong name. A name fit for such a man," he said in a fake deep American voice.

Her mother smiled, "So is he here?"

Peggy nodded, "Of course he is. My husband is currently outside with our luggage and Ed."

"I can't wait to meet him," her mother said genuinely.

"me too," her father agreed.

Victoria smiled, "I want you to meet my son. He will love to meet your aunt and uncle for the first time. He'll be thrilled!" she said to Peggy.

Their mother chuckled, "You'll love her son, Peggy. He's are so cute!" With that Victoria excused herself and walked toward the back door to get her son who was playing in the playpen in the backyard.

Peggy shrugged and smiled, "I'll go get my husband." She turned around and opened the front door to call on Steve to meet her parents.

Mr. & Mrs. Carter simply wrapped their arms around each other and smiled happily. Their family is whole again. For the most part.

Steve walked through the front door at the call from his wife with Ed walking close behind him. They were immediately greeted by smiles from Mr. & Mrs. Carter waiting anxiously to meet Peggy's husband. Peggy's parents smiled warmly at the sight of Steve and were quite surprised at how different he looked in person compared to the papers and the newsreels. Steve quietly returned the warm smiles and gently placed the suitcases down on the floor then draped his khaki trench coat over one of the suitcases. He took a deep breath as he stood up and again produced a warm smile that didn't expose his new found nervousness. He felt confident the whole trip until he passed through the front door and was met by Peggy's awaiting parents.

This time, it was Peggy who felt confident and Steve who felt nervous. Peggy could read her husband like a book and could instantly tell that Steve was uneasy. Though to the untrained eye, he didn't look the least bit nervous; he just looked calm and composed like usual. Peggy swooped in and saved Steve by happily introducing him to her parents, "Mother, father, this is my husband Steve Rogers," she said happily.

Peggy's mother stepped forward first and offered her hand and warm smile, "Amanda Carter," she said in a warm voice.

Steve stepped toward her and shook her hand with a firm but gentle handshake, "Pleasure to meet you, ma'am," he said in a respectful tone.

Amanda waved her hand disarmingly with a grin, "You don't need to call me, ma'am, Steve. You're my daughter's husband. Mrs. Carter or Amanda is just fine."
Steve chuckled and released Amanda's hand, "I'll try to remember that. I say that out of respect."

Amanda chuckled, "Don't worry, Steve. You already struck me as a respectful young man."

Steve chuckled then turned his attention to Peggy's father. Peggy's father held out his hand, "Harrison Carter," he said in a firm voice.

Steve took his hand and gave him a firm handshake, "Nice to meet you, sir."

Harrison laughed, "You got a mighty fine handshake there, Mr. Rogers," he said as the two men continued to shake hands.

Peggy stood by her husband and rubbed his back, "He's Captain America, Father."

"That he is," Harrison said with a chuckle as he let go of Steve's hand. He focused on Steve, "How long have you been in the Army?"

Steve shrugged, "About five years."

Ed interrupted softly after he heard a rattling sound coming from the kitchen, "Excuse me," he said respectfully excusing himself from the group. Everyone smile and gave him a courteous nod as he parted ways with them to head over to the kitchen.

Amanda chimed in, "And you've been Captain America this entire time?"

Steve and Peggy shared a glance while smiling at each other. Steve answered, "More or less." Peggy nodded and shrugged in agreement.

"Since you're quite famous, do you make any extra profit from the fame of being Captain America?" Amanda asked curiously.

"Mother!" Peggy gasped in shock of her mother's question. That question was very unlike her mother as Peggy remembered.

Amanda chuckled, "I'm just curious, dear."

Steve chuckled and wrapped his arm around Peggy, "It's okay, Peggy." He focused on Amanda and shook his head, "but to answer your question: Not really." He shrugged, "If you look at the comic strips or listen to the radio shows about Captain America, they never use my real name. They only use the name 'Captain America'."

Peggy jumped in, "Mother, Steve is very humble. After he was found and the war ended, he refused all the offers to profit from his fame, including thousands of dollars offered for appearances, product endorsements, newspaper articles, and movie rights to his life story." She smiled up at her husband, "Instead, he lent his name and his nickname to various charitable and civic causes."

Amanda was impressed, "That's very humble of you, Steve." Like everyone else, Amanda knew Steve went missing in 1945 and found a few months later. The news of his disappearance and finding was all over the papers and newsreels for a while in both the United States and the United Kingdom. She figured it was a personal subject for her daughter and son-in-law, and decided to bring it up later. She's concerned about this issue because her son, Michael was killed while serving the British Army during the war, so Peggy being married to a soldier concerned her just a bit. Amanda is just concerned about her daughter is all.

Harrison nodded in agreement, "Yes it is." He made a face of confusion, "But how are comic strips
and radio shows using your title 'Captain America' if they don't have the rights to use it?"

Steve chuckled, "Well, it's a long story. The radio show…" He didn't really know how to phrase the answer.

Peggy helped him, "Mother, Father, remember when Steve rescued 400 American prisoners?"

Amanda nodded, "Yes of course, it was all over the papers and the radio."

"Well before he did that he used to go around on bond tour stage shows in the United States as 'Captain America' before he saw any action," Peggy said plainly.

Harrison nodded, "Oh yes, I remember now. His bond show was coming to London a long time ago." He chuckled, "I forgot about that."

Peggy nodded, "needless to say, the stage company still has the rights to the name 'Captain America' and they leant the rights over to a radio broadcasting service and some other businesses who create comic books, posters, and trading cards." She sighed, "They make up fictional 'adventures' Steve undertook during the war."

Harrison nodded, "I see. That makes sense."

Steve chuckled, "It used to be for bonds, but we don't need those anymore." He shrugged, "It's a seller's market, and all those things are making profit still so…"

Amanda shook her head, "It's a shame businessman like that use your good name for their own profit."

Steve waved his hand, "its fine." He shrugged, "I didn't really choose the name either…but…" he chuckled, "it eventually grew on me." He smiled, "Plus, it feels pretty good when kids look up to you. Seeing kids running around dressed like me and loving those comic books gives a pretty warm feeling." Peggy chuckled.

Peggy praised her husband, "but the whole country is in love with him. From USO stages to newsreels. Its quite a story."

Amanda smiled, "We'd like to hear it sometime." Steve and Peggy shared a happy glance with one another.

Ed appeared from the kitchen, "Mrs. Carter, the pot is boiling. I don't know what you want me to do with it."

Amanda gasped and turned around to face Ed, "Oh yes, I almost forgot about supper." She smiled, "I'll be over there in just a moment." Ed nodded then disappeared back in the kitchen. Amanda turned back to Steve and Peggy, "Supper will be ready in a few minutes. Make yourselves at home."

Peggy smiled, "Thank you, mother."

Steve nodded, "Thank you, Mrs. Carter."

Harrison nodded to the living room, "come join me in the living room for some good music." Both Steve and Peggy nodded as they were about to follow Harrison Carter into the living room.

Before the trio left, Amanda spoke up, "Oh, Steve, Peggy, be ready to meet Victoria's beautiful son."

Steve chuckled, "We'll be ready." With that Peggy linked her arm with his and the two followed
Peggy’s father to the living room.

The Carter living room was almost exactly how Peggy remembered it to be. The room is still beautifully decorated with many of the same décor and furniture in their same place, and the wood floor is still polished and spotless with the same multicolor rug covering much of the room. Everything looked seemingly unchanged to Peggy. Steve could instantly tell that Peggy was feeling more relaxed and even feeling a bit nostalgic just by looking at her. Her face and body language betrayed her. She wasn't on a mission or at the SSR at the moment, so she didn't need to hide behind a tough exterior. Steve was happy that Peggy could reunite with her family, and he could tell it was a tremendous weight off her shoulders. But needless to say, both Steve and Peggy are happy and relaxed at the moment.

Peggy sat on the green couch with her back propped up by a pillow while she leaned against the armrest with her feet resting comfortably on Steve's lap who sat on the opposite side of her on the small couch. Her father sat on one of two matching green armchairs in front of the fireplace that was turned slightly toward the sofa they were on. The trio was enjoying the afternoon with pleasant conversations and soft music playing on the radio.

Harrison chuckled at his oldest daughter, "You know, Peggy. Your mother would probably get upset with you for lying on the couch like that." He laughed, "Not very lady like when you have guests over," he said jokingly.

Peggy shook her head then turned her attention to Steve, "Darling, can you please take off my flats," she respectfully requested to her husband with a grin.

Steve complied with a smile, "Of course, my dear." He gently removed each flat and put them both down on the floor at the foot of the couch.

"See, father. I removed my shoes. So she can't be mad at me making the sofa dirty," Peggy said jokingly. She rested her hands on her protruding belly and gave a happy grin to her father.

Harrison chuckled and focused on Steve, "Is she like this with you?"

"Yes sir, all the time," Steve instantly replied jokingly. With that comment Peggy kicked him playfully in the gut which earned a grunt from her husband.

Harrison laughed at the two. He wanted to talk about how his daughter met Steve and wanted to get to know Steve better since he's married to his daughter. But Harrison opted to wait with that line of conversation because he knew his wife wanted to be part of it. Essentially, he and Amanda were going to interview Peggy and Steve, not to place judgment on their relationship, but to get to Steve better. He smiled at Steve and Peggy interacting with one another. The couple were laughing and joking happily like they were kids. It was quite funny.

Suddenly Victoria entered the room carrying a little boy in her arms with Ed trailing close behind her. She made her way to the couch at the center of the room and smiled, "Sorry it took me a while. I had to clean up my baby boy here."

Peggy smiled, "its no problem, Vickie." The three-year-old boy in her sister's arms had the same shade of brown hair like his mother, but at the same time he looked a lot like his father.

Ed took a seat on the armchair opposite of Harrison while smiling at his wife and son. Victoria looked at her son, "Peggy, Steve, I'd like you to meet your nephew, Alex." Alex looked at his new aunt and uncle with a curious stare.
Peggy instantly adored the toddler, "hello there, darling," she said in a sweet voice.

Steve too loved the little boy, "hey there, buddy," he said in his own playful tone. Harrison and Ed chuckled to themselves at the scene.

The boy blushed in his mother's arms and turned away from them and hid his head in the crook of Victoria's neck. Victoria laughed, "Sorry, he's a little shy."

Peggy chuckled, "Its quite alright, Vickie."

Victoria smiled and spoke to her son in a gentle tone, "Look, dear. Its only your aunt and uncle. They very much want to meet you." Alex still was overcome by shyness and continued to hide his face in the crook of Victoria's neck. Victoria chuckled, "They won't bite, Alex trust me." She felt Alex clamp his hands tighter around his mother.

Ed laughed, "He's usually energetic and easily excitable."

Harrison chuckled, "The kid is just shy."

Victoria bounced her son in her arms, "Your uncle is Captain America…" With that statement, Alex's head shot up and looked over at the two new people in his life. Everyone laughed.

Peggy laughed, "That got him."

Victoria pointed at Peggy, "That's your Aunt Peggy. She's my big sister I told you so much about."

Alex waved and spoke shyly, "Hi…"

Victoria pointed to Steve, "That's your Uncle Steve. He's Peggy's husband AND he's Captain America."

Steve could see the three-year old's face light up. Alex smiled happily, "Hi," he said

Steve gently moved Peggy's legs off his lap then stood up to meet Alex. He rushed over to Victoria, "May I?" he asked politely to hold his nephew.

Victoria nodded, "Of course," she said handing her son over to Steve.

Steve effortlessly held his nephew in his arms with a big smile, "hey, buddy."

Alex smiled, "Hi." Peggy sat up and watched her husband interact with her nephew.

Steve chuckled, "I'm your Uncle Steve."

"Captain America!" Alex yelled happily earning a laugh from everyone in the room.

"That's right, buddy. I'm Captain America," Steve said with a smile. Peggy slowly stood up and joined her husband in the middle of the room.

Peggy wrapped her arm around Steve, "You're such a handsome boy, Alex." Everyone in the room smiled as they watched the Rogers interact with the young three-year-old.

Victoria chuckled, "what do you say, Alex?"

"Thank you," Alex said happily clearly overcoming his shyness.
Steve nodded at Peggy, "That's your beautiful Aunt Peggy."

Alex waved his hand, "Hi, Aunt… Peggy" he said slowly trying to find the words.

Peggy leaned forward and kissed her nephew on the temple earning a giggle from the boy. Peggy chuckled and looked up at Steve, "Look who isn't shy anymore."

Steve held the boy up and gave a goofy grin, "Do you like your Aunt Peggy and Uncle Steve?"

Alex giggled happily, "Yes!" Steve continued to make silly faces, and funny noises which made Alex laugh loudly. Peggy stared at Steve with adoring eyes as she watched her husband interact with her nephew. It hasn't even been five minutes and Steve and Alex seemed to have already bonded immensely. Ed, Victoria, and Harrison watched in admiration at the soldier interacting with the young toddler. Alex smiled happily at Steve, "Captain America!"

Steve chuckled at the little kid and kissed his cheek. Amanda appeared in the dining room and smiled warmly at the scene in the living room. After a moment Amanda had to interrupt and announced to everyone, "Supper is ready!" She called happily.

Victoria came over to Steve and graciously took Alex back in her arms, "Looks like my son already bonded with you," she said with a chuckle.

Steve shrugged, "What can I say? I'm good with kids."

Peggy leaned into Steve and wrapped her arm around his back and planted her other hand on his chest, "That you are, my darling," she said lovingly. "You'll definitely make a good father," She repeated with a happy grin. Steve simply gave a confident smile to his wife and wrapped his arm around her and began making their way to the dining room.

Victoria laughed, "I agree with my sister," she said following the couple.

Ed walked next to Victoria and joined the conversation, "Alex seems to agree."

Harrison stood up from his chair and followed everyone to the dining room, "I'm going to agree with everyone else, Steve." He laughed, "Although I just met you, I already feel like you'll d be a good father."

Peggy laughed and patted Steve's chest, "Look, Steve. Family support."

Harrison shrugged, "Call it a gut feeling."

The music playing on the radio in the living room could be heard in the dining room which added to the already pleasant atmosphere. The dining room alone welcomed everyone with the aura of delicious food laid out on the table. There is so much food on the table that it looked like it could practically feed the whole United States Army. On the table is a large platter of roast lamb and plates of different vegetables including potatoes and carrots. The dinner looked absolutely delicious. The long dining room table could seat up to eight people with a seat at each end of the table and three seats on either side. The table has plenty of room for everyone including the young toddler.

Harrison maneuvered around to sit at the head of the table while Amanda positioned herself on the opposite end from him. Victoria and Ed placed themselves on the right side of the table with Victoria gently placing her young son down in the middle seat between her and her husband. Steve and Peggy began making their way on the left side of the table, opposite from Victoria and Ed.

Steve smiled at Amanda, "Looks and smells delicious, Mrs. Carter," he said respectfully. Peggy sat
Amanda smiled, "Thank you, Steve." The three-year-old, Alex, started to bounce excitedly causing everyone to smile.

Peggy leaned over to Steve and smiled, "she makes the best roast lamb, darling."

Steve laughed, "Yeah I can smell it from here."

Harrison smiled, "My wife is one good cook." Everyone agreed with praising smiles to Amanda. Harrison nodded and propped his elbows on the table and interlaced his fingers, "Let's say grace." Everyone silently acknowledged him and propped their elbows on the table like Harrison and awaited the prayer.

Harrison lowered his head so it rested against his hands and started reciting the prayer, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name." Everyone remained silent as Harrison recited the prayer. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits." Steve silently lowered his hands onto the table and slowly looked toward Peggy who was concentrating on the prayer. "Blessed be God, eternal king, for these and all his good gifts to us," Harrison continued with his head still down against his hands. Steve slowly took hold of Peggy's hand causing her to look at him. The two locked eyes as Steve brought her hand to the table and gripped it lovingly. At that moment, Steve and Peggy stopped paying attention to Harrison reciting the prayer as they continued to stare into each other's eyes with affection. Small smiles grew on both of their faces as they stared at one another. Amanda noticed the interaction between her daughter and Steve causing her to stop paying attention to the prayer as well.

Amanda smiled at the two of them while Harrison continued praying, oblivious to Peggy and Steve. Harrison lowered his hands, "Amen," he said concluding the prayer.

"Amen," everyone responded in unison.

Peggy and Steve returned to reality and faced the table and whispered in unison, "Amen."

Amanda smiled, "Let's eat." Steve and Peggy shared a brief glance before reaching for the food to serve themselves.

Dinner was absolutely wonderful. Good food, pleasant conversations, pleasant music on the radio, and good company made it a very enjoyable evening. The food was beyond phenomenal, and everyone was full, including Steve. Throughout dinner, the Carter family pleasantly talked to Steve and Peggy and got to know Steve a little better. It was a pleasant dinner and a good start for the evening.

Once everyone's food had settled at the conclusion of the meal, Victoria immediately excused herself and volunteered to clean up the table. Ed too excused himself to take Alex up to one of the bedrooms to get him cleaned up which left Steve and Peggy alone with Peggy's parents. Peggy figured this was planned so her parents could have alone time with her and Steve. Before anything was said, Harrison and Amanda got up from their seats and sat opposite of Steve and Peggy so they could face them. Harrison spoke first, "Did you enjoy dinner, Steve?"

Steve nodded, "Yes I very much did, sir." He looked at Amanda and gave a courteous nod, "That was very delicious, Mrs. Carter."

Amanda produced a warm smile, "Glad you enjoyed it, Steve."
Peggy scooted her chair closer to Steve's so she could lean on him and feel physical contact with her husband. Harrison smiled at the two and spoke calmly, "Now that it's just us. Amanda and I want to get to know you a bit more personally without major distractions," he told Steve referring to Victoria, Ed, and Alex.

Steve smiled, "No problem, sir." Peggy wrapped her arm around Steve's and leaned into him.

Harrison and Amanda gave each other a glance for a moment before continuing on with the conversation. Harrison smiled, "So you two met during the war?" He chuckled, "Let's get into some detail."

Steve nodded, "Yeah, I was in training back in the US when I first met Peggy. I swear she was the only female on the whole base that I could notice."

Peggy chuckled, "There were other women there too, Steve."

Steve just shrugged, "Yeah, I didn't notice," he said with a laugh. Peggy chuckled and nudged him with her shoulder. Project Rebirth and the Super Soldier serum and program were still highly classified and would probably be that way forever, so both Steve and Peggy decided to leave out that detail.

Amanda and Harrison just chuckled at the two of them. Amanda calmed down, "Peggy, you were with the US Army?"

Peggy shook her head, "I was with the British military and was assigned to the US as an advisor," she said omitting some key facts for security reasons. Even though the war was over, she still couldn't talk about her role in British Intelligence and the SSR.

Harrison nodded in understanding, "I see."

Amanda laughed, "So you caught my daughter's eye just like that, huh?"

Steve chuckled shook his head, "Uh. I don't think it was that simple." Peggy laughed.

"Steve is obviously a handsome and respectful man, but what did you see in him at first?" Amanda asked curiously.

Peggy smiled, "He wasn't like anyone else I've ever met. Unlike most men, Steve solved things with his mind more than his strength," she said lovingly. "He's also a complete gentleman," Peggy said in admiration. She laughed, "But he had no idea how to talk to a woman." Steve just shook his head with a smile at what she said remembering their conversation in the car just before his procedure to receive the serum.

Amanda smiled at the two of them, "You two are so adorable," she said happily.

Harrison changed the subject to something more serious, "Steve. Did Peggy ever tell you that she was engaged before?"

Steve nodded, "Yes, sir."

Peggy spoke up, "He knows everything, Father. I don't keep anything from Steve. We tell each other everything." Steve nodded in agreement.

Amanda chuckled, "That's good, but we had to bring it up just to make sure that he knew because a good relationship is built around communication and trust."
Peggy smiled, "We know, mother."

Harrison smiled, "Well, your brother was right. That Fred Wells wasn't the one for you."

Peggy smiled, "Michael was always right." Steve smiled at Peggy.

Amanda gave a sad smile, "About Michael…"

Harrison carried on the conversation for his wife, "We're sure Peggy spoke of him."

Steve nodded, "She spoke highly about him quite frequently."

Harrison nodded, "He was a great man."

Amanda agreed, "A very handsome boy," she said saddened.

Harrison continued, "Our son was killed during the war…Just before Peggy's wedding with Fred."

"She told me," Steve said evenly.

"It was the loss of her brother that caused her separation between us," Harrison said plainly. Peggy didn't speak when her father spoke about her. "Soon after his death, Peggy left."

Amanda nodded sadly, "The death of her brother devastated her."

Steve nodded, "I understand that pain. I lost a lot of people I loved and cared for too," he said truthfully. He lost his parents, friends during the war, and seen plenty of death that no one should see in their lifetime. Steve was no stranger to loss and pain.

Peggy finally spoke up, "Why are we talking about Michael like this," she said with a hint of irritation and anger in her voice.

Harrison sighed, "Because…"

Amanda interrupted, "because your husband is in the Army too. And he isn't just a soldier, he's Captain America. He's going to be doing more dangerous tasks than simple soldiers."

Harrison sighed, "We know the war is over, but there is always someone else to fight." He frowned, "We don't want to see you getting hurt again in case he…"

Peggy sighed in frustration and interrupted her father, "Stop right there," she said angrily. "I know he…" Steve placed his hand on hers which caused her to stop. She turned to look at him and saw that he was looking at her with a soothing look which instantly calmed her down. Peggy sighed and rubbed her baby bump with her free hand as she calmed down.

Steve took over for Peggy, "I understand what you're saying, Mr. and Mrs. Carter."

Harrison nodded, "Thank you. I don't mean to be rude." He sighed and ran a hand through his hair, "We just… don't want to see Peggy going through the loss of losing someone she loves in war."

Steve sighed, "I understand that…"

Amanda interrupted, "When you disappeared during the war, Steve, were you and my daughter together then? I know you met my daughter while you were in training, but were you two together?" That question caught both of them off guard. Neither Steve or Peggy thought about that time in over two years.
Both Steve and Peggy knew Steve's disappearance, and discovery was all over the papers and news of multiple countries. The explanation the government gave the press for Steve surviving his frozen tomb was a report provided by Howard Stark. Stark told the press that the ice put Steve in suspended animation or simply known as cryogenic stasis which was the temporary cessation of most vital functions without death. Steve was essentially a frozen hibernating animal. That explanation was only partially true. The super soldier serum injected into Steve during Project Rebirth was the key for Steve surviving as long as he did. But Project Rebirth and the super soldier serum was still highly classified. The public only knew half of the truth, so Peggy's parents knew nothing of how Steve became a super soldier. But even though Peggy and Steve weren't officially a couple, Steve's disappearance devastated her tremendously. It was a blessing for Stark to find Steve back in May 1945.

Steve answered before Peggy, "No. We were not…"

Peggy spoke up, "But I was in love with him…" she said truthfully. She sighed, "I was in so much pain when Steve disappeared. I thought he was gone forever." Peggy decided to open up about how she felt when Steve disappeared just so her parents wouldn't keep pushing the topic. She shook her head, "I was in so much pain… I missed him so much, and I was afraid I missed my chance to tell him how I really felt." Steve gripped her hand as she spoke. Peggy gave a warm smile, "but when Howard Stark found him, I was ready to believe in anything. I couldn't believe it." She laughed, "Stark explained the science, but I didn't care. Steve coming back was a miracle." Peggy gripped Steve's arm tighter earning a small smile from him. Both Peggy and Steve felt the pain reliving that depressing memory.

Amanda smiled apologetically, "I apologize for bring it up, darlings." She shook her head, "I was just curious and concerned." She gave a loving smile at the two of them, "But I thank God that Steve was able to come back to you, Peggy, and that we could meet him."

Peggy sighed, "its okay mother. But, if it's all the same to you, Steve and I don't want to talk about that moment again. It was a hard time for a while for the both of us." Amanda and Harrison nodded in understanding.

Steve spoke up, "For your comment of me being in the Army…"

Harrison interrupted, "I'm sorry, Steve. That was rude of me to assume that…"

Steve chuckled, "It's alright, sir. I was going to say that I'm not planning to stay in the Army for much longer."

Harrison and Amanda were surprised, "You're not?" they asked in unison.

Peggy gripped Steve's arm a little tighter and looked up at him. Steve smiled, "I've been thinking about that for a while now. Since the end of the war in fact." He nodded, "I did my time in the Army during the war and did my duty for my country. I proved what I needed to prove, and I did it proudly." He sighed, "I had enough of war. I gave all I can give, and I think I earned some peace. I want to have the simple life and have a family and settle down." He gave a small smile, "A family and stability. It would be nice to have that again."

Amanda smiled, "Steve, your part of the family now. If you need anything, let us know."

"I will, thank you," Steve said respectfully. Steve's official enlistment will be over in the next few months, but he doesn't know how long his contract with the SSR will last and whether or not that will affect him leaving the Army.
Harrison smiled at Steve, "Any ideas on what you want to do once you're out of the Army?"

Steve shook his head, "Not yet."

Peggy smiled, "He's quite an artist and athlete," she said in praise.

Harrison chuckled, "Right there, I think I can list a great deal of opportunities for Captain America."

Amanda chimed in, "Speaking of lists. Did you two figure out a name for your baby? I'd like to know the names if the baby is a boy or a girl," she said with an eager smile.

Steve and Peggy shared a happy glance with one another. Peggy spoke up, "We got the names already, but we want to keep it a surprise for everyone." Steve nodded in agreement.

Harrison sighed, "More surprises? So many of those today, dear."

Peggy laughed, "Sorry, father."

Amanda pleaded, "No hints?"

Steve shook his head with a chuckle, "No, I'm sorry."

Suddenly, Steve heard a familiar song come on the radio from the living room which prompted him to smile from ear to ear. The song, "Let's Dance" by Benny Goodman filled his ears. Steve chuckled, "If you'll excuse me, Mr. and Mrs. Carter." He turned to Peggy, "Peggy, care for a little dance?"

Peggy giggled and nodded, "Of course, my darling." Steve stood up and held out his hand to help his wife up.

The Rogers then walked arm in arm into the living room for some space to dance. Once Steve and Peggy got some space, they started to feel the rhythm of the song in their feet and began to dance together. The two held each other as close as possible, but with Peggy's baby belly it made it a little more difficult but not impossible. The couple swung gracefully and danced beautifully together with the lively music playing on the radio like they were the only ones in the house.

Amanda and Harrison stood up from the dining table and watched their daughter and her husband happily dance to the music in the living room. Peggy and Steve looked graceful as they continued to dance together. Amanda gave a proud smile, "Michael would've loved Steve."

Harrison nodded, "That he would have." He looked over to his wife, "What do you think of them?"

Amanda chuckled, "What do I think? I think they deserve each other. I think they make a lovely couple. Steve is a really nice man and a complete gentleman." She smiled proudly, "And Peggy loves him. I can see they're happy together so I'm happy," She said as she watched the Rogers dancing with one another in the living room.

Harrison nodded, "I agree. Peggy has gotten a lot tougher since the last time we saw her though. But, I'm glad she found someone she feels strongly about." He chuckled and turned to his wife, "Hm… you thing Steve loves her in the same degree as she loves him."

Amanda laughed and wrapped her arm around her husband, "Are you serious?" She nodded to the dancing couple, "You have to be blind. Steve obviously thinks the world of Peggy. You can see it in his eyes, his body language, and how he talks to Peggy. He's completely in love with our daughter." At that moment the song ended with Steve holding Peggy in a dip, so she was leaning back on her heels, so she was almost parallel with the floor with Steve's strong arm holding her up effortlessly on
the small of her back while his other arm held her hand. Peggy is significantly heavier due to her pregnancy but Steve held her like she was a flower.

Steve and Peggy were out of breath from their dance, but they held a constant gaze into each other's eyes. Peggy smiled and whispered, "I love you."

Steve whispered back, "I love you too." With that Steve hoisted her up effortlessly and kissed her on the lips. Neither Peggy or Steve realized they were being watched.

Amanda smiled and Harrison, "See?" Harrison smiled at the couple. His heart, warm with pride and admiration. All of a sudden they heard the sound of a snap from a camera causing them to turn to see Victoria standing near the dining table with a small Bolsey 35mm camera. The two parents laughed.

Peggy and Steve broke their kiss at the sound of the camera and turned to the direction of the sound and saw Victoria grinning happily at them. Steve and Peggy looked at each other both blushing and smiling.

It was going to be a fun and eventful week in London with the Carter family.

Got part of the dinner scene from "The Pacific"

Again, when I made the story originally, I didn't know Peggy only had a brother, so now she had a brother and has a sister.

SHIELD HQ, The Triskelion, was under construction in 1989, but SHIELD also had Headquarters in New York City in Time Square so I decided to give the codename "Aegis" which means "the power to protect, control, or support something or someone." Seemed fitting
While the Rogers took a trip to London to visit Peggy's parents, the SSR continued their missions against the Neo-Hydra group and the Soviet Leviathan deep science and espionage agency. After a number of raids on Hydra facilities, buildings, and safe houses in the United States, the SSR discovered that Hydra was very disorganized and scattered, at least in the United States. Though the Hydra elements in the United States became disorganized after the "SHIELD Incident" there was no telling if the other Hydra groups around the world were suffering the same effects. The SSR determined that Zola's plan to infiltrate the government was a large-scale covert operation that involved much of the Neo-Hydra group. But the overall status of the foreign-based Hydra groups remains unknown which means that the SSR and eventually SHIELD would be forced to deal with them in the immediate future. As long as Hydra exists, they pose a significant security risk to the United States and the free world.

The evidence provided by the Howling Commandos and the Rogers in July showed that Hydra holds significant influence in Leviathan and the Soviet government, but the SSR and the US government consider Leviathan not associated with Hydra since it's employed and managed by the proper government of the Soviet Union. This attitude is in part due to the US governments foreign policy of anti-communist sentiment and Containment, appropriately known as the Truman Doctrine. The Doctrine which detailed America's foreign policy of countering Soviet geopolitical spread was adopted in March after President Truman announced it to Congress. Containment in a basic sense was to "contain" the spread of Communism either by military, economic, or political means. Though the Truman Doctrine is still in its infancy, the US Government has ambitious plans to stop the spread of Communism and Soviet influence. All this focus on Communism and the Soviets put dealing with Hydra in the back seat in the eyes of the government's foreign policy. Hydra is still a threat but is considered less of a threat as compared to the Soviet Union and Communism as a whole. This leaves Hydra and even Leviathan a strict government agency problem with the SSR and soon SHIELD to deal with it.

November 25, 1947 Two days before Thanksgiving Day

Steve & Margaret Rogers Residence, Scarsdale, NY

Its been a few weeks since the Rogers returned home to their house in Scarsdale, New York from their week-long trip to London and the due date for their baby has come and gone. So the birth of their child can happen in any moment. Peggy has been carrying their baby for a little over nine months; nine months, three weeks, and two days to be exact. Nine months of happiness, excitement, and joy. But of course, she also felt the downside of pregnancy with all the side effects that came along with it too. The combination of constant morning sickness, mood swings, strange cravings, back pain, and the aches in her feet constantly annoyed the usually calm Peggy Carter Rogers for the past nine months. She's finally at that point in her pregnancy when she can't wait to give birth to the baby and be done with being pregnant. But at the same time, she knew it was all worth it in the end. Not even the side effects of pregnancy stopped her from feeling extremely happy for starting a family with Steve. She wanted this, and she knew her Steve wanted this too. Honestly, she didn't think she and Steve would start a family this soon into their marriage, but reflecting on how everything turned out, she couldn't be happier. Marriage and family, it almost seemed like they were living a normal
The early morning November sun shines high and bright above the quiet suburb of Scarsdale, New York in another calm autumn Thursday morning. The trees throughout the quiet neighborhood have changed color to show a beautiful display of red and orange fall shades with their leaves gradually falling to the ground. Piles of fire red leaves framed the roads and messily blanketed the grass yards of all the houses in the quiet neighborhood. Though the weather was a bit chilly the atmosphere was comforting.

In the Rogers home, even with the lights out and the drapes closed the November sun managed to pierce the shadows and slightly brighten much of the house. The house is calm and peaceful on this Thursday morning with the Rogers home in complete harmony. In the silent upstairs, directly across the master bedroom is the new nursery that Steve and Peggy set up. Since neither of them knew the baby's gender, they styled the nursery in a gender-neutral scheme with painted light blue walls. The nursery was done mostly by Steve earlier in the month and completely furnished with everything their baby needed. The white wood crib Steve put together is placed up against the wall between the two windows. To the left of the crib at the corner of the room is a gray armchair with a matching leg rest and small wood end table. To the right of the crib is a white wood baby changing table and a small laundry hamper. Against the wall in front of the door is the white wood nursery dresser with a few toys neatly placed on top of it. The room is set and pristine with nothing out of place. Everything down from décor to furniture to toys is ready for their baby. Everything about Steve and Peggy's house

Across the hallway in the master bedroom, the early morning sun peered through the closed drapes and brightened the peaceful Rogers bedroom in morning light. Like the rest of the house, the room is in complete serenity. The atmosphere makes it feel like just another morning in the Rogers home. In the big master bed, Steve in his usual sleepwear which consisted of a white t-shirt and gray sweats slept soundly under the covers with his arm tucked slightly under his pillow. Even with the morning light slowly brightening the room, Steve remained in his peaceful slumber. But on Peggy's side of the bed, Peggy was quite the opposite of her husband. She was wide awake with her back resting up against the headboard of the bed and her pillow supporting her lower back for comfort. She wore a comfortable black chemise and white polka dot nightdress with a drop-down surplice neckline and white lace trim.

On most days Peggy wakes up after Steve, but today was one of those rare occasions where she woke up before him. Though she's still considered a light sleeper, she became slightly more of a heavier sleeper since she started living with Steve. Since they started living together, Peggy found it easier to fall asleep and stay asleep when she was with Steve. Her husband had a calming effect on her and in turn she had a calming effect on him. They were simply made for each other. The married life with Steve is going better than good, but just because she settled into marriage and slept more didn't mean she let her edge go. Peggy's still a highly trained and lethal federal agent with quick reflexes and can turn on her agent mode in a split second if need be. There have been a few instances when Steve surprised her while sleeping (usually in the morning), and Peggy damn near almost killed him with a knife or pistol she had hidden next to their bed. But this particular situation today is quite the opposite.

Peggy silently adjusted herself against the headboard then slowly looked over at the closed drapes hanging on the window. She took a deep breath and continued to think to herself just as she's been doing since she woke up at four in the morning. Peggy didn't end up getting much sleep because her mind wondered all night about what life she and Steve's child would have. Plus, the baby constantly kicking and moving throughout the night didn't make getting sleep any easier either. Peggy just sighed as she stared at the closed drapes with her hands resting on the sides of her belly. She became
extremely worried that she and Steve will make their child an easy target to their enemies, and yes, they had enemies. She and Steve weren't exactly living a normal life, they have very real and very dangerous enemies. There's been a nagging feeling in her gut that Hydra and or Leviathan would try and attack their family some time in the not so distant future, and not to mention the various organized crime syndicates Steve attacked in search of Leviathan. The threat of Hydra, Leviathan, and or some other enemy targeting their family is extremely plausible. It also didn't help that Leviathan and or Hydra might know where they live since Leviathan sent the Winter Soldier to pay their house a visit a few months ago. All these possibilities made her extremely worried.

Peggy knew she and Steve couldn't be with their child all the time because of their jobs which meant their child would be vulnerable. That scared her greatly. She's been thinking about this a lot recently, but for some reason today made her worry about it a lot more than usual. Maybe she was overthinking, maybe there was really nothing to worry about, or maybe there is, and she doesn't know what to do. But in every other aspects of life, Peggy never overthinks and always knows what to do. Steve in his own way always said that she is his compass because she always knows what to do and where to go. But being a mother is an entirely different beast on its own. Becoming a mother coupled with the threats of Hydra or Leviathan just made her more worried. Of course, Peggy wants to start a family, but now she reached the crossroads where she is unsure if she's even ready to be a mother. When she and Steve were in London, her mother told her that no one is ever truly ready for a child.

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**Early November 1947, Rogers visit to Harrison & Amanda Carter Residence**

In the backyard of Peggy's parents house, Peggy was sitting with her back straight in a white outdoor patio chair in front of her mother's matching patio table. She wore a soft Navy Blue button up wool coat that flared just past her knees like the dress she wore underneath. She adjusted herself in her chair for what seemed to be the millionth time then reached forward to grab her tea cup and saucer on the table. Though it was still a bit chilly outside, the overcast clouds cleared a few hours earlier opening up the sky for some much-needed warmth from the sunlight. Peggy leaned back then took a sip of her tea. She slightly cringed as she placed her tea cup back on its saucer, "You're quite the kicker, darling." She smiled as she gently rubbed her big baby belly, "You sure like to kick mama don't you?" She chuckled.

As Peggy was about to lean forward to the table to put her tea cup and saucer down, she heard her mother call out to her, "Oh, Peggy, let me." Peggy turned to see her mother dressed in a grey wool coat over a yellow dress of some kind walking through the back door of the house. Amanda Carter, her mother, took the tea cup and saucer from her and gently placed them back down on the table. Peggy smiled, "Thank you, mother," she said as she rested her hands under her belly.

Amanda nodded with a smile then sat down on the chair next to her daughter, "I remember when I had to struggle to get you to sit straight." She laughed, "It took you getting pregnant to do that."

Peggy laughed, "Very funny, mother."

"Is the little one kicking a lot right now?" Amanda asked with a smile. "Your baby has some strong kicks," she added jokingly.

Peggy nodded, "Oh yes. She's likes to kick mama's ribs."

"Oh," Amanda said with a surprised look, "You think its going to be a girl?"

Peggy shrugged, "Steve thinks its going to be a boy. Only natural for me to go against his bet," she
chuckled.

Amanda shook her head, "You two..." she said in a playful tone.

"I don't mind if it will be a boy or a girl." Peggy smiled, "Just a good feeling thinking about the possibilities."

"That it is, Peggy. That it is," Amanda said with a smile. Then a comfortable silence came over the two ladies as they quietly listening to the wind blowing through the trees. It was just another calm early November evening. After a while of silence, Peggy took a deep breath that her mother could clearly hear. "What is it, Peggy?" Amanda said softly. Peggy sighed and rubbed her belly. "What is it, dear?"

Peggy shook her head, "Its just..."

"Its okay, Peggy. Go on," Amanda gently encouraged her daughter.

Peggy sighed, "I want this. I want this baby and I want this family. And I know Steve does too." She shook her head, "But how do I know if I'm ready?" She turned to her mother, "I don't know if I'm ready. I'm sorry mother, I guess I'm just nervous." Amanda stared at her strong daughter with comforting and understanding eyes. Peggy sighed again, "Its silly, I know."

"No its not," Amanda shot back. Peggy looked back up at her. Amanda placed her hand on Peggy's, "Its perfectly normal to feel nervous about this, Peggy. But the truth is...no one is ever ready to be a parent. Trust me, I know," Amanda chuckled. She gripped Peggy's hand, "I know you've always been strong and adventurous, but something like this, it's okay to be nervous and even scared. It means you want to be a good mother." She laughed again, "When I was pregnant with your brother, I was nervous too. Actually I was beyond nervous. Just ask your father." Peggy chuckled. Amanda gave a gentle smile to Peggy, "I didn't think I was ready then, but once I had your brother... everything seemed to fall into place. I learned as I went, and obviously there was challenges, but I wouldn't change any of it for anything. Michael grew into a fine young man."

Peggy gave a sad smile, "He did..."

Amanda chuckled and changed the topic, "And by the time I had you, I felt like I had figured out many things." She laughed, "One could argue it was easier the second time around, but that's a different story for a different time," she winked.

Peggy chuckled nodded with a smile, "Thank you, mother."

Amanda let go of Peggy's hand and leaned back, "Does Steve get nervous about it too? About being a parent? As I recall when I was alone with him, he told me he's nervous too."

Peggy nodded, "Yes, he does. He talks about it every now and then."

"See? Even the great Captain America is nervous about being a parent too. So don't worry about being ready, your father and I know you'll make a great mother, and Steve will make a great father," Amanda chuckled. "Call it parents intuition."

Peggy smiled, "Thanks you again, mother." She nodded, "Speaking of, where is my husband?"

Amanda laughed, "Your father took him to meet some of his friends at the pub."

Peggy chuckled, "Good luck."
"Who? To your husband?" Amanda asked curiously.

Peggy laughed and shook her head, "No, to father and his friends. Steve can't get drunk."

Amanda's eyes widened.

Peggy returned to reality when she felt Steve slightly twist in his sleep. She slowly looked over at her husband sleeping peacefully and gave a small smile at his sleeping form. She could almost hear Steve telling her that everything will be alright and that nothing will happen to them or their child. Peggy couldn't help but smile wider, she knew her husband all too well. Part of her relaxed at the thought of Steve comforting her. She quickly settled that there was no way she would let anything happen to her baby. She promised right then and there that nothing bad will fall upon their child and family as long as she lives. Nothing. Peggy smiled to herself then suddenly she heard Steve speak up.

"Everything will be okay, Peggy," Steve said turning in the covers to face his wife. "I know it." He said almost like he was reading her mind.

Peggy chuckled then turned and smiled at her husband, "When you say it, I can believe it." Steve smiled. "Good morning, handsome."

Steve smiled happily up at Peggy, "Good morning, beautiful." He slowly sat up in the bed to be at the same level as his wife. He then turned and kissed Peggy on the lips which she happily reciprocated. But what started as a simple good morning kiss slowly deepened into a passionate one.

Peggy suddenly broke the kiss and slightly cringed with a smile. Steve chuckled, "You okay? Peggy nodded and rubbed her belly, "Our baby is just kicking." She chuckled, "She's just saying good morning to her daddy."

Steve laughed, "She? We're doing this right now, Peggy? Cause I'm pretty sure it's a 'he'," he said humorously as he moved down toward Peggy's belly.

Peggy laughed, "We'll know soon enough. Its any day now."

Steve smiled and placed the side of his head gently against Peggy's belly and waited for the slightest movement of their unborn child. Suddenly Steve felt the strong kick from the baby almost if the baby knew he was waiting. Steve smiled widely then kissed Peggy's belly, "Good morning, little one," he said happily. "Your mommy and daddy can't wait to meet you," Steve said kissing the belly again.

Steve sit back up and kissed Peggy on the lips, "I love you," he said after breaking the kiss.

"I love you too," Peggy said kissed him back.

Steve smiled, "Want anything for breakfast?"

Peggy nodded, "lots of eggs, sausages, fruits, and toast would be nice," she said smiling lovingly at Steve.

Steve kissed her on the lips again and said, "Yes, ma'am."

He pushed off the covers and swung his legs off the bed and stood up then took a moment to stretch. As he swung his arms up to stretch he heard Peggy hum in content behind him. Steve chuckled then turned around to see Peggy smiling seductively at him. "Mmm. I will never get sick of your body."

Steve laughed and put his hands on his hips, "I knew it. You only love me because of my muscles,"
he said jokingly.

Peggy smiled, "Uh oh. I've been found out," she said without missing a beat. Peggy winked at Steve while maintaining a seductive grin.

Steve turned around and walked to the bedroom door while laughing, "I'll get your breakfast started, beautiful."

"I love you, darling!" Peggy called to her husband as he walked out of the room.

Peggy smiled as she heard Steve call from the hallway, "I love you too, Peggy!" She then leaned back against the headboard again and smiled in content. She's now free from worry and nervousness. At least for now.

Peggy waddled into the cluttered kitchen about an hour after Steve started cooking, still in her black chemise and white polka dot nightdress with her long brown hair tied up in a high ponytail. Just the smell of Steve's cooking motivated her to get out of bed and join her husband in the kitchen for some breakfast. In Peggy's opinion, Steve's cooking is to die for. Once she entered the kitchen she immediately made her way over to Steve who was busy multitasking on the stove. Steve noticed her coming into the kitchen and glanced over at her and smiled, "Hey, look who's out of bed," he said with a chuckle.

Peggy walked over to Steve and leaned against the counter next to him and smiled, "Mmm. The smell of you cooking was hard to resist."

Steve laughed, "Its only simple eggs and sausages, love."

Peggy nudged him playfully with her shoulder, "Its how you make it that makes it smell and taste delicious, darling."

Steve chuckled, "Breakfast will be done in a second," he said working between the eggs and the sausages. He turned to Peggy who leaned over to him and kissed his lips briefly. Peggy then looked to her left and right and saw the numerous amounts of groceries scattered messily around the counters of the kitchen that she and Steve picked up earlier in the week. The groceries were all for the Thanksgiving dinner that is soon approaching in a few days. They have more groceries than the last two times they celebrated Thanksgiving together because they'll be having guests over for dinner this time.

"How many people are coming for Thanksgiving again?" Peggy said as she slowly pushed herself off the counter and headed for the kitchen table.

"Uh. Let me think," Steve said as he finished the eggs then skillfully placed them on a plate he had nearby.

Peggy took a seat at the head of the table, "Angie is coming and so is Daniel."

Steve finished the sausages and placed them on the same plate as the eggs, "The Colonel, Dugan, Gabe, and Jim are coming." At that moment the toast popped up in the toaster prompting Steve to grab the two slices of bread and place it on the plate, "so that makes six total."

Peggy nodded, "We should have enough space on the dining room table right?"

"Yeah, we should," Steve said as he grabbed Peggy a napkin and some silverware from the drawer then brought Peggy her plate of eggs, sausages, and toast to the table.
Steve put the plate down in front of her along with the napkin and silverware, prompting Peggy to smile up at him, "Thank you, darling."

Steve nodded, "I'll go get your fruits ready," he said happily as he turned around.

As Steve started to go through the fridge to get some fruits for Peggy, Peggy immediately dived into her breakfast. Peggy paused in between bites as a questioning look formed on her face. She swallowed her food and spoke up, "Steve."

"Hm?" Steve hummed in response as he walked over to the sink with grapes and an apple in his hands.

"I'm just curious… we known Colonel Phillips along time," Peggy started.

"Uh-huh," Steve said as he turned on the sink to wash the fruits.

"But I never stopped to think about this until now."

Steve turned to look at his wife, "What are you talking about?"

"Does Colonel Phillips have a family?" Peggy asked curiously.

Steve looked out through the kitchen window, "huh..." He chuckled, "I never stopped to ask him after all this time. I guess it never came up." He laughed, "It should've came up when we told him we were getting married…and when we announced your pregnancy."

Peggy nodded, "I don't think he's married. He was alone during our wedding."

Steve laughed as he finished cleaning the fruits for Peggy, "We can always ask him when he comes over," he said reaching into a cupboard to get a small plate for the fruits.

Peggy chuckled, "He isn't big on his personal life."

Steve returned to the table with Peggy's fruits, "that's true. But no harm in trying," he said placing the plate next to Peggy, "I think its an honest topic to bring up to him when we have the chance."

Suddenly the tea kettle started to whistle signaling Steve that the water was boiling. Steve smiled and kissed the top of Peggy's head, "Your tea is almost ready."

Peggy smiled, "Thank you, darling."

After a moment Steve returned back to the table with a cup of tea in hand then placed it down by Peggy's plates. Peggy simply smiled in gratitude at her husband as he took a seat by her. "Not going to eat anything, Steve?" Peggy asked as she was about to take a sip of her tea.

Steve rested his head on his hand and smiled, "I can eat later."

Peggy chuckled, "Just going to watch your nine-month pregnant wife eat?"

Steve laughed, "something like that."

Peggy laughed and took a sip of her tea. Once she put her cup down she smiled, "About Thanksgiving dinner..."

"Hm?" Steve hummed in response.

Peggy smiled, "Well obviously you don't want me to do much of the leg work in the kitchen because
I'm nine months pregnant." She chuckled, "And because you're so bloody stubborn."

Steve laughed and simply shrugged, "Well you do complain about your feet hurting a lot, so..."

Peggy laughed, "But I happen to agree with you that I shouldn't do any leg work in the kitchen, but I also want to help with cooking dinner."

Steve smiled, "I never said I didn't want you to help, I just didn't want you to be working too hard on your feet in the kitchen." He shrugged, "We cooked together the last two Thanksgivings, no sense in stopping now. Plus, we have guests coming over so I'm definitely going to need some help prepping everything.

Peggy smiled, "I was thinking the same thing. I can prepare my family dish and the other fixings you need on the table, and when I'm done with those preparations you can finish them and get them cooked." She shrugged, "We'll figure it out, but that's the basic idea."

Steve smiled and nodded, "Sounds good to me, Peggy."

"It works out," she said smiling. Steve simply smiled then stood up from his seat at the table. Peggy looked up at him curiously, "Where you going?"

Steve smiled down at her, "Going to make myself some food. I'm hungry." He then turned and walked to the fridge to make himself some breakfast. Peggy just giggled to herself and continued eating her delicious breakfast made by her husband.

7:00 pm

The rest of the day was calm, quiet, and relaxing with nothing major occurring in the Rogers home. Having all this time off from maternity leave made a part of Peggy miss going back to work in the SSR. Though her "maternity leave" was filed as "paternity leave," the SSR didn't have a precedence for female agents taking leave since 99% of the SSR agents were male. Peggy, being the obvious exception wasn't replaced by returning war veterans, had to file for paternity leave instead of maternity leave with Sousa to grant her time off while still being employed at the SSR. But even though part of her wanted to go back to work, having all this free time and no missions or assignments had its advantages. Since being placed on unpaid paternity leave, she caught up on more recreational reading and got to spend more time with her best friend Angie. But more importantly, she got to spend more time with Steve when he got off work from the multiple places he worked out of. With all this free and peaceful time, it almost felt like she was living a normal life. Almost.

Peggy, dressed in a white-collared blue maternity dress with white polka dots and tie around waist, laid on one of the couches in the living room with her legs stretched across the sofa and her back propped up against one of the armrests with a pillow supporting her back. She was quietly reading a book while pleasant Big Band music played on the radio. After a while of reading, she paused and looked over at Steve's sketchbook that sat idly on the coffee table in front of the couch. She smiled to herself as the curiosity of what Steve was drawing earlier filled her mind. Steve is an incredible artist, so Peggy was always curious to see his finished sketches and drawings. But just a few moments earlier, Steve stopped drawing in his book and went into the kitchen to make Peggy more tea. Since it was always a hassle for her to keep getting up and walking, Steve happily left to refill her teacup without her asking. Steve essentially took over most of the chores in the house because of Peggy's pregnancy without her needing to ask or tell him to. It was a little annoying at times because she was feeling spoiled, but nonetheless she loves his thoughtfulness and genuine care. She chuckled to herself. If only the world knew how soft Captain America really was. Peggy couldn't help but to laugh louder to herself at that thought.
Steve, wearing a tan collared shirt with no tie, a pair of khakis with a black belt, and brown socks, quietly stepped out of the kitchen with a teacup in his hand at the sound of Peggy's laughter. He quietly leaned against the archway of the kitchen and smiled at Peggy who was busy laughing to herself. Steve smiled, *damn she is one beautiful doll*, he thought to himself. He looked down at the full teacup in his hand then back at Peggy and simply smiled happily at her. As Peggy calmed down, Steve spoke up softly, "What's so funny?"

"Oh!" Peggy gasped, nearly dropping her book on belly in surprise. She quickly recovered and looked over her shoulder to see her husband leaning against the archway to the kitchen with a tea cup in hand, and a goofy grin on his face. Peggy smiled, "You scared me, darling."

Steve laughed, "Sorry, my love. Heard you laughing."

Peggy rolled her head back, letting her hair drape the pillows behind her. She laughed, "Oh its nothing."

Steve walked toward her slowly, careful not to spill the tea, "uh-huh," he said simply.

Peggy chuckled, "If only the public knew how soft you really were." She put her bookmark in her book then reached over and placed it down on the coffee table as Steve approached her. She graciously took the tea cup from Steve and smiled up at him, "thank you for the tea, Steve."

Steve smiled, "Of course." He shrugged with a coy smile, "Let it be our little secret." Peggy simply laughed in response as she took a sip of her hot tea. The tea was a little hot for her to take large sips so she decided to let it cool down for a bit. As she leaned forward to place the tea on the coffee table to let it cool off, Steve stepped forward and bent down and put his hand on her teacup, "Let me, love."

Peggy let go, "Oh, thank you, darling," she said graciously as Steve took the teacup and placed it down on the coaster on the coffee table for her. Peggy smiled up at her husband then started to slowly reposition herself on the couch to make room for Steve in an unspoken invitation for him to take a seat next to her. Steve got the message and made his way around the coffee table as Peggy slowly sat up and moved her legs off the couch to make space on the sofa. He plopped down on the cushion next to her and instantly wrapped his arm around her affectionately earning a bright smile from his wife. Peggy automatically leaned into his muscular frame and enjoyed his strong grasp around her and his pleasant scent. The couple simply cuddled in silence and enjoyed their physical intimacy for a long moment as the swinging music from the radio continued to fill the room.

Peggy looked up at him and simply gave him a content smile. Without thinking, Steve smiled and said just loud enough for her to hear, "you're the most beautiful woman I ever seen…"

Without missing a beat, Peggy smiled, "I love you too, Steve," she said resting a hand on her baby belly.

Steve chuckled, "I said that out loud didn't I?"

"mhmm," Peggy hummed in response. She leaned into him more and captured his lips for a long moment. The need for air was the only reason they broke their lip lock. Peggy rested her head against Steve's chest again and chuckled, "No need to apologize, darling."

"I love you," Steve said softly as he a kiss on the top of her head.

Peggy hummed in content at Steve's physical and verbal affection. She then looked over at Steve's sketchbook on the coffee table and spoke softly, "Darling."
"Hm?" Steve responded.

"What do you like to draw? I've seen a lot of your drawings but never asked what your favorite things to draw are?" Peggy asked curiously.

Steve put his head back to think for a moment, "hm. That's a good question." He chuckled, "I don't know how to really answer that one." He shrugged, "I don't even know the answer."

Peggy smiled against his chest, "I know you like to draw people. From all those old drawings you showed me that were in your sketchbooks and in your old apartment."

Steve chuckled, "Now that you said it. Since I was a kid, I always enjoyed drawing people." He laughed, "I like to draw people because...well, people are all different and no one is the same. Everyone is unique in every aspect which provides me with something different to draw. People are all unique, from their facial expressions to their body posture. That's what I like to capture in my drawings when I draw people."

Peggy smiled, "That's wonderful, Steve. Absolutely amazing. I mean it, darling. Since we got together, I've always been impressed at your many talents. I've said it once and I'll say it again, you have a real gift, love." She chuckled, "I bet you could land a job and make pretty good money with your talent."

Steve chuckled and slightly tightened his grip around Peggy, "Well...I was a free lance illustrator for a while."

"Oh, yes I remember you told me that," Peggy replied leaning deeper into Steve's side.

"To be honest, Peggy. I'd rather keep drawing as a hobby rather than a job," Steve chuckled. "Keeps me honest."

Peggy laughed, "You're always honest, Steve." She kissed his chest, "All I like to do is read, play the piano, and recently started to thoroughly enjoy cooking."

Steve laughed, "I'd like to point out that you are excellent at playing the piano and an outstanding cook. And I'm saying it honestly."

Peggy giggled, "I know, darling." She kissed his chest again with a big smile. She then started to blush and laughed to herself, "Look at me. You ruined me, you know that?" Steve let out a small chuckle and looked at her with a warm smile. "You know I never was a hopeless romantic. I was just independent... But...after my brother died and before I met you, I told myself I'll never allow myself to be that way." She chuckled lightly, "But once I met you and... started developing feelings for you... I didn't want to settle for less."

Steve smiled at her lovingly, "I understand the feeling."

"You took a strong independent woman who wanted to carry the world on her shoulders, got her attached to you, and got her pregnant. Way to ruin her," Peggy chuckled.

"I try," Steve said humorously. He laughed, "Look at you, Peggy. Made an honest woman out of you." They both laughed.

Peggy chuckled, "As honest as can be. I still work in espionage." Steve laughed lightly in response. Peggy rested her hand on Steve's chest and smiled, "Of all things I have done in my life, this I do not regret," she said happily while fiddling with her wedding ring with her middle finger.
Steve chuckled, "me too." The couple went into a comfortable silence for a moment as the Big Band music on the radio continued to fill the room. The Rogers returned back to quietly enjoying their physical contact with one another while enjoying the pleasant music playing on the radio. Steve spoke up softly, "Want to see my recent drawings you haven't seen yet?"

Peggy hummed in content, "I always want to see what you drew."

Steve chuckled and unwrapped himself from Peggy so he can grab his sketchbook on the coffee table. "I'm going to let you know right now that I have a few drawings that aren't quite finished yet," he said as he grabbed his sketchbook. Once he had his sketchbook in hand he leaned back on the couch and turned to Peggy to see her cringing uncomfortably with her hands rubbing her belly up and down. "Peg?" Steve asked with concern.

Peggy continued to cringe uncomfortably and started to pant for air, "Darling…" She gasped again.

Steve didn't know what to do, "Peggy? What's wrong? You okay?" he asked concerned and confused.

Peggy cringed and panted harder, "Steve," she said between gasps of air, "Darling…I think my water just broke." She panted harder in discomfort as she started to support her back with one hand while the other rested on her stomach.

Steve nodded, "Uh. Okay, okay, okay-okay," he said nervously teetering on panic. They've been preparing for this moment for months, but now that its actually happening Steve is facing extreme nervousness and worry. There are a lot of fears coinciding at the moment two of which are fearing for Peggy's and their baby's welfare. Steve was so nervous that going on impossible missions and fighting legions of Nazis and Hydra soldiers during the war didn't even compare to how he feels now. This exact moment can easily be more nerve racking than his procedure to become a super soldier.

Peggy turned to Steve and forced a smile while fighting extreme discomfort, "Darling, its happening." She panted in pain from, "Its really happening. Finally," she gasped in pain again still with a bright smile across her face.

Steve shot up off the couch finally in action mode, "Hang on, honey! I'll get you to the car!" He turned and effortlessly picked her up in his arms and quickly bounded to the door with Peggy wrapping an arm around her husband.

Peggy held onto Steve tightly as he quickly grabbed the car keys on the console table near the door with one of his hands while the other effortlessly cradled her. Peggy gasped again as wave of pain from her first few contractions intensified. She smiled in discomfort at her husband, "You're kinda sexy when you're aggressive like that," she said to Steve while panting.

With one hand, Steve threw open their front door, "Just hang on, hon. We'll make it to the hospital." Peggy moaned in discomfort and in pain as she gripped Steve tightly in response. He quickly closed their door and rushed to their car.

White Plains Hospital, White Plains, New York

Delivery Room

1:00 am
Steve got Peggy to the hospital in record time, breaking nearly every speed limit and traffic rule in existence. Once at the hospital, the nurses and doctors rushed her to a delivery room for the remainder of her labor. Nothing in Peggy's life could compare to the amount of pain she is going through at this exact moment. Fighting through the war, getting shot, battling both mental and physical pain throughout the war doesn't even come close to the pain she is facing right now. After six hours of labor, she was starting to feel fatigue and is seemingly teetering on the edge of giving up. Steve didn't leave her side and brushed her sweat covered hair continuously in comfort as Peggy crushed his hand as the contractions got worse and worse, and in shorter intervals. Steve refused to leave his wife to the all-male waiting room like all men were expected to at that time. Even though the hospital staff urged him, he held his ground and refused to leave Peggy's side. The doctors and nurses knew better than to stand against Captain Rogers so they let him remain with Peggy. Instead the doctors and nurses continued to do their best to support Peggy medically during her labor.

Peggy hasn't cried this much since she lost Steve back in '45 when he crashed the Hydra plane into the ice while talking to her on the radio. She was now on the extreme edge of her mental and physical abilities. The intense pain shooting through her body was too much for her to bear. Peggy cried out as she crushed Steve's hand again while she pressed her back against the bed, "Oh my God! Oh my God!" She cried, "I don't think I can do this, Steve!"

Steve remained strong and unwavering in his support and confidence, "Yes, you can, Peggy. I know you can do this." He said as he continued to brush Peggy's sweat covered hair. He stood by the bed, refusing to sit down, "Peggy you're the strongest person I've ever met. I know you can do this!" he started saying anything to comfort her.

"You're doing good, honey. You're doing good. You're almost there I know it," Steve said quickly, trying to comfort his in pain wife.

"Shut up, Steve!" Tears continued to roll down her cheek, "Oh god it hurts!" After a long surge of pain, she opened her eyes and gasped, "I'm so sorry, darling. I didn't mean..." she cringed in pain again.

Steve brushed her hair some more, "Don't apologize, beautiful. I understand. Just focus on what you need to do." Steve turned to the doctor and saw him looking at his watch and biting his lip.

Peggy screamed, "AH!" She cringed in utter pain.

Steve continued to brush her hair and turned to the attending doctors and nurses, "Doctor..."

Almost on cue, the doctor stepped forward and bent down at the foot of the bed and looked under the blanket covering much of Peggy's lower body. After a long while, the doctor looked up at Steve and Peggy and nodded, "Now, Mrs. Rogers. Let's get your twins out."

"What? Twins?!" Peggy gasped in between surges of pain. Steve looked at the doctor confused, "Twins?" he looked at Peggy in shock, "We're having twins?!" Peggy, at this point, was in too much pain to verbally answer. Steve's eyes widened at the news that they're having twins. This is the first time either of them heard the news of twins. Granted, there was no way of knowing the gender or how many babies they were going to have with only rudimentary pregnancy check ups through the touch method.

The doctor spoke calmly, "This is the hardest part, Mrs. Rogers." Peggy started to clench Steve's hand. The nurse put a hand on Peggy's shoulder as Steve started to brush Peggy's hair once again.
The doctor nodded, "You're going to have to push on a count of three." Peggy took a deep breath. "one…two…three… Push!" On command, Peggy pushed with all her might and screamed at the top of her lungs. After what seemed like an eternity she had to stop and catch her breath. The doctor nodded, "That was good, Mrs. Rogers. You need to do it once more." He paused, "Ready? One… two… three…"

Peggy pushed once again for what seemed like another eternity. She squeezed her eyes shut and pushed as the extreme pain continued to intensify. She prayed silently and toned out the noise in the room including Steve's encouraging words. She kept pushing and kept going despite the intense pain shooting through her whole body. "Ah!" Peggy cried out in pain once more. Finally, a surge of much needed relief shot through her body as she seemingly returned to reality. Suddenly, she heard the sound of a baby crying loudly forcing her to open her eyes to see the doctor holding a small baby with damp dark brown hair in his arms. Peggy let out a relieved and pure happy smile, too tired to say anything.

Doctor smiled, "It's a girl!" he said happily as the baby continued to cry, kick starting her lungs.

Peggy continued to smile happily at her newborn baby girl. She then slowly looked at Steve tiredly and saw the pure love in his eyes as he continued to gaze at his new daughter. She looked back at her little baby and said weakly, "She's so beautiful." She gasped and held a happy but tired smile across her face.

The doctor smiled, "Time of birth, 1:50 am, November 26." Almost on cue, the attending nurses stepped forward and began cleaning the baby girl with small towels. After a moment they wrapped the baby in a towel then began the next few steps for the baby. After waiting a minute or two, the nurses and doctor clamped the umbilical cord in two places then cut it, separating the baby from Peggy. The baby continued to cry loudly due to the umbilical being cut and because she was getting used to the outside world. The nurses then replaced the existing towel wrapped around the baby with a clean towel then gently transferred the crying baby over to Peggy's eager arms.

Peggy held the little baby girl in her arms for the first time and gasped with joy as she smiled weakly at her little girl, "Hello, my darling," she said lifting her head off the bed to get a better look at her daughter. She caught her breath as tears rolled down her cheek, "Mama is here for you, Sarah Amanda Rogers" she said tiredly as the baby continued to cry. Sarah Amanda Rogers, the name both she and Steve agreed on if their baby was a girl. Peggy giggled lightly, "Its me, your mama. Your dad and I couldn't wait to finally meet you," she said happily with the hint of fatigue in her voice betraying how tired she really was after the long hours of painful labor. Finally seeing her daughter almost made her forget that she had to give birth one more time.

Steve turned to Peggy and smiled, "You did it, Peggy. You did it," he said as he brushed her hair. He then focused on his crying daughter and smiled, "hello, sweetie. Your mommy and daddy are here," he said referring to himself and Peggy.

Peggy smiled and weakly replied as she cradled her newborn daughter, "She's so beautiful." Her tired smile grew larger, "Sarah Amanda Rogers."

Steve smiled and kissed the top of Peggy's head, "She's our little girl." He chuckled lightly as he brushed her hair once more, "She's our perfect little girl. With a perfect name," he said as he watched his daughter start to calm down in Peggy's arms. Steve looked at Peggy, "You're so beautiful. You and her," he said as tears of joy started to roll down his cheek.

Peggy produced another tired smile, "I love you so completely," she said weakly as she slowly brought a hand up and caressed Steve's chin while the other continued to carefully hold their daughter. Steve leaned forward and kissed her lips in response. She happily reciprocated the kiss
with the remaining energy she had left after her painful labor, but the moment soon came to an end with a new surge of pain shooting through her. She broke the kiss as she her squeezed her eyes closed and cringed again as another surge of pain tore through her body. She gasped in pain but continued to skillfully hold their daughter so they won't disturb the already calming baby girl.

"Ah. Ah…" Peggy started to groan.

"Peggy?" Steve asked in pure concern. He turned to the doctor, "Doc?"

The Doctor looked at the nurses and nodded, "Ladies," he said simply. As if the nurses could read his mind, they calmly approached Peggy and gently took the baby from Peggy's arms and proceeded to place the baby girl in the bassinet near the bed. The nurses will later do additional cleaning and other necessary procedures for the wellbeing of Sarah Amanda Rogers. But until then the doctor quickly went to work and bent down at the foot of the bed, and looked under the blanket covering Peggy's lower body once again. Peggy continued to gasp and pant in pain as she felt the feeling of another contraction. It was a pain she couldn't forget. After what seemed to be an eternity of the doctor checking under the blanket, he finally stood up and looked at Steve, "Its time for the other baby."

Peggy cringed in pain again as her body prepared for another birth. Steve looked down at Peggy and brushed her hair, "One more, Peggy. One more. You can do this. I know you can, beautiful." He smiled at her, "We're having twins. We're having two babies. Just one last push and you're done." Peggy squeezed her eyes closed and death gripped his hand as the pain continued to shoot through her again.

The doctor nodded, "Okay, Mrs. Rogers. Same as last time."

Peggy opened her eyes, "Wait, wait, wait. I don't know if I…"

Steve continued to brush her hair, "Peggy listen to me. Just Once more, Peggy. Once more. One more." He kissed the top of her head, "You have always been the strongest one. You can do it, my darling," he said softly.

At the encouragement of Steve's words, Peggy squeezed her eyes closed once again and pushed with all her might. She fought another wave of insane pain shooting through her body as she pushed with everything she had. She screamed at the top of her lungs just as the feeling of relief surged through her body telling her that her labor is done. She rested her head on her pillow panting heavily with sweat dripping down her brow and tears rolling down her cheeks as her body settled in relief after yet another extremely painful labor. Suddenly she heard a different baby crying causing her to lift her head tiredly to see the doctor cradling a new born baby that also had wet dark brown hair like Sarah Amanda who was born mere moments ago. Peggy gave a weak smile at her baby as another wave of relief swept her body. She was hanging on the edge exhaustion from hours of painful labor and producing two babies, but the sight of her babies kept her from falling victim to that tired feeling. Giving birth to the second baby was arguably a lot easier and faster than giving birth to her first.

The doctor smiled, "It's a boy!" He explained excitedly as the baby boy in his arms continued to cry loudly. The baby boy continued to cry louder and louder at the new feeling of being outside as his lungs got used to the new environment. "Time: 2:30 a.m. November 26." He smiled, "Congratulations, Mr. and Mrs. Rogers. You are now proud parents of twins. One girl and one boy."

Peggy gasped with a wide smile forming across her face, "He's beautiful…" A mixture of tears of joy and pain from labor continued to roll down her cheeks as she looked at her newborn boy crying loudly in the doctor's arms. "He's perfect. They are both perfect," she said weakly referring to her new daughter and son. The sweat from her laborious efforts during pregnancy continued to glisten
on her face in the light of the delivery room as Peggy slowly calmed down from the long hours of labor.

After the attending nurses cut the umbilical cord and cleaned the baby, they wrapped the baby in a clean towel like Sarah Amanda then carefully handed the baby over to Peggy. Once Peggy had her newborn son with her, she turned in the bed slightly so she was laying with her son in her arms too tired to move much of her body. The little baby boy continued to cry in her arms with his little hands waving in the air frantically as Peggy continued to gently embrace him. A tired but glad smile seemed to permanently rest on Peggy's face, happy that she finally gave birth to two beautiful babies, one girl and one boy each with ten fingers and ten toes, by all accounts a healthy pair of fraternal twins. Peggy squeezed her son gently and smiled at him, "mama is here, my darling. Mama is here," she said softly. The baby boy started to calm down as his cries went from loud to sporadic whimpers almost like he instantly recognized his mother's voice. Peggy kissed the top of his head and smiled, "shhh," she said softly and gently. "Mama and daddy are here. We'll always be here for you. For you and your sister," she said genuinely.

Steve leaned over Peggy kissed the top of her head, "He's beautiful." He kissed her head again, "They're both so beautiful."

Without looking away from her son, Peggy replied softly, "Yeah."

Steve hovered over her and smiled, "You did great Peggy. I knew you could do it."

Peggy fiddled with her son's hand with hers then turned her head to capture Steve lips for a long lasting kiss. After a moment she broke the kiss and smiled weakly, "I love you."

Steve smiled, "I love you too." Peggy smiled happily at her husband then rested her head back on the pillow and looked at her newborn son. Pure exhaustion was finally setting in her core making her want to move very little. She was so exhausted that even moving her arms and head was extremely hard. But emotionally, she was happy. So moving her body to see her babies was well worth the effort.

An attending nurse cradling Sarah Amanda wrapped in a clean blanket approached the delivery bed, "Mr. Rogers, would you like to hold your daughter?"

Steve stood up straight and nodded, "Yes, please," he said softly but with a hint of excitement. He met the nurse halfway and as gently handed his newborn daughter into his arms. The little girl was no longer crying and was wide awake with her curious blue eyes darting around the room. As Steve returned to Peggy's side, he smiled down at his daughter, "hey there. Daddy's got you," he said softly. Sarah stopped looking around the room and rested her curious gaze on Steve, seemingly recognizing that he is her father. She let out a soft babble almost like it was response.

Peggy diverted her attention from their son to look at Steve cradling and interacting with their newborn daughter causing her heart to melt instantly. She simply gave a warm loving smile at the scene and felt absolute love for her husband and their newborn babies in this moment. Steve looked over at Peggy then back at Sarah, "want to see mama and your brother?" Sarah was silent and only looked up at him with a questioning gaze. Her consistently curious blue eyes were really quite adorable. Steve chuckled and leaned closer to the bed and angled Sarah so she can see her brother and her mother.

Steve and Peggy smiled widely and happily at one another. The doctor stepped forward with a clipboard in hand, "Sorry to interrupt."

Steve straightened and took a seat on the side of Peggy's bed, still gently cradling Sarah in his arms.
"No it's okay, Doctor," he said softly.

Doctor nodded, "Names for the certificate? Daughter first please."

Steve and Peggy shared a brief glance to determine who would answer. But after a split second, Peggy answered with a smile, "Sarah Amanda Rogers."

The Doctor smiled as he wrote down the name on the birth certificate. "For the boy?" the doctor asked as he flipped the page in his clipboard.

Before Steve could say anything, Peggy spoke up again, "Michael James Rogers." Steve quickly looked at Peggy and was completely taken back by the name she just gave for their son. The name "Michael" was agreed on but the middle name caught him completely by surprise. Steve remained motionless and couldn't stop looking at his wife with surprised grin spread across his features.

Doctor smiled, "Thank you, and congratulations again," he said as he tucked the clipboard under his arm and turned to leave the room to finalize the paper work.

Peggy nodded then smiled happily at Steve. Steve locked eyes with his wife causing his surprised grin to turn into a warm genuine smile on his face. Suddenly he heard his daughter babble in his arms causing him to break eye contact with Peggy to give his daughter some attention. He smiled happily at Sarah as he fiddled with her small hands with his large free hand. He spoke softly, "Sarah Amanda Rogers and Michael James Rogers," he said to no one in particular. He nodded at his daughter, "You and your brother have good names." Steve brought his daughter up to his lips and kissed the top of her head, "welcome to the world."

A little while later, Peggy was moved to a private hospital room near the maternity ward for the duration of her stay in the hospital. In her hospital room, Peggy sat up in her hospital bed with pillows supporting her back as she cradled her newborn son in her arms. In the armchair right next to her bed is Steve continuing to cradle their newborn daughter in his arms. Peggy didn't get a very good look at her babies in the immediate moments following their birth because she was mentally and physically exhausted from long hours of painful labor. But the hours following her labor, she started admiring and memorizing the features of each of her children. Both her son and daughter had dark brown hair like her, and had blue eyes like Steve. The two babies already showed clear combined physical qualities of both their parents, yet they both looked uniquely different. Sarah Amanda and Michael James aren't identical twins but rather fraternal twins which means they are as alike as any two siblings. So they can look different and even have different personalities, or, the twins may be so similar that they are assumed to be identical, just as some siblings could arguably be indistinguishable, if only they were the same age. Peggy already noted that her two twins looked physically different and interestingly enough, Sarah Amanda had a fuller face like Peggy and Michael James had a thinner face like Steve. But however they look, both Steve and Peggy are extremely happy and proud to be new parents of two beautiful babies. Peggy especially. After months of unknowingly carrying twins in her belly and hours of painful labor, finally seeing the twins and their cute distinct features made it all worth it.

Peggy felt her son stir in her arms causing her to smile down at her little baby, "Good morning, my little Michael James." The baby fidgeted slightly and slowly opened his eyes to reveal his curious blue eyes looking up at her. He babbled causing Peggy to giggle to herself. "Did you just wake up? Sleep well, my darling?" she asked softly. Baby Michael James blinked tiredly and slowly moved his arms at the sound of his mother's voice. Peggy's smile grew wider, "Mama is here, my darling. And daddy is here too." The baby babbled almost like he was responding to her in his own little way. Peggy looked into the blue eyes of her son and saw the resemblance of Steve in him. Peggy looked over at Steve who was rocking their daughter side-to-side in his arms, "They have your eyes," she
said lovingly.

Steve looked up and smiled at his wife. He replied softly, "they're both so beautiful. Just like their mother." Peggy tilted her head and smiled at him with loving eyes.

Steve chuckled, "Guess neither one of us were wrong."

Peggy laughed, "No. I guess not." She smiled at her daughter in Steve's arms then back at her son, "Turned out 'darling' is actually 'darlings.'" The two both laughed to themselves for a moment.

Steve smiled at Peggy, "Michael James, huh?" he asked humorously as he stood up from his seat to sit at the edge of Peggy's bed.

Peggy chuckled, "Yeah. Michael James," she said smiling at their son in her arms. "I wanted to surprise you."

"You certainly did that," Steve said humorously. "Its perfect. Both of their names are perfect," he said softly as he leaned closer to Peggy and kissed the top of her head earning a warm smile on her lips. They both agreed to the first name "Michael" for their son after Peggy's brother who was killed in action during the war. But the middle name they originally agreed on was "Carter" after Peggy's last name, but obviously it was surprisingly changed to "James" after Steve's long time best friend Bucky. For their daughter, the name "Sarah" was after his mother and the middle name "Amanda" was after Peggy's caring and loving mother. The names carried a great deal of meaning for both of them, so they're absolutely perfect just like the twins themselves.

Peggy smiled up at Steve, "I love you."

Steve smiled back, "I love you too." He leaned toward her and spoke softly, "I promise, Peggy. For as long as I am alive... our kids will be safe." Peggy nodded and smiled quietly to herself, reiterating the similar promise she made earlier silently.

Anyway:

Read about Steve Rogers being a professional sketch artist and worked as a freelance illustrator.

Quoted from The Adjustment Bureau Movie

I know in the late 40s and 50s Hospital delivery and procedures were quite different, but I wanted to change it a little to get Steve in there with Peggy.

I know I probably got some things off with childbirth and what not, but I did my best lol. Also I learned that women back then were sometimes put in a state called "twilight sleep" where they were injected with a powerful anesthetic. Essentially women could experience childbirth without the pain. But it became known that women wouldn't even remember it while under "twilight sleep." So I didn't want to put Peggy through that.

Hope you enjoyed.
It's now 1948, and with this new year came the hopes for good fortunes and another peaceful and prosperous year. As the rest of the world continues to pick up the pieces from the war, the US public continues to enjoy growing luxuries and almost seemingly perfect national harmony. With the United States in prosperity from the end of the war, the postwar affluence changed the American dream. There was no more crippling sums of poverty from the Great Depression, and there was no more war. The United States seemed to be in flowing in complete peace in the postwar world. Cars and automobiles started to flow through the assembly lines of the Big Three companies of Ford, Chrysler, and General Motors. Interstate highways and toll roads started to spring up in postwar-US especially in the New York state allowing living farther from work in the cities a possibility. Families, like the Peggy and Steve, that been delayed having children because of war no longer waited. The nation was enjoying prosperity and a very active baby boom free from war.

But overshadowing the hopes for continued peace was the constant increase of tension between the United States and the Soviet Union. With the American public still high on the victory against the Germans and Japanese during the war, most Americans viewed their place in the postwar world with optimism and confidence. But within two years of the end of the war, new challenges and perceived threats from the Soviet Union and communism had arisen to erode that confidence. Now, three years after the end of war, and the Cold War was quickly escalating. With fear of communism and Soviet power spreading a very real possibility, the US government is slowly increasing and implementing aggressive anti-communist sentiment.

As the world rebuilds and the US public continuing to live prosperously in the postwar-US, the SSR has been working vigorously to hunt down Neo-Hydra groups and the Soviet Leviathan deep science and espionage agency both domestically and abroad. While the SSR focused on Neo-Hydra and Leviathan, the CIA has been strictly focusing on intelligence gathering on the Soviet Union as a whole allowing the SSR to focus all of its efforts on Hydra and Leviathan. While the SSR continued in its missions, SHIELD has been gradually reaching operational status once again and is slated to be activated in the beginning of March 1948. The SHIELD top secret headquarters building in New York City's Time Square, "The Aegis," has been completed ahead of schedule. With the SHIELD headquarters hidden inside another office building in New York City, it takes the phrase "hide in plain sight" to a literal sense. Additionally, many SSR facilities and bases like Camp Lehigh have been already seamlessly converted to SHIELD with many SSR personnel and agents still maintaining their jobs, but not under SHIELD payroll until after SHIELD activation. Thanks to the efforts of Colonel Phillips and Howard Stark, the transition from SSR to SHIELD would be relatively smooth. By March, SHIELD would already have numerous domestic assets and even international assets ready to engage in protection of the United States and her allies.
Steve, in his usual sleepwear consisting of a white shirt and grey sweats, slowly woke up with his arm still draped lazily over Peggy's side. Throughout much of the night, the two of them remained cuddled nicely together under the covers of their big queen sized bed. Their bedroom was dim as the sun just started to rise on another early winter Saturday morning. Peggy was still sound asleep dressed in her favorite spaghetti strap short rose pink nightgown with her back pressed snugly against Steve's chest. Steve yawned tiredly then slowly raised his head off the pillow and smiled as he gazed at his sleeping wife. Her brown wavy hair almost seemed to defy physics as it looked flawless while it draped neatly around her neck, shoulder, and pillow. He couldn't help but smile and automatically run a hand over her bare arm and shoulder, feeling every inch of her smooth skin. He stopped at her shoulder and gripped it gently as he stared at the two small bullet scars in her right shoulder. He smiled fondly as he gently traced her scars just like she did with his. Even with her scars she is still beautiful and perfect. Steve felt Peggy stir slightly as he moved his hand over her exposed skin.

After a moment Peggy turned so she was lying on her back, "Hm," she hummed tiredly in response to Steve's gentle touch. She slowly opened her eyes, "Watching me sleep again?" she asked tiredly. Steve chuckled as he draped his arm over Peggy's now significantly thinner stomach, "could you blame me?" he asked while propping his head up with his other hand.

Peggy chuckled tiredly, "I suppose I can't."

Steve frowned, "Sorry, I woke you."

Peggy chuckled, "No, it's alright. The twins are going to be up soon anyway. Waking up to you is always the best way."

Steve smiled, "I figure you want more sleep, because you've had a hard week with taking care of the twins for much of the day while I was at work."

Since giving birth to Sarah Amanda and Michael James a month and two weeks ago, taking care of the twins was an immediate challenge the moment the babies came home with Steve and Peggy from the hospital. On top of the usual hardships of taking care of a baby, having twins virtually doubled the load. At first, Steve and Peggy were juggling the needs of their babies individually which proved to be more of a headache because once they took care of one baby, the other baby would cry and need something. But the Rogers were quick to adapt and synced feeding and napping/sleeping schedules for their twin babies. But synchronized schedules didn't stop Sarah Amanda and Michael James from crying excessively during the day or the night. In basic terms, the twins cried A LOT. Peggy initially thought that the twins cried more than the normal babies, but she figured that probably wasn't true. The twins weren't hurt or sick, so which meant they cried because they were either uncomfortable, hungry, need a change, or simply wanted attention. Taking care of the needs of the babies was challenging and at times incredibly frustrating for both Steve and Peggy. But it got even harder and twenty times more frustrating for Peggy when Steve had to go back on duty after his family leave ended ten days after the birth of Sarah Amanda and Michael James, leaving Peggy alone with the twins during the day. The United States military policy for paternity leave is ten days which is a significantly shorter than Peggy's maternity leave of twelve weeks. Peggy, who is now in her tenth week of maternity leave (she started her leave early before the birth) has a few weeks left before she goes back to work at the SSR. Since Steve returned to work at his various postings, she has been dealing with the twins by herself during much of the day which exhausted her. She had to balance exercising to get back into shape, taking care of the twins, and other responsibilities of everyday life. It got exhausting quick, but she was thoroughly surprised at how much energy she actually possessed. Steve would help when he can, mainly in the evenings when he got home from work and weekends, which proved to give Peggy much needed relief.
The immediate few weeks following Steve going back to work strained the two of them. It's hard work living with constantly crying babies, and it took its toll on both Peggy and Steve. They both can handle stress, fatigue, and lack of sleep because of who they are and what they do, but parenting two newborn babies felt like an entirely different beast on its own. Though frustrations ran high and fuses were short, Steve and Peggy remained understanding with one another. But when Peggy occasionally slips and gets frustrated and accidentally takes it out on Steve, Steve doesn't escalate the frustrations into a fight and remains calm and passive. His patience and calm voice always helped Peggy to eventually settle down which she's always grateful for. Its not that Steve doesn't get frustrated while taking care of the twins, its that he doesn't like taking his frustrations out on anyone, especially on Peggy. He likes to release steam when he runs, trains, and works, so his frustrations don't correlate back to anyone especially his wife and babies. Though taking care of Sarah Amanda and Michael James is at times hard and frustrating, Steve and Peggy are still jubilant and proud to be parents and a family. No regrets.

Peggy smiled tiredly up at him, "Don't apologize, darling. I know you would stay and help take care of the babies with me if you could. I understand you have to go back to work, so no need to apologize." Steve simply smiled. Peggy chuckled, "Sorry if I sometimes take my frustration out on you."

Steve chuckled, "No, its completely understandable. You don't have to apologize for that," he said as he ran his hand over Peggy's thin stomach while he started to admire her.

Peggy smiled at him, "come here," she said softly. Steve leaned down and kissed her lips gently. The kiss deepened as Peggy opened her mouth to graze Steve's tongue with hers. Peggy shifted so she can wrap her arms around Steve's muscular frame as their heated kissing intensified. She broke the kiss and smiled at him, "Hey."

Steve smiled, "Hm?"

"Are you happy?" Peggy asked softly.

"Of course I am," Steve said genuinely. "I'm the luckiest man in the world. I have a beautiful and loving wife, and a family...what more do I need?" Peggy smiled in response. "If this was all I can have in this life, then it be enough for me. It feels good to be in an actual family again," Steve said with a gentle smile. "Are you?" He asked softly.

Peggy smiled, "I am." She brushed his blonde hair, "This is perfect." They both gave each other warm smiles. She chuckled, "Though I can do with less crying from the twins."

Steve laughed, "Me too." He held his happy smile, "But they're a blessing...for we have a family now."

Peggy smiled, "I love you, Steve," she said as she ran a hand along his cheek.

"I love you too," He said in response as he went down to kiss her again. But just as they were about to kiss they heard the distinct cry from her son in the nursery room.

Peggy broke the kiss reluctantly, "And their up," she said referring to her two infant twins with a hint of frustration in her voice. Though they could tell the cries were from Michael James, they knew it wouldn't be long until Sarah Amanda would be up from all that crying. Steve and Peggy may be proud parents, but the timing the twins had played hell with the romance in their life. It always seemed like the twins cried when Steve and Peggy were getting into a romantic mood.

Steve went down and kissed her, "I'll take care of them." He could hear the cries from his son
escapate from the closed bedroom door.

Peggy smiled, "You sure? You took care of them during the night."

"Yeah I'm sure. I also woke you up so its only fair," He chuckled. "Sleep in, beautiful," Steve said as he rolled off of Peggy while the cries from the baby continued to intensify.

Peggy smiled at her husband as he got off the bed, "Thank you, darling. Though waking up to you kissing me is always smiled upon" she said happily.

Steve turned around and smiled, "I'll keep that in mind." The cries from Michael James got louder and louder, and were soon joined by the cries from Sarah Amanda. Steve quickly kneeled on the bed and planted a one last kiss on Peggy's lips before running to the nursery to take care of his crying babies.

Peggy rested her hands on her stomach with a faint smile on her lips. She took a slow deep breath as she could faintly hear her husband's soothing voice through the cacophony of cries in the nursery room. She closed her eyes and tuned out the cries of her babies to leave it to Steve, and found herself drifting back to sleep. For what seemed to be only a moment, she slowly woke up again and all was quiet. The crying subsided and not even the soft sound of Steve's soothing voice could be heard through the door and walls. Peggy blinked the sleep away and realized the room was a lot brighter than before with the sunlight piercing the closed drapes. She yawned then propped herself up on her elbows and looked over to Steve's side of the bed to see if he returned back to bed, but found his space still empty. Peggy smiled and knew he was still with their babies. She then twisted in the bed covers toward her nightstand to get a glimpse of her clock. The clock read "9:15" which meant she slept for a couple of additional hours. She laid back down on her back and started to contemplate going back to sleep or go check on Steve. After a moment Peggy made her decision and got up out of bed to check on her husband and her two little ones in the nursery room. But before she left the bedroom, she strolled over to get her pink and black robe that was draped over one of the armchairs by the windows. She smiled at the thought of Steve with babies as she put her robe over her short rose pink nightgown and tied it off. Peggy couldn't lie, seeing Steve with her babies was always a heartwarming and an adorable sight. Something well worth getting up to see in addition to greeting Sarah Amanda and Michael James. She chuckled and made her way out of the room to see her three precious angels.

Peggy silently made her way across the hallway to the nursery room and noticed that the door was left wide open. She quietly entered the room and saw a heartwarming sight. Steve was fast asleep on the gray armchair with his legs propped up on the matching leg rest with a baby resting comfortably in the crook of each of his arms. Both Sarah Amanda and Michael James were fast asleep just like their father. Peggy giggled quietly to herself as she leaned against the wall and crossed her arms over her chest. She took in the heartwarming sight in front of her of all three of her angels sleeping comfortably together. She couldn't help but to think of Steve as a baby at this very moment. Well he is sleeping like a baby. Peggy chuckled lightly again. Suddenly she heard Michael James stir then began to whimper quietly. Steve didn't look like he was waking up from his slumber, but started to move his head slowly from side-to-side.

Peggy quietly but quickly came over to Steve just as Michael's whimpers started to get louder. She carefully picked him up in her arms, making sure to support his head, and held him close to her. She kissed the top of his head and said softly, "Shhh." She whispered in a sweet motherly tone, "Mama is here. Mama is here." Michael's whimpers continued but didn't escalate which meant he might be calming down. Peggy rocked him gently side-to-side as she walked slowly around the room. Peggy smiled down at her son in her arms as she paced the room. "Shhh, it's okay, darling, Mama is here," she said again as Michael slowly calmed down. As soon as Michael stopped making whimpering
noises, Peggy whispered softly, "Daddy, help put you back to sleep?" Michael didn't respond but simply blinked up at her and gave an almost smile. Peggy chuckled. She stopped and looked over at Steve and Sarah still sleeping quietly together. She laughed, "I guess your sister and daddy are a lot alike." Michael flopped his arms in response. Peggy giggled at his baby response and beamingly, "You sure are active today, dear," she said softly. Michael again quivered his arms and legs in what appeared to be a happy response.

Steve stirred and slowly woke up and saw Peggy standing in front of him holding Michael James in her arms. "Good morning, hon," he said to Peggy tiredly. He then looked down and saw Sarah Amanda still sleeping peacefully. He smiled warmly at his daughter and didn't want to move so he wouldn't disturb her.

Peggy chuckled, "Good morning to you too, darling." She smiled, "Thought you would be awake when I came in here."

Steve chuckled lightly, "I got them to stop crying, but they seemed like they wanted me to stay with them." Peggy chuckled and smiled at her husband. Steve shrugged, "This chair is so comfortable couldn't help but fall asleep with them."

Peggy laughed. Michael James simply blinked curiously at the interaction between his two parents. Peggy smiled, "What did our little ones need?"

Steve shrugged again, "I think they just missed us."

Peggy laughed, "Michael will be hungry soon since he's up." She smiled down at him, "He was about to cry a few minutes ago." She kissed the top of Michael's head gently.

Steve smiled, "If you feed Michael, I'll bottle feed Sarah. When she wakes up." Steve chuckled, "It's Michael's turn for you anyway."

Peggy simply laughed at his comment. She tilted her head with a wide smile, "the bottle is downstairs."

Steve chuckled, "Well...will this be a morning without..." Suddenly without warning Sarah Amanda woke up and started to cry.

Peggy laughed, "Now why did you have to say that, darling. Look what you've done," she said humorously.

Steve quickly repositioned Sarah in his arms then stood up. He brought her up to him and kissed the top of her head, "Good morning, Sarah. Daddy's here." Sarah continued to cry louder and louder. Steve sighed and kissed his daughter on the head once again as he rocked her gently from side-to-side trying to calm her down.

Peggy chuckled, "Better hurry, solider. Our daughter is looking very hungry."

Steve sighed and looked down at his daughter in his arms, "Blackmail, huh?" He chuckled, "Is getting fed all you think about, sweetie?" Sarah simply cried louder and louder. Steve laughed, "Well, I don't blame you."

Peggy smiled, "She is your daughter, darling." Before Steve headed downstairs he kissed Peggy gently on the lips then kissed his son on the head.

Just as Steve left the room, Michael James suddenly started to cry just as loud as his twin sister. Peggy chuckled, "Mama is going to get you fed, alright, darling?" Michael, like Sarah, only cried in
response. Peggy sighed as she turned and sat down in the armchair, "You two will probably eat as much as your father when you two get older. But, hopefully won't cry as much as you do now." Peggy smiled, "But we will always love you no matter how much you cry." With one hand, she started to loosen her robe to get ready and breastfeed her son.

After a while in the kitchen, Steve made his way back up the stairs to the nursery while simultaneously bottle feeding his daughter in his arms. He walked slowly to avoid sudden moves from disturbing his precious daughter from feeding. As he calmly entered the nursery he saw Peggy breast feeding their son while sitting comfortably in the gray armchair. Peggy sat quietly while looking lovingly at their son with a small smile growing on her lips. Steve couldn't help but lean against the wall and watch in complete love and admiration of his wife with their son. Peggy looked up from her task and instantly saw Steve. She smiled at him, "hey."

Steve smiled back and nodded, "hey," he said softly. He looked back down at Sarah Amanda to make sure she was comfortable in his arms while he held the bottle for her.

Peggy chuckled, "I see Sarah is content."

"See, Daddy did something right," Steve said to Sarah with a smile on his face.

"After your wife had to remind you," Peggy replied chuckling to herself. Michael James continued to feed, uninterested in the exchange between his two parents.

"You did not," Steve said with a grin. "I knew they were going to be hungry," He paused. "I just didn't want to disturb them."

Peggy smiled and shook her head, "Whatever you say, darling."

Steve chuckled, "Come on, can you disturb them with these faces?" He said angling his body to show Peggy a full view of Sarah's adorable little face while he held the bottle for their baby girl.

Peggy chuckled, "I suppose I can't. We did make cute babies, didn't we?"

Steve smiled, "Well you did most of the work."

"Well...I couldn't have done it without you, darling," Peggy said with a slight giggle. They took a moment and gave each other a loving and understanding smile. Peggy smiled as she looked down at her son who was still breastfeeding off of her. She spoke in a hushed tone, "Though our babies can be an extreme handful." She gasped happily, "But I wouldn't trade of this for anything."

Steve chuckled, "me too." He shrugged, "but aren't you used to extremes? Being a federal agent, a spy, and serving actively in a war seems pretty extreme," he said encouragingly. He then looked down at his daughter to check if she was doing alright with the bottle in his hand.

Peggy chuckled, "And there's marrying you," she said smiling.

Steve raised an eyebrow, "extreme in what way?"

"In every way," she said winking. Steve chuckled and smiled at her while shaking his head.

"How are you feeling today?" Steve asked changing the subject.

"Good," Peggy responded evenly.

Suddenly, Steve felt Sarah Amanda stir in his arms causing him to look down at her. He saw Sarah
turn her head and push the bottle away from her giving Steve a cue that she might be done eating. Steve angled the bottle down but kept it close to Sarah's mouth in case she only wanted a break from feeding. Peggy smiled at the interaction between her husband and their infant daughter, "looks like she might be done."

Steve laughed, "maybe. I don't want to be wrong and put the bottle down and find out she's still hungry." He smiled at his infant daughter seeing that she was gazing up at him with her cute blue curious eyes. He spoke softly, "she sure is strong though..." Peggy smiled at him.

"She is your daughter. I can already tell she's going to be like you," Peggy said softly. "Call it mother's instincts."

Steve looked up at Peggy and chuckled, "Maybe." He then looked down at his daughter again,"But she's beautiful like her mother." Peggy tilted her head and smiled at her husband with affection.

Peggy looked down at their son who still looked obviously hungry as he continued breast feeding. She chuckled, "goodness our son doesn't seem he wants to stop."

Steve chuckled, "He's a hungry baby." He smiled, "I think Michael is going to be like you. I just know it much like your motherly instincts."

Peggy smiled at their son, "me too. But handsome like his father." Both Steve and Peggy remained in silence for a moment as they watched over their two infant babies with loving and caring glances.

Steve spoke up gently breaking the silence, "Anyways, were you able to do this week's workout plan?" He asked, changing the subject.

Peggy nodded, "mhmm. Did a little extra too. Added some of last week's exercises into this week." She chuckled, "our babies watch mama. They kept me on track," she said with a smile.

Since giving birth to Sarah Amanda and Michael James a month and two weeks ago, Peggy had been desperately working to get back into shape after the birth. She's been using the remainder of her maternity/family leave to not only take care and bond with her two babies but to train and lose as much of the baby weight as possible. Peggy knew getting back into shape wouldn't be instantaneous nor easy, but she needed to be disciplined with her health and training so she can be fit to return to work as a field agent. She didn't want to be viewed as someone who needed protection or be considered a liability. Though the majority of the men at the SSR office respect her and her abilities, she still needed to make sure she can keep up if not surpass the other male agents. Steve was obviously very supportive of her and often trained with her during the weekends when he wasn't on duty at his various postings. But during the week when Steve was gone for much of the day, he made rigorous workout plans for her to do at the house to help train her. There was no need to go to the gym because Peggy could train vigorously just as well at the house with the assortment of weights and equipment she and Steve owned including a heavy bag in the backyard.

Peggy liked the idea of training in the backyard of their house because she didn't need to go to gyms to train rigorously. During this time in the 40s, women did not go to gyms nor were expected to do intense workouts because it crossed true "feminine" boundaries. Instead, they were supposed to go to "Slenderizing Salons" to get rolled and pressed by wooden pins and metal coils to lose fat. The machines at these "salons" did not burn body fat or even get women into shape but rather were intended to beat fat to submission. It resembled very much like a modern torture chamber tailored for women. Peggy, of course, was not like most women, she thought those places were absolutely absurd and never went to one. She would like to train at a gym, but she didn't want to be without her babies, deal with overly aggressive gym rats, and bother with the ridiculous social stigma. Even
though she loved challenging societal norms, going to the gym was completely out of her way, for now at least. There were so many reasons why not to go to the gym and only one reason to go. Plus, she didn't want to go to the gym without Steve in the first place because he was her workout partner.

But another reason why Peggy liked training in the backyard is that not only was she getting a full body exercise in but she could also watch the babies. Sarah and Michael are still highly attached to her and Steve, especially to her because she was home more often, so she didn't want to leave them alone without her or Steve for extended periods of time. So wherever Peggy goes, the twins go. They go to the grocery store, hair salons, diners, and even friend dates with Peggy. It's going to be a definite challenge to get them acclimated to seeing a babysitter or nanny when she has to go back to work. The process of finding a sitter or nanny is entirely a different challenge in itself. But Peggy and Steve agreed that they didn't want to leave their infants with babysitters or nannies until the very end of Peggy's leave.

Steve laughed as he repositioned Sarah in his arms while still holding the bottle near her with his free hand, "Wow. You're taking super mom to a whole new level."

Peggy chuckled, "Well I'm a spy, a wife, and a mother." She shrugged, "Kind of have to be super."

"Soon a director of an intelligence agency too," Steve said with a smile.

Peggy hummed with a smile, "Hm. This is true." She looked down just as she felt Michael James stop breast feeding. She then eased him off her breast and started to cover herself up again with her free hand.

Steve chuckled, "I noticed you're getting stronger every day since you started training after the birth of our twins." He chuckled, "you're getting fit a lot faster than I thought. It's not a bad thing by the way."

"Are you underestimating me, darling?" Peggy asked jokingly as she positioned Michael James, with careful precision, on her chest with his cheek on her shoulder.

Steve went wide eyed, "no, never! I mean, I didn't think you'd get fit THIS fast." Peggy gotten more fit and lost nearly twenty-three pounds in little over a month which completely surprised Steve. Peggy essentially gotten into shape and lost weight faster than an average person can. She also is returning to pre-baby weight faster than the average woman, while also taking care of the twins and other duties. Something has changed within her which begs the question whether the serum was transferred to Peggy through the twins.

Peggy chuckled as she started rubbing Michael's back, "I'm just messing with you, love." Steve simply smiled at her as he thought about how she's been getting physically stronger after the birth.

Peggy smiled, "You should know I'm not an ordinary woman," she said in a seductive tone.

Steve decided to address that question at a later time with Howard first. He smiles, "Yeah, you're extraordinary."

Peggy winks, "In what way?"

Steve chuckled, "In every way." He looked down at his infant daughter just as he felt her stir in his arms. Sarah Amanda looked like she was about to whimper causing Steve to bring the bottle back to her lips to see if that's what she wanted. Steve saw his baby girl instantly calm down in his arms as she happily drank milk from the baby bottle. Steve smiled in victory then looked back up at Peggy, "Are you sore at all?"
Peggy shrugged, "A little."

"Do you want to train today?" Steve asked courteously.

"Mhmm… wait. Today is Saturday, isn't it?" Peggy asked quickly.

Steve chuckled, "Yeah. Why?"

Peggy glanced at the clock on the wall, "And it's almost eleven." She looked back at Steve, "I forgot to tell you that I'm spending the day with Angie today. It's her day off and I haven't seen her in a few weeks. Hope that's okay."

Steve smiled, "Of course it's okay! Give her my love for me."

"You okay with me going out? Will Sarah and Michael be okay?" Peggy asked concerned.

Steve chuckled, "Peggy, we'll be fine. Go have fun. Our babies are oh so good," he said with a bright smile.

"I don't mean to…"

Steve chuckled, "Peggy, I always want to spend time with you because you're my wife and best friend, but that doesn't mean I want to restrict you in anyway."

Peggy smiled, "After all this time, you're still such a sweetheart."

Steve chuckled, "All the time in the world won't be enough."

"A sweetheart and a sweet talker. Gosh, I love you," Peggy said affectionately.

Steve smiled, "I love you too." Both Steve and Peggy chuckle at their exchange. "But I'm glad you're going out. It's good to take time for yourself with friends too, you know. Go out and let your hair down. I'll take care of the babies while you're gone. Don't have to worry," he said happily.

Peggy smiled, "Thanks, darling." Peggy then looked at Michael James as she continued to rub his back gently. She didn't know if he's still hungry but just looking at him melts her heart. She gazed at his adorable little features as he continued to rest idly against her chest with his head resting on her shoulder. The twins are definitely a blessing without a doubt.

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**Noon**

Steve, still in his sleepwear, is busy cleaning up the kitchen after brunch while Peggy went upstairs to wash up and get dressed for her meeting with Angie in the city. While Steve cleaned and Peggy got changed, the twins were cuddled nicely together in a brown straw baby bassinet basket on a foldable stand next to the kitchen table. As Steve cleaned, he would periodically look over at the twins in the basket to make sure they were doing alright. The twins were placed in the bassinet basket, so it was quick and easy for Steve and Peggy to look after them while they ate their meals at the dinner table and to sometimes simultaneously move them up and downstairs. Just as Steve finished wiping down the sink with a towel, he heard one of the twin's whimper prompting him to walk over to the kitchen table to check on his little ones in their basket. He sat down at the head of the table then draped the towel over his shoulder as he leaned over the bassinet to check on his two infants. Steve then started to alternate tickling Sarah and Michael with one hand earning an excited reflex of arms and legs from his two twins.
Steve chuckled, "Which one of you made a whimpered sound?" He smiled at his little ones, "This is home. You can't be sad here," he said chuckling again. Neither of the two infants cried or whimpered but they did kick in response. Steve laughed, "Ah, just made the sound to get attention from daddy, huh?" The two babies made a reflexive smile and kicked their legs in response.

Steve leaned completely over the bassinet and kissed both of the twins gently on the head, "Daddy, will always be there for you two. I promise," he said as he sat back down. Just as he sat down, he heard Peggy's heels clicking on the wood stairs as she walked down the stairs. Steve smiled, "Mama's here."

Peggy walked into the kitchen while finishing putting on her last small pearl earring. She's dressed beautifully in a thick button up dark blue wool coat for the cold winter over a rose pink long sleeve button up collared blouse tucked into a high waist navy blue flowy sailor pants, matching navy blue heels, her favorite brown purse slung across her body, and of course, she was wearing the Captain America Shield necklace Steve gave her for Christmas a few years ago. Steve smiled and looked down at the twins in the bassinet, "Mama is here and she looks absolutely beautiful."

"You've seen me in this before, darling," Peggy chuckled as she finally got her last earring on while walking towards Steve. She stopped right next to her husband and gave him a quick kiss on the top of his head.

Steve looked up at her and chuckled, "So? Doesn't mean you aren't beautiful in it. You're always beautiful," he said lovingly.

Peggy smiled, "thank you, darling," she said as she wrapped her arm around Steve's shoulders and leaned into him.

Steve looked down at the basket, "Sarah, Michael, do you two agree?" Of course the two infants didn't respond but Steve was sure they'd agree. He chuckled and looked back up at his wife, "They agree," he said confidently.

Peggy only smiled happily in response. She leaned back and looked at Steve, "Alright, I'm heading out."

Steve smiled, "Have fun, love."

Peggy nodded with a smile. She then turned serious, "Okay, so I got fresh diapers and baby powder from yesterday's trip to the store, so you don't have to worry about any shortage in baby supplies," she said quickly to Steve. "You prepared the formula and bottles, right? Remember do everything in pairs with them because their twins. So you know..."

Steve cut her off, "hon, relax!" he said raising his voice slightly with a grin. He stood up and took her hands in his and gripped them gently.

Peggy calmed down and gave a small smile, "Sorry, Steve." She paused and looked down, "Just wanted to make sure you got everything."

Steve chuckled, "I've been left alone with the twins before, hon. We'll be fine," he said with a reassuring smile.

"This is true," Peggy said looking back up at him with a gentle smile.

"Plus, you do this every time you leave. Even for an hour," Steve said humorously.

Peggy chuckled, "Bad habit I guess." Both of them laughed. Peggy then leaned forward and
captured Steve's lips in a gentle kiss.

After a moment they broke the kiss and Steve smiled at Peggy, "You're just being a mother, Peggy." He chuckled as he ran a hand down her smooth cheek, "Go have fun. And say hello to Angie for me."

Peggy smiled and leaned forward again and kissed Steve gently, "I will." She then took a step back from Steve and squatted down next to the bassinet basked and gently kissed both Sarah and Michael on the head. She smiled and whispered to them in a gentle motherly tone, "Mama is going to leave for a few hours. She's going to be home later, I promise." The twins simply moved reflexively and turned their heads slightly in the direction where they felt her kiss. She smiled and kissed them on the head gently again, "bye, bye, my angels," she said softly. Peggy stood up and kissed Steve on the lips one more time, "Okay, I'm going."

Steve smiled, "Have fun, hon." Peggy turned to walk to the front door with Steve close behind so he can close and lock the door when she left. Once they got to the front door, Peggy stopped at the console table and got her car keys from one of the drawers.

"Oh! I might stop by the office and check in," Peggy said as she gripped the keys in her hands.

Steve smiled, "On a Saturday? Don't you usually check in over phone?" he asked curiously.

"Yes, but I want to see who's working in the office today and see if anything super important is going on right now cause I've been out of the loop for some time," Peggy said evenly. She smiled, "I'm going back to work soon, so I feel like I should stop by in person and see what's going on. Plus, it's a Saturday, it shouldn't be too chaotic, so I shouldn't be that much of a distraction," she chuckled.

Steve laughed, "Miss work already, huh?"

Peggy stepped toward Steve and took his hands in hers, "Spending all my days with you and the twins are perfect, but I want to continue working. I know you know the feeling, darling," she said with a gentle smile.

Steve chuckled, "Honey, I know. I was only joking with you." He leaned forward and kissed her on the lips briefly.

Peggy let go and smiled, "See you in the evening, darling," she said as she turned to the front door.

Steve smiled, "See you."

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**New York Bell Company Office**

Peggy, wearing her wool coat, walked into the "Bell Co. Office" building with a sense of purpose like she usually did when she was working. She walked through the first floor of the building toward a telephone switchboard room with absolute confidence and command presence drawing the attention of those she passed. The specific telephone switchboard room she's heading to is where the secret one-stop elevator is located to get to the SSR office/facility in the upper floors of the building. In that specific switchboard room are SSR federal employees with security clearances who operate the SSR telephone switchboards, and a handful of SSR agents for security purposes.

As Peggy rounded the corner toward the switchboard room, she spotted two familiar men, two SSR agents dressed in dark suits, sitting behind a couple of desks flanking the door to the room. Both the agents were armed and were assigned to guard the entrance to the switchboard room from any unauthorized personnel. She smiled to herself as she confidently walked toward the two familiar SSR agents.
agents with her heels clicking against the hard wood floor. One of the male agents behind his security desk instantly spotted Peggy walking toward them. He turned to his partner sitting nearby, "Hey, is that Peggy?"

Before the second agent can respond, Peggy spoke up with a smile, "good afternoon, gentlemen."

Both the male agents stood up instantly to greet the senior field agent of the office. The second agent smiled courteously at Peggy, "Agent Rogers, haven't seen you in a while. Welcome back."

Peggy stopped and greeted the two men. She smiled, "Thank you, Gene. It's good to see you and Paul again. Though I hate to say that I'm not officially back yet because I have one more week of leave."

Paul nodded at Peggy, "How's the husband and your baby doing?"

Gene chuckled, "Enjoying sometime off. Man, I'm kind of jealous of you, Peggy. I wish I could have that much time off…"

Peggy laughed, "Just give birth to your own baby and you'll have your time off." She made a grin and shrugged, "but I have to say, you'll be taking care of the baby for much of it."

Gene nodded, "No, I'm good where I am." Peggy and Paul laughed at Gene's response.

Peggy smiled, "But to answer your question, Gene, yes, I am enjoying my time off. It was great spending my days with my husband and babies. Well…" She paused, "until he had to go back to duty, so it's back to seeing him in the afternoons, evenings, and weekends. But I can't complain, he's absolutely wonderful." She chuckled, "But I can say I love spending time with my babies. Even as infants I can tell how much they're alike to Steve and me." She smiled happily while talking about her family, "though I could do with a little less crying. But they're babies so crying is to be expected."

Paul rose an eyebrow, "Wait, babies?"

Gene smiled, "You have twins or…"

Peggy chuckled, "twins."

"What are their names?" Gene asked curiously.

Peggy continued to smile, "Sarah Amanda and Michael James."

Paul nodded, "ah boy and girl. Maybe one day my kids and your kids can meet."

"That would be nice," Peggy said honestly.

Gene smiled, "Congratulations, Peggy."

"Thank you," She replied briefly.

Paul flinched and quickly pressed a button under his desk which signaled the other agents in the switchboard room that someone authorized was entering. "Oh, sorry for wasting your time. Go right in, Agent."

Peggy smiled, "Thanks, you two." Just as she thanked her two colleagues, the steel door to the switchboard room opened automatically for her.
Gene turned to Peggy, "Oh! Before you go up there, Agent. Colonel Phillips is here and so is the Chief. They're in an important one-on-one meeting." Peggy looked over at Gene and nodded courteously with a confident smile before entering the familiar switchboard room.

As the door closed behind her, Gene spoke up to Paul, "You know…"

"Hm?" Paul hummed in question as he sat back down at his desk.

"Agent Rogers looks pretty good after pregnancy," Gene said as he too sat back down at his desk.

Paul shook his head, "She's married, Gene. Forget it."

Gene sighed, "Not like that, idiot. I mean…" He shook his head, "Never mind, I should not be talking about this anyway."

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SSR Switchboard Room

Peggy stepped into the switchboard room where she always walked through to get to the SSR office above and immediately noticed she was drawing attention. It didn't take long to attract the attention of the SSR switchboard operators and the two SSR agents keeping guard near the door. As she passed the guards, she greeted them courteously then walked down the hallway of telephone switchboards toward Rose who sat at the very end. As she walked down the pathway, she could hear many of the switchboard operators whispering about her while they did their job. Peggy didn't really mind since she was used to the whispering behind her back. Other than a handful of ladies in the room, Peggy didn't really know many of the women who worked as SSR telephone operators. Rose Miller, Dorothy Harris, and Mary O'Connell, who were Peggy's bridesmaids at her wedding, were the only ones she knew and are considered friends.

As Peggy neared the end of the pathway toward Rose, Rose instantly spotted her. "Peggy!" Rose yelled energetically as she quickly took off her headset.

Peggy stopped by Rose's work station, "Hello, Rose," she said smiling.

Rose stood up and smiled happily at her friend, "So good to see you back. Welcome back!" she exclaimed happily. "Give me a hug!" she called out excitedly as she embraced Peggy in a tight friendly hug completely taking her by surprise.

Peggy hugged her back and chuckled, "Good to see you too, Rose. But I could use some air," she said mocking pain.

Rose let go of Peggy and continued to hold her bright smile, "Gosh, I feel like it's been forever!"

Peggy composed herself then chuckled, "Yes, it's been some time, though I still got another week of leave before I officially go back to work."

"Still. It's good to see you. Haven't seen you in a few months but it's understandable," Rose replied with a smile. She bowed her head with a grin, "Oh! And congratulations, Peggy."

Peggy chuckled, "Thank you, Rose."

"I appreciate the letter you and Steve sent me with photos. You have such a beautiful family and such adorable looking babies!" Rose said happily. "Goodness, Sarah and Michael are so cute!"

Peggy chuckled, "they're beautiful, aren't they? They are so awfully cute. Even though they're a lot
of work, I live to see their adorable features every morning and Steve caring for them every day." She shook her head with a pure smile, "I love my babies so much, words cannot describe."

Rose chuckled, "That's so sweet. Last time I saw you this happy was when you and Steve got married." Peggy shrugged with a joyous grin. "You have to send me more photos of them."

Peggy chuckled, "I will."

"Oh! Goodness, you probably came for business purposes, don't let me delay you," Rose said as she turned and opened the SSR elevator from her workstation.

As the heavy blast doors to the elevator slowly opened, Peggy turned to Rose, "Are Dorothy and Mary here today?"

Rose chuckled, "Mary is, but I think she's getting lunch at the moment. When you're done upstairs come down and say hi, she'll love to see you."

Peggy smiled, "I will."

As Peggy walked into the elevator, Rose continued to speak to her, "We should go out the next time you're free."

Peggy turned around in the elevator to face her friend standing near the open elevator doors, "definitely. Steve is good with the babies, so he doesn't mind me going out."

Rose chuckled, "or you can bring that handsome husband of yours with you along with your cute babies to meet their aunt Rose."

Peggy laughed, "You'll meet them soon, Rose. I promise." She pressed the button to the floor she's heading to, "See you later."

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SSR New York City Branch "Bell Co. Office"

Operations Floor

In the chiefs office, Chief Sousa and Colonel Phillips were having an important meeting about the future of the SSR and the new intelligence agency designated as SHEILD. Sousa who sat behind his desk, wore a grey vest, matching suit trousers with suspenders, dark blue tie, and black polished shoes. Sitting in front of Sousa is Colonel Phillips dressed in civilian clothes consisting of a black suit with a dark diamond pattern tie. Phillips leaned back in his chair with his suit jacket unbuttoned, "I know you don't want to be bothered on a Saturday, but Stark only told me this yesterday. Since your office is close by to the new SHIELD headquarters I needed to have this meeting as soon as possible." Sousa nodded quietly. "I don't need to tell you this but everything discussed and handed to you in this meeting is top secret. The file in front of you has more details that we are discussing." Sousa looked down to the awfully thick manila folder in front of him that said "CLASSIFIED" in big red letter.

Sousa opened the folder to see a large stack of papers. He looked up at the Colonel, "It's not a problem, Colonel. This is my Saturday to work anyway." Like the military, law enforcement, and other government agencies, all SSR personnel cycle shifts and duty on weekends.

Phillips nodded, "Anyway, this is about the SHIELD transition." Sousa nodded in response silently. "SHIELD is expected to be fully functional by May of this year. All new SHIELD facilities across the country will be completed and all SSR facilities will either be converted to SHIELD use or be
closed by that time. The SSR will essentially become a research division for SHIELD." Sousa sat silently and listened intently to what the seasoned Colonel said. "But all remaining SSR field offices will maintain their role as investigative and espionage field offices with added responsibilities except this one…"

Sousa raised his brow, "What about this one, sir?"

"It's being closed." Sousa looked a little confused with the Colonel's words. Sousa leaned forward, "let me explain, Chief. As I'm sure you know SHIELD headquarters known as 'Aegis' in a large unmarked building in Time Square is complete and occupies substantial real-estate down there." Again, Sousa nodded in response. "This SSR office will be closed down and field operations will be transferred to the Aegis HQ. All agents including you will essentially operate primarily out of Aegis. This facility is particularly being closed due to its proximity to the SHIELD headquarters. There's no need for this many SHIELD buildings in one area."

Sousa relaxed, "makes sense."

Phillips leaned back in his chair again, "this is where your new job comes in."

"Sir?" Sousa asked curiously.

"Another purpose of our meeting." Phillips smiled, "The thing I am about to tell you does not and will not officially exist. Due to endorsements from the Rogers, in which they have stressed your unwavering loyalty, integrity, and bias for action, you will be in charge of the Office of Special Projects." Sousa raised his eyebrows in surprise. Phillips continued without issue, "the SHIELD Office of Special Projects is already authorized by the Secretary Defense and is a secret branch dedicated to…more covert operations both domestically and abroad."

Sousa nodded, "It's an honor, sir. Thank you."

Phillips nodded in response, "Don't thank me, thank Steve and Peggy."

"I will do the job to the best of my abilities, sir," Sousa said reassuringly.

"I know you will, Chief. That I have no doubt because if Steve and Peggy trust you that means I can trust you," Phillips said with a smile. Sousa nodded with a new burst of confidence running through his veins. Phillips continued, "More details about the branch are in the file in front of you. But again, the branch does not officially exist so cover stories will be implemented to cover its existence." He leaned back, "Since it doesn't exist that means your job doesn't exist. So unofficially your job title is Operations Officer stations in Aegis Headquarters building."

Sousa nodded, "Understood, sir."

Phillips nodded, "To another topic. We're trying to make the transition to SHIELD as seamless as possible. But understandably there will be some issued. For instance, all SSR agents and employees will be screened, evaluated, and retrained. Some will be cut but others will be retained based on the process."

Sousa understood the mindset of screening perfectly, "how would screening and retraining go?"

Phillips spoke calmly, "It will take some time. It'll be a cycle so it won't remove all agents from the field at the same time…" He paused as he heard a commotion behind the closed door in the office floor. Phillips looked back and saw the weekend duty agents in the office floor rushing toward the elevator. He turned back to Sousa, "What's going on out there?"
Sousa merely shrugged as both he and Phillips stood up. As Phillips went to open the door, Sousa grabbed his crutch and slowly limped to follow the Colonel to investigate.

The moment Peggy walked into the office she became surrounded by many of her fellow agents eagerly greeting her return. Her team consisting of Jack Thompson, Mike Li, and Rick Ramirez quickly pushed through to the front of the small gathering to greet Peggy in person. Thompson, wearing a black suit and silver tie, smiled confidently as he put his hands up to give Peggy some space, "Woah, fellas! Give our senior field agent some space." He chuckled, "I'm sure she wants to greet her team first."

An agent laughed, "Aw, cut if Jack. We're just happy to see her back in charge in this place." Everyone laughed at the comment.

Peggy chuckled and shook her head, "Relax, boys. I'm sure all of you have your own mothers." Everyone laughed at her joke.

Thompson looked at Peggy, "Had us worried for a second. We thought you weren't coming back," he said laughing.

Ramirez, rolled his eyes, "he means, HE was worried. Li and I didn't doubt it, boss."

Peggy shook her head and looked at Thompson, "You didn't really think I'd be a stay at home mother, did you?"

Thompson chuckled, "I'd be ashamed if you did."

Li laughed, "I think that's his way of saying he missed you, Peggy."

Ramirez nodded, "we missed your investigative and tactical mind, boss."

"Oh? Hydra and Leviathan still causing us trouble?" Peggy asked raising a curious brow.

"Every damn second," Ramirez said plainly.

Thompson interrupted, "Hey, I say we were doing pretty good. Tracked down some leads and got the bad guys." Peggy chuckled and shook her head at Thompson's defense.

Li smiled, "All I'm saying is, having Peggy back will make life easier."

Peggy smiled at Li, "Thank you, Li."

Thompson shrugged, "I have to agree with Li," he chuckled. "It's good to have you back with onboard, kid," he said playfully. Peggy rolled her eyes with a smile knowing he was just trying to mess with her. Thompson smiled at Peggy, "I got to say, Peggy. After being pregnant, you look good."

Peggy raised a brow, "Saying I didn't look good before?"

"That's not what I..." Thompson quickly said suddenly and uncharacteristically nervous. The other agents laughed at Thompson's sudden nervousness in front of Peggy. There was a long period of time when Thompson did not respect Peggy as a person and merely treated her like an object or a substantial inferior to him. But, she finally earned his respect and loyalty a few years ago and repeatedly demonstrates her abilities as an effective leader and field agent in the SSR. Never again will Thompson question her abilities and judgment and he will follow her like he would follow any
other man.

Li chuckled, "Walked right into that one, Jack." Peggy just smiled confidently.

Peggy shrugged, "if you think I can't cut it anymore, I'm happy to spar you again. I haven't let pregnancy dull my edge."

Ramirez laughed, "I'd pay to see that again."

Thompson shook his head, "I'm good. I was just…"

"I'm just razzing you, Jack. You can relax," Peggy said in a friendly tone.

Thompson sighed, "Good times. We really did miss you. It's good to have you back." Li and Ramirez agreed full heartedly.

Peggy put her hand up to stop the conversation, "Hold on, boys. I'm not returning for another week. I'm still on leave."

Ramirez shrugged, "Really? Well I guess it make sense. Why would your first day back be a Saturday."

Li smiled, "How's your kid, Peggy?"

"Kids," Peggy corrected with a happy grin.

"Wait…" Thompson said connecting the dots.

Peggy chuckled and smiled happily, "I had twins, Jack."

Ramirez cheered, "Oh! Congratulations, Peggy!" Almost instantly, there were a mixture of applauses and verbal congratulations ringing through the office space to Peggy.

Li was super happy for his superior, "Congrats! There's going to be junior SSR agents running around here someday."

"Or soldiers like their dad," Ramirez added with a grin.

Thompson smiled, "What are their names?"

"Sarah Amanda and Michael James Rogers," Peggy responded happily talking about her family.

Ramirez cheered, "boy and a girl!"

"Congratulations, Peggy. To you and Captain Rogers," Thompson said respectfully. He laughed, "Now you're on a new mission of a lifetime. A mission of motherhood."

Peggy chuckled, "I can argue working with you three is like motherhood. Dealing with disobedient children."

Thompson mocked hurt, "ouch."

Li smiled, "hey, got any pictures?"

"Of course, she got pictures, you dope. She's a mother now!" Ramirez said as he bumped Li in the shoulder.
Peggy shook her head at their exchange, "I got some. Give me a second," she said as she dug into her purse to get her photographs she and Steve took with their camera. After a moment, Peggy took out a small stack of pictures from her purse and split the stack in two, handing the two halves to Li and Ramirez. The photos were a variety of Steve with the twins, Peggy with the twins, Steve and Peggy with one baby at a time, and the whole family together.

As Ramirez went through the photos he paused at one in particular and singled out the photo that had Steve, Peggy, and the twins all in one picture. He paused briefly as he smiled at the tender picture in his hands. He then suddenly pushed through the small crowd causing Peggy and Thompson to look at him confused at his sudden burst. Ramirez then hopped onto a desks and called out to everyone in the office, "Hey everyone! Our own Agent Margret Rogers is a mother of two beautiful twins! Give her one!"

Everyone who heard the sudden outcry congratulated and applauded Peggy for becoming a new mother. Peggy didn't blush but merely shook her head at Ramirez's outburst. She chuckled then thanked everyone who congratulated her again.

Thompson, who was looking over Li's shoulder while he flipped through Peggy's pictures, spoke softly, "You have good looking babies, Peggy. Congrats."

Peggy smiled, "Thanks, Jack."

Suddenly the room went absolutely silent as Colonel Phillips followed by Sousa stepped out of the chief's office. Ramirez silently but quickly got off the desk while everyone turned to the two leaders diligently. The overwhelming presence of Colonel Phillips caused the entire office to go quiet. The Colonel's command presence was so overpowering that it left no doubt that he should be respected. When he enters the room, everyone notices and he instantly inspires confidence in his leadership without saying or doing anything. Peggy, who's carries herself with a similar command presence, still feels the need to put in effort for others to follow and respect her. She knows her value and that's all that matters to her. Peggy always admired the Colonel's demeanor and leadership even while she served under him during the war when they weren't real close.

Before anyone could explain the commotion, Colonel Phillips spoke up with a straight face, "Is that Agent Margaret Carter Rogers, I see?" The small crowd around Peggy split fully revealing Peggy to the Colonel and chief. All the agents including Thompson and the rest of Peggy's team were nervous about what would happen next. Peggy, however, wasn't worried because she and the Colonel had a father-daughter relationship and the other agents didn't know him like she did.

Peggy smiled, "Good afternoon, Colonel. Didn't mean to disturb your meeting just checking in the office before my leave is over."

Phillips cracked a genuine warm smile, "It's quite alright. You're just the person I need to see anyway. Come join us in the office," he said as he turned back toward the office. Sousa nodded and smiled at Peggy before following the Colonel.

Peggy nodded, "yes, sir." She then collected her pictures from Li and Ramirez and quickly followed the Colonel and the chief into the office. Peggy's team and the other agents quickly dispersed and returned to business as usual.

As Li walked back to his desk he nodded to the Chief's office, "think they'll lay her off because she's a mother and everything?"

Ramirez shook his head, "not likely."
Thompson sat back down at his desk then turned his chair to face Ramirez and Li, "fellas…she's the future deputy director of SHIELD remember?"

"Oh yeah…," Li said as he sat down at his desk.

Back in the Chief's office, Sousa leaned his crutch against his desk and sat down in his chair as Peggy and Phillips sat down in the chairs in front of his desk. Phillips turned to Peggy, "before we get started, congratulations, Peggy. I received you and Steve's letter in the mail. Beautiful family you two made."

Peggy smiled happily at the Colonel, "Thank you, Colonel."

Sousa leaned forward at his desk and offered his congratulations as well, "congrats, Peggy."

Phillips smiled at Peggy, "Sarah and Michael will grow up to be excellent people with you and Steve as their parents." Phillips along with Sousa were one of the first people to see the Rogers babies when they attended Thanksgiving dinner at the Rogers house last year. Like many others, he also received a letter with baby pictures from Steve and Peggy. "You're going to enjoy being a parent, Peggy. Both you and Steve believe me. Cherish these moments when you have them."

Peggy nodded, "Thank you, Colonel. We will." His statement to her sounded like personal experience talking. The way he said it seemed like he experienced parenting before, but as much as Peggy wanted to ask more about his personal life, she knew that now wasn't the time. She and Steve never did ask him about his personal life during Thanksgiving dinner when he came over with the other guests. It wasn't a good time then too.

Phillips leaned back, "Well since you're here. Something we need to talk about. We'll keep it brief." Sousa nodded then turned to Peggy, "You return to work next Monday, right?"

Peggy nodded, "Yes, I do."

"So, you'll continue your work as a senior field agent for the time being until SHIELD becomes fully functional around May," Sousa said calmly.

Phillips intertwined his finger on his lap, "essentially once SHIELD is operational, you will take the deputy director position for SHIELD and will be the head of the Aegis HQ building in Time Square as previously discussed."

Peggy spoke confidently, "I'm proud to have earned the position, but I understand the President has to approve of your choice for Deputy Director."

"President Truman already did. Endorsements from numerous Army officers essentially sealed the deal," Phillips said with a smile. Peggy smiled at the Colonel in silent gratitude. Phillips continued, As Deputy Director, you'll be the second highest official of SHIELD. Second to me. In my absence, you'll do my job. Other tasks as deputy director is to work with other intelligence agencies on our priority missions, administrative and logistical tasks for the overall agency attend national security hearings with me, and work with Stark who is our chief science and technology director for SHIELD."

"Sounds straight forward," Peggy responded evenly.

Phillips gave a half smile at Peggy, "I know you can handle it. New agency so there will be a lot of work to do."
"I can do it," Peggy said confidently and without the slightest bit of hesitation.

Phillips nodded, "I know you can. Chief Sousa, here, will be handling field operations and the Office of Special Projects out of the headquarters building as well. He will be working under you." He smiled, "Don't worry, I'll give you a complete write up for you soon."

Sousa nodded to Peggy, "Thanks for the recommendation." Peggy simply gave a warm smile in response.

Phillips stood up which caused both Sousa and Peggy to do the same, "Well, that's all I got for you for now. Don't want to keep you from your busy day," he said with a smile. He then turned to Peggy and embraced her in a brief hug. Phillips leaned back and spoke softly, "give Steve my best. I'll see him Monday."

Peggy chuckled, "Thank you, Colonel. I will." She then walked over to Sousa and embraced him a friendly hug.

Sousa let go of Peggy, "See you soon," he said softly. Peggy smiled then began to make her way to the door. As she opened the door, Sousa called out to her, "say hi to Angie for me."

Peggy chuckled, "Okay. See you two later." Sousa and Phillips simply smiled at Peggy as she left the office.

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Aurora's Café, New York City

Peggy and Angie were sitting across from one another in a small booth at Aurora's Café, a humble café in downtown New York that offered a relaxing atmosphere in the middle of the hustle and bustle of the big city. The café wasn't too big, but it was rather spacious for an establishment of that type. Aurora's Café also had a 1920s wood Steinway vertegrand upright piano available for anyone to play it which only added to the relaxing ambiance. For Peggy and Angie, this is the first time they've been to this particular café and is quite the distance away from their usual meeting place at Angie's work at the Automat. Angie heard about Aurora's from a friend and decided to meet Peggy there instead of the Automat because she didn't want to spend her day off at a job she didn't even like.

Peggy folded her wool coat then placed it next to her neatly then sipped her coffee, "This is a nice place," she said looking around as she placed her cup down on the saucer. "Very relaxing," she said with a smile at Angie. "I should bring Steve here one of these days."

Angie, who wore a yellow button up, collared, puff short sleeve blouse with dark green swing skirt and heals, chuckled, "Yeah, you should and tell him it was my idea." Peggy laughed and shook her head. Angie shrugged, "I heard about it from a friend. Glad, she recommended this place to me," she said with a content grin. Peggy silently nodded with a smile as she took another sip of her hot coffee. Angie burst out happily at Peggy, "Gosh, English! It's so good to see you again. It feels like it's been such a long time since we last went out together."

Peggy put her cup down, "Angie, it's only been a few weeks," she said deadpanned.

Angie shrugged, "So? That's still a long time, English!" she burst out causing other people sitting near their booth to look at her with bemused looks.

Peggy laughed, "Goodness, Angie."

"Of course, it flies by for you. You have Captain Yum-Yum and babies to keep you busy," Angie
said with a grin as she took a sip of her coffee.

Peggy laughed, "I got to tell my husband you called him that. He would love that."

Angie chuckled, "Please do."

Peggy leaned back against the backrest of the booth and crossed her legs, "being a mother has it challenges don't get me wrong, but it's great at the same time." She smiled with a warm motherly smile, "Sarah Amanda and Michael James are so cute. I wouldn't trade any of this for anything."

"That's so sweet. How is the family?" Angie asked with a happy grin.

"Perfect. No major complaints. Should see the way our baby girl and boy look at us when we hold them. They are so cute. Though… they sure like to cry," Peggy said with a laugh.

Angie laughed, "babies love to cry. Either because they're hungry, thirsty, want attention, or simple to cry."

Peggy chuckled, "Oh I know that for sure." She reached into her purse and took out the small stack of photos that she had in the SSR office, "Here's a few recent pictures," she said as she handed the photos over the table to Angie.

Angie took the photos and gasped, "OH MY!" she said loudly. She flipped through the photos, admiring each one for a moment, "Sarah and Michael gotten a lot bigger since the first few photos you sent me. Oh, my gosh! Your family is so adorable," she gasped in excitement. It's true that Sarah and Michael grew since being born, but not by much. The two infant twins grew about an inch and gained about a pound each in their first month, but to Angie it did seem like a drastic change.

Peggy smiled happily, "Aren't we?"

"How's Steve as a dad?" Angie said with genuine curiously.

Peggy produced a loving smile, "He's perfect. Absolutely perfect like everything else," she said in an affectionate tone.

Angie smiled, "Aw. I think you're blushing."

Peggy was in fact blushing as she talked about Steve. Though they've been together for a few years and married for little over a year, Peggy always found new things to love about Steve. Loving him was just easy. Before they were together or even had any romantic interest in each other, Steve treated her like a person, which she really appreciated, rather than a porcelain doll or object like other men treated her in the past. There are so many reasons why she loved Steve, but a current reason she's focusing on is how he is with their two babies. Peggy laughed, "He loves to play with the babies and make them happy. He's very energetic with them. I also get the feeling that he wants to take of the babies at night when they cry to solely because he wants to hold them." She chuckled, "I knew he'd make an excellent father. I think he was always meant to be one."

"I bet your little ones like it when he plays with them," Angie responded happily.

Peggy nodded, "they do. It's funny and cute."

"Do you think they cry for you when you aren't around?" Angie asked curiously.

"I'm sure they do. Much like they cry for him at times," Peggy chuckled, "I can't tell the difference in cries based on sound. It's a little more complicated than that."
Angie laughed, "Look at you, Peg. Already an attached super-mom."

"I think I got attached the moment they were born," Peggy said causing both of them to laugh.

Angie handed Peggy the pictures back, "I need to meet them in person one of these days."

"I promise you will," Peggy said as she put the pictures away. Peggy took another sip of her coffee, "So, how are you and Daniel doing?"

Angie smiled happily, "We're doing great! We try to see each other every other day, but his work is getting complicated and stressful."

Peggy smiled in understanding, "That's great, I'm happy for you two. But be patient, Angie. He's a good man and he's doing the best he can. The fact that he's trying to see you in the middle of all this stress means he's really putting effort. Means your special to him and you're a priority to him."

Angie smiled, "Thanks, Peggy. I know I am to him."

"You've been together since Steve and I been married, haven't you?" Peggy asked as she took a sip of her coffee again.

Angie nodded, "Mhmm. But speaking of…" She paused and raised a brow, "What do you think of us. Me and him?" she asked turning serious.

"What do you mean?" Peggy asked confused. "Obviously, I think you two are a good match for each other. You both complement each other's traits and you two both have mutual respect for each other. Why?"

"It's just…"

"It's just what?" Peggy pushed while leaning back against the booth backrest.

"I want to know where this is going. Where he and I are going. We've been together for a few years now and…"

Peggy interrupted her, "you're thinking about getting married?"

"Yeah… I am. I love him and I feel like we should take this to the next step." Angie sighed, "I gave it some thought and I definitely want to, I just hope he feels the same. I…" This the first-time Peggy saw Angie practically speechless and serious.

Peggy relaxed, "He hasn't said anything to me, but that being said I haven't been around him since I went on leave. But believe me when I say it, I'm sure he feels the same way as you. I know he loves you, you just need to give him some time. Be patient and don't rush it," she said honestly.

"But didn't you and Steve get married not long after you two started dating?" Angie asked curiously.

"Yes, but our circumstances were different," Peggy replied seriously.

"What does that mean?"

Peggy ran a hand through her brown wavy hair, "Well it's a complicated answer and I can't rightfully explain other than say Steve and I just clicked." Angie was silent and wasn't buying her response. Peggy sighed, "It just felt right, Angie. It's like I knew him my whole life, and everything fell into place." She chuckled lightly, "I thought I lost him forever when he went missing…but then he found his way back. I love him and there was no way I was going to lose him again. So, when he asked me
the question after only five months of dating, there was no way I was going to say no. Again…it felt right and it still does."

Angie nods, "I see," she said evenly.

"Look, Angie. You can't compare yourself to others because you will always be disappointed or hold resentment. Comparisons are always unfair because you tend to compare the worst of what you know about yourself to the best of what you presume of others." Peggy sighed, "Don't compare your relationship to Steve and I, alright? We had a lot of bumps in the road to get here. So many things could have happened that could've stopped us from being together."

Angie nodded, "I understand. Sorry, Peggy."

"Don't need to apologize, Angie. You're just trying to figure things out. Just be patient. Daniel is a good man and as you said work is getting stressful, so just trust him, okay?" Peggy said softly with an understanding smile.

Angie smiled, "I do. I'm not doubting him. I love him. I just want to know what he wants with us." She nodded, "Thanks, Peg."

Peggy smiled back, "Anytime, Angie." She raised her brows, "How's your pursuit of acting?" she asked changing the subject.

Angie sighed, "Gosh, where do I even start. But I can say that I think I've come to terms that I can't make it here. So much for dreams of being a show girl, right?"

Peggy shook her head, "Don't you dare go there, Angie. I know you can act and even sing, I've seen it and heard it before." She looked sternly at her friend, "Remember when those federal agents came for me a few years ago, and you covered for me? They believed your act."

Angie sighed again, "I know you believe in me, English. And I appreciate it… but the talent agents don't think I belong on stage. I've been trying for years and haven't made progress, I think it's time for me to take a hint."

Peggy shook her head, "Don't you dare give up. Don't even dream of it. There is always something you can do to succeed." She leaned forward, "You can be anything you want to be…"

"Maybe that works in your world, but doesn't really happen in mine," Angie said sadly. Peggy always knew Angie to be a happy, high-spirited, and a real down-to-earth girl, but she can tell that the recent setbacks in Angie's goal to be an actress have really weighed heavily on her. Facing constant setbacks in any goal tends to weigh heavy on anyone's shoulders and makes them feel like it's impossible. Peggy and even Steve know the feeling very well.

"Change your world," Peggy replied quickly with conviction.

Angie gave a weak smile and shook her head, "Look, Peggy. I know you're trying to help and I appreciate it, but can we talk about something else. Something that isn't serious and depressing at least. Because I feel like all we talked about today are serious and depressing things."

"I have an idea, Angie. It can help you," Peggy said plainly.

Angie leaned back, "what?" she asked calmly with an eyebrow raised wanting to change the subject. She didn't want to think about being an actress right now after the setbacks she faced the past few years. It hurt too much to think about it because she was in a negative rut.
"You remember when Steve was a stage performer as Captain America for a while before he became a war hero?"

Angie put her hands up, "Oh no, Peggy, you don't need to bother your husband about this."

Peggy leaned against the table, "Come on, Angie. Steve will be thrilled to help you trust me."

Angie sighed, "Okay, Peg. How can he help me?" she asked curiously.

"Steve can set you up with a talent agent he may know," Peggy said with a smile.

A sudden burst of optimism and hope shot through Angie, "Really?" she said containing her hopefulness.

Peggy nodded, "If he still has contact with him, yes. Also, not only can he act but he can also sing quite well, believe it or not." She laughed lightly, "He says he can't but believe me, he can. You should hear him sing songs to the babies at night, his voice just melts your heart." She waved her hand, "Anyway, that being said he might be able to give you some tips and pointers to 'wow' the talent agents. Be aware he isn't a professional singer or actor so he can't necessarily coach you, alright?"

Angie beamed happily, "Peggy this is great!" She quickly scooted out of her side of the booth then slid into Peggy's side and hugged her tightly. "I really appreciate this. If you and him can do this for me, I'll be so thankful!"

Peggy hugged her back then let go after a moment, "I still got to ask Steve, alright? Hopefully he can. Just hope for now."

Angie quickly returned to her side of the booth, "Thanks, Peggy. You're the best."

Peggy waved her hand, "Ah stop it, Angie," she said with a smile.

"I'm sure Steve would agree!" Angie expressed excitedly. Peggy laughed and shook her head. Angie smiled, "Seriously, Peggy. Thank you for helping me on this. I…"

Peggy shook her head, "You're welcome. You don't always have to do things by yourself, sometimes it's alright to seek and accept help from others. It took a while for me to understand that concept too."

Angie smiled in contentment, "thanks."

Peggy braced her hands against the table, "So…after we eat, where do you want to go?"

"How about a movie?" Angie asked curiously.

"Which one?"

Angie thought for a moment, "Captain from Castile? I think its showing."

Peggy nodded, "Sure. Haven't seen a movie in a while." She smirked, "Steve and I love going to movies…well until the babies were born. Can't exactly leave the babies for long."

Angie shook her head with a grin, "It's called a babysitter, English. Look into it, and you'll have more free time to go out with Captain Yum-Yum. Plus, your kids are infants now; they're no longer newborns."
Peggy laughed, "I know, Angie. But I want as much time for Sarah and Michael with us before they are introduced to a babysitter."

Angie raised an eyebrow, "Aren't you going back to work soon? They'll be meeting one soon."

"This is true," Peggy replied calmly. "The mother in me wants to stay with them all the time. But I know I can't."

Angie laughed loudly, "It seems you always talk about your husband and now your kids these days."

Peggy gasped, "Am I? I'm sorry, Angie. I..."

Angie laughed again, "Relax, English. I don't mind. It's adorable seeing you so..." she gestured her hands over at Peggy.

"Happy?" Peggy asked confused.

"Fawning," Angie replied quickly. She laughed, "Can't say I blame you."

Peggy rolled her eyes, "ready to go?"

Angie grinned, "Yup!"

Steve & Margaret Rogers Residence, Scarsdale, NY

7pm

At the Rogers home, Steve has been busy at home all day, training, doing housework, and watching the two infants. Before doing any household chores after Peggy left, Steve did a quick one-hour in-house workout with the babies close by so he could keep a vigilant eye on them. But while he was training, Steve often caught the babies staring at him curiously almost if his workout entertained them. He liked to think that he was entertaining his little ones in some way. It's now seven in the evening and Steve has accomplished everything on his "to do list" during his busy day at home. He worked out, did the laundry, cared for babies, and cooked dinner. Though the list was short and had no particular order, the day was only busy because carrying for the twins occupied much of the day. The whole afternoon and early evening were particularly hectic because the twins decided to be fussy for about four hours until Steve managed to calm them down. It seems fussy babies are efficient in standing up against and immobilizing Captain America. Steve has been left with the twins plenty of times before, so the fussiness is not a surprise, but it's always a little challenge to calm the twins down. But only after he calmed them down was he able to cook dinner. Taking care of the twins is a full-time job for both Peggy and Steve, but it was a job they both loved to do so it was all worth it, especially when the babies eyes light up at the sight of their parents. Though the babies can't speak or verbally communicate, the eyes tell Steve and Peggy a great deal.

The winter sun had set for the day around five in the evening leaving the sky pitch black at the current hour. The weather outside was cold but calm with the skies clear from thick cloud cover. It was a relatively an ordinary cold winter night in Scarsdale, New York. In the cozy Rogers home, Steve sat on the floor of the living room leaning against one of the couches playing with the twins and listening to music on the radio while waiting for Peggy to come home. Steve is dressed in casual wear consisting of a long sleeve white button up collared shirt with the sleeves rolled up past his elbows without a tie, shirt tucked into a pair of pressed dark blue slacks with suspenders, black socks, and black shoes. Sarah Amanda and Michael James were both nestled comfortably in Steve's
lap as he made silly faces and spoke in goofy voices at them. Steve puffed out his cheeks and held up his hands next to ears pretending his hands were small floppy ears, "what am I?" he asked goofily.

The babies merely cooed with curiosity in their eyes. Steve chuckled, "I'm a hippo!" He then made a silly grin and used one of his hands to make an elephant trunk at his nose, "And this is an elephant!" He said excitedly as he made hilarious elephant noises. Steve couldn't help but laugh at the energetic nonverbal responses from his little ones. He put his hands up like claws, "Now I am a bear! I roar!" The babies flicked their hands and kicked their legs in response to his antics. He then wiggled both Sarah's and Michael's noses gently, "be careful, because bears are dangerous." He winked and the babies only gazed at him curiously. Steve then put his hands up to his face covering it from the babies, "I'm a turtle. He hides in his shell then comes out and play!" The babies cooed quietly and made a reflexive smile. Steve raised his face above his hands, "turtles like to play peekaboo!" he said beginning to play the age old baby game. "Peekaboo!" He repeated multiple times as he played the game with the twins on his lap. Sarah Amanda and Michael James kicked excitedly, smiled reflexively, and cooed all at the same time. With each peekaboo Steve did, he made different silly faces for his son and daughter.

Steve put his hands down and tickled the tummy's of his two little ones just as Peggy walked through the door, "And daddy, says, 'I love you!'" he expressed ecstatically earning the reflexive baby smiles from his two infants.

Peggy closed the door behind her, "Darling, I'm home!" She put her purse down on the console table and started to unbutton her coat as she walked toward the living room. As she walked into the living room her heart melted at the sight of her husband enthusiastically playing with their infants. She leaned against the wall and smiled at the scene.

Steve didn't see Peggy standing against the wall as he shot his hands up, "I got your noses! Oh no!" he gasped playfully. The twins kicked excitedly in response.

Peggy giggled, "Having fun without me, I see."

Steve quickly twisted and saw Peggy leaning against the wall, "Oh! Hi, Peggy!" He chuckled, "I didn't hear you come in, sorry. Was kind of..." He looked over at the babies in his lap, "Occupied..."

Peggy chuckled as she stood up straight and removed her coat, "it's alright, Steve. You are so adorable with them. I love seeing you with them," she said as she draped the coat over her arm.

Steve carefully removed the twins one-by-one from his lap and placed them on their backs on a blue baby towel on the floor next to him, "Don't go away; Daddy's got to talk to mommy," he said with a wink.

Steve stands up and walks over to Peggy behind the couch and gives her a brief kiss, "How was Angie? What did you guys do?"

Peggy neatly draped her coat over the couch and gave a quick glance at their babies lying on the floor before answering Steve. She turned and smiled, "She's doing well as usual. Still currently works at the diner unfortunately. But we had fun." She looked over at the twin infants again, "We had lunch at Aurora's Café in the city, watched a movie, then had tea." She smiled back at Steve again, "It's always good to see her and talk with her."

Steve chuckled, "Glad you two had fun. Someday she'll get out of there. I know it."

Peggy smiled, "I have my hopes too..."
"Have dinner yet? Cause I just finished cooking," Steve asked. He nodded to the kitchen, "Food is covered on the table for both of us. Didn't know if you were eating here so I made food for the two of us and waited till you got home."

Peggy beamed happily, "that's so sweet of you." She laughed, "And I'm starving because I haven't eaten since lunch. Could really use some of your cooking right now," she said humorously.

Steve smiled then began to turn to the kitchen. But just as he turned, Peggy grabbed his arm and pulled him to her, "come here," she whispered as she gave him a deep kiss on the lips. After a moment Peggy broke the kiss when she heard one of the babies begin to whimper. She chuckled at Steve, "Uh oh. Mama needs to say hello." She kissed him briefly again then let him go to so she could greet the infant twins.

Peggy walked around the couch then bent down slowly and greeted her babies lying on their little blue towel, "Hello, my darlings." The babies cooed quietly recognizing their mother's voice. Peggy leaned down and gently kissed both Sarah's and Michael's head, "didn't give daddy a hard time, did you?"

Steve sat on the arm rest of the couch and smiled, "They were super good, Peggy. A little fussy in the afternoon but that's kind of their normal." He chuckled, "They napped, we played little games, I talked they laughed. They were so good as ever." He smiled happily, "But they missed mama."

Peggy chuckled then looked down at the babies again, "I'm glad you two had fun with daddy. Mama missed you too lots." She leaned down again and kissed them on the heads again.

Steve smiled, "Ready to eat?"

Peggy hummed in response, "mhm," she hummed as she picked up their son. As Peggy started to walk toward the kitchen, Steve got off the armrest of the couch and gently scooped his daughter up in his arms.

In the kitchen, Peggy gently put Michael in the baby bassinet basket next to the table then took her usual seat adjacent to the head of the table. She looked up at Steve who was just now placing Sarah down in the basket, "Are they fed yet?"

"Mhmm," Steve hummed in response. He smiled, "That's why they aren't crying right now."

Peggy smiled, "They aren't crying because you're so good with them."

Steve chuckled, "Give it a few minutes and they'll cry."

Peggy rolled her eyes, "don't jinx us, darling." Steve laughed at her response as he removed the thin towels covering the food on the table revealing hand tossed salad, rolls, ham, steamed vegetables, and baked potatoes.

Steve took his seat at the head of the table adjacent to Peggy and smiled at her, "Should I say grace or do you want to?" Steve has always been a devoted Catholic, and always attended church on Sunday's with his mother until her death when he was eighteen. He still goes to church but not as frequent as his youth and remains heavily Catholic. Though Peggy isn't Catholic, she often attended church with him.

Peggy smiled, "I'll do it."

Steve and Peggy continued eating dinner with the radio still playing in the living room gave a very
relaxing atmosphere for the winter evening. As they ate, they held pleasant conversations and sporadically checked on the twins in the bassinet basket. Peggy smiled as she finished her pieces of ham, "This is delicious, Steve."

Steve chuckled, "I'm glad it's not cold and didn't require me to heat it up." He swallowed a bite of ham, "So... I was reading the paper."

"Hm?" Peggy hummed in response as she chewed her food.

Steve smiled, "What do you think about television?"

Peggy raised a brow, "You want to buy a television set?"

"It's a personal technological marvel that's starting to boom the markets," Steve said excitedly.

"Hmm..." Peggy responded as she turned her attention to the babies in the bassinet basket between them. She tickled Michael in the stomach gently and at the same time checked to see if they were okay. She looked up at Steve and gave a quizzical look at him.

Steve smiled, "Think about, love. They might even have news broadcasts on television. We won't have to go to the theaters for the newsreels."

Peggy chuckled, "But I'm sure we'll be going to the movies anyway, darling. It's kind of one of the places we frequent."

"This is true," Steve said as he picked up another piece of ham with the serving fork.

Peggy shook her head with a grin, "I think you want to check it out because it's cool."

Steve laughed, "You aren't wrong there."

"It's still new, darling. There isn't much going for it and it has some issues right now, so I say we wait a while before getting one. Wait until the industry gets bigger," Peggy replied logically. Peggy was always the more logical of the two of them especially when it came to buying things.

Steve nodded and conceded, "You're right. Again."

Suddenly Sarah made a sound causing Peggy to focus her attention on her. Peggy spoke softly without looking up from Sarah as she played with her little legs, "You know what Angie called you today?"

Steve chuckled, "Is it a different name?"

Peggy looked up at Steve with a huge grin on her lips, "She called you Captain Yum-Yum." Both Steve and Peggy burst into laughter at the name Angie gave Steve. Michael James started to whimper then cry at the sudden loud burst of laughter coming from his parents. Peggy quickly stopped laughing and focused her attention on her son, "Oh, I'm sorry, sweetie. Mama didn't mean to scare you." She gently picked up her son and carefully brought him to her chest, and started to simultaneously pat him on the back and bounce him. Steve smiled at the sight of his wife and son. "Oh, darling," Peggy began to say over the cries of her son.

"Yeah?" Steve responded quickly.

"Do you still have theater contacts or talent agent contacts from your brief days as a stage performer?" Peggy asked curiously not forgetting about her idea for Angie.
Steve looked confused at what brought this subject up, "Yeah, I think so, why?"

Peggy glanced at her infant son in her arms who was still crying then back up at Steve, "Do you think you can help Angie jump start her acting career? She could use the help and she's been struggling to gain momentum. It's really quite sad seeing her dejected like this. Acting has always been her dream and…"

Steve cut her off, "Of course I'll help. I can try calling the guy who used to manage my shows and what not," he replied a little louder than usual to get over the sound of his son crying.

"Great! Thanks, darling!" Peggy replied happily. She continued to pat Michaels back and bounce him to try and calm him down, "Maybe set her up, put a good word for her. Maybe even help her in acting and singing since you have experience," she said glancing at him.

Steve shrugged, "I don't think I can help the singing part. I'm not a great singer."

Peggy chuckled, "And I'm not a spy."

Steve sighed with a smile, "I'll see what I can do." He grinned, "Let's set up a date for me to meet up with her. Do it during the week after work?"

Peggy continued to bounce Michael, "this is wonderful, thank you, Steve! I'll call her tonight."

Steve grinned, "I haven't done anything yet, so don't thank me so fast."

Michael stopped crying giving Peggy much needed relief because if he didn't stop crying she would end up getting up and pacing the kitchen to calm him down. Peggy sighed in relief then looked at Steve, "Still. You wanting to help deserves gratitude." With that sentence, Sarah started to cry. Peggy grinned, "These two babies sometimes…"

Steve stood up, "I got her."

Peggy took a whiff of the air and made a disgusted face, "Smells like she needs a change of diapers," she said with a chuckle.

Steve laughed, "latrine duty again," he said over the cries of his daughter.

Peggy held up Michal in front of her and smiled, "You're going to be next, aren't you?" Michael opened his mouth letting his tongue stick out at his mother. Peggy laughed at how silly her son looked.

Steve shook his head, "Woo that's a doozy."

Peggy chuckled, "I'm done eating. If you're done, take care of her and I'll take care of the dishes. It's my turn anyway."

Steve smiled, "Sounds good." He looked at Sarah who cried loudly, "let's get you cleaned up and ready for night, night." He made his way out of the room with Peggy smiling lovingly at him as he left. Peggy turned to Michael and kissed him on the cheek then laid him back down in the basket.

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**Later That Night**

In the nursery, Peggy tucked the twins in their crib and kissed them good night, "good night, my darlings." She smiled and saw that her little ones were fast asleep cuddled together in their crib.
Peggy then turned and silently turned the lights off and left the room, leaving the door slightly open. Peggy quietly strolled into the bedroom and noticed Steve is in the bathroom showering. She smiled then sat down on her side of the bed and decided to call Angie regardless of the time. She picked up the phone and dialed Angie's number then waited for her to pick up.

After a moment she heard Angie answer the phone tiredly, "hello?"


"Goodness, do you know what time it is, English? Can't enough of me?" Angie laughed tiredly on the phone.

Peggy shook her head, "It's only nine, Angie."

"And I got work at four..."

"Sorry," Peggy replied.

"It's okay. What's up? Got to be important if you called me this late," Angie responded.

Peggy smiled, "Steve is going to try setting you up with one of his stage contacts and even help you out on acting and singing so you can blow the talent agent away."

"Really?" Angie asked excitedly.

Peggy chuckled, "Really."

Angie giggled excitedly, "This is amazing! Thank you, Peggy! Oh and thank you, Steve!"

"Just need to set up a date to meet with Steve," Peggy responded with a warm smile on the phone.

Angie smiled, "Monday in the afternoon should work."

"I'll ask him. He'll call you back."

"Thanks, Peggy!" Angie replied excitedly.

Peggy chuckled, "You're very welcome, Angie. Sorry I woke you, goodnight."

"Goodnight, English," Angie said before hanging up the phone. Peggy put the phone down on the receiver and let go a breath of relief. It felt good to help one of best friends, especially since Angie helped her multiple times before. Peggy didn't doubt that Angie could figure out how to become an actress herself, but it wouldn't hurt to help. Steve and Jarvis were the ones who taught her the lessons of accepting help and in return giving help to people.

Steve walked out of the bathroom in his sleep wear consisting of his normal white shirt and grey sweats, "Just call Angie?" he said as he strolled to his side of the bed.

Peggy turned and laid down on the bed, "mhmm. She's grateful to you."

Steve chuckled as he laid down next to Peggy, "Remember, I haven't done anything yet."

Peggy turned to face him, "It's the thought that counts. And it's a sweet thought," she said affectionately.

Steve smiled at her, "Bathroom is all yours by the way."
Peggy scooted closer to Steve and cuddled nice and tight with him. She kissed him on the chest, "I should've joined you."

Steve laughed, "Next time." He looked down at her, "So, what day did you say?"

Peggy rested her chin on his chest, "She says Monday afternoon."

Steve smiled, "I can do it in the evening after I'm off duty. Meet here so I can help with the babies."

Peggy propped herself up on her elbow and gazed down at Steve, "No, I can handle them. You two can go somewhere that is guaranteed to be quiet."

Steve chuckled, "I don't know where. We'll be okay here, but only if you're okay with it. Besides, I can help her and help you with the babies in case." He smiled at her, "Relieve some of the pressure on you since you will be alone with the twins all day."

Peggy chuckled, "Goodness, I can't argue with that. Of course, I'm okay with it."

Steve nodded, "So…the twins okay?"

"Mhmm. All ready in their crib. Hopefully they won't wake us up too soon," Peggy replied hopefully.

Steve chuckled then kissed Peggy on the lips, "We can only hope." Steve went quiet as his gaze started to wander to the pictures hanging on the wall and the pictures propped up on the dresser. Peggy noticed his sudden silence and followed his gaze to the pictures. She smiled at all the good memories they captured in photographs. There were pictures from when they were dating like the time when they went to their first Brooklyn Dodgers game, times overseas, wedding pictures, pictures of the two of them, and the most recent pictures are of their new family. Peggy happily at Steve at the warm memories playing in her mind. Steve looked at Peggy, "We made a pretty good family, didn't we?"

Peggy smiled, "We sure did," she said leaning forward and kissing him on the lips. She broke the kiss and smiled lovingly, "next time, when your leave ends and you go back to duty I'm going to ask my mother to come to the United States for a while because I will have my hands full."

Steve chuckled, "Next time? Already thinking about it?"

Peggy nodded, "Mhmm. I wouldn't be opposed to it. But I don't think we should have more just yet." She chuckled, "Sarah and Michael are handful as it is."

Steve smiled, "I agree." He leaned in and captured her lips once again, deepening the kiss as simultaneously caresses her cheek. Peggy laid down on her back while she kissed Steve, running her hand through his hair. He broke the kiss briefly, "until then…"

Peggy's lips hovered close to Steve, "until?" she whispered softly. Steve kissed her deeply again. "Oh…." Peggy whispered as she leaned into Steve. She kissed him again and allowed him access to her mouth. After a moment she broke the kiss briefly, "you're so good. Hmmm," she hummed between kisses as their tongues grazed each other. She broke the kiss again, "God, I love you in every way," she whispered just before she crushed her lips to his once again. As they continued to kiss, Steve started to unbutton her pink blouse causing Peggy to smile against his lips. Peggy again broke the kiss and smiled, "Darling, what are you doing?"

Steve chuckled, "About to show you how perfect you are," he said as he continued down her blouse.
Peggy didn't stop him and merely smiled, "darling, I just put the babies to sleep."

"Exactly, which means we don't have much time," Steve said flirtatiously.

Peggy grinned, "God, you make it so hard." Her blouse is now open revealing her bra and exposing her chest. Just as Steve and Peggy leaned to kiss once again the sound of the babies crying in the nursery abruptly cut them off. Peggy sighed, "Every time."

Steve chuckled, "I'll take care of it." He chuckled, "bathroom is all yours, hon."

Just as Steve got up to take care of the babies, Peggy grabbed his shirt and pulled him down to her, "Wait," she said as she gave a longing kiss. After a moment, she let Steve go and smiled, "We'll pick up where we left off next," she said with a wink.

Steve stood up and smiled, "I'll hold you to it." The babies continued to cry causing Steve to rush out of the room, "I'm on my way!" he called out to the nursery. Peggy gave a warm smile as he left.

Steve & Margaret Rogers Residence, Scarsdale, NY

Monday Evening

It's just another relaxing evening in the Rogers household as the Rogers family enjoyed the end of the day. Steve, dressed in a gray collared button up shirt, no tie, dress vest, black slacks, and dress shoes, is busy bottle feeding Michael at the kitchen table while Peggy finished cooking dinner at the stove and counter tops. Peggy wore a green apron over a lovely violet, long sleeve, autumn and winter dress with a swing skirt and a bow tied at her front. As Peggy stirred the pot of steaming vegetables on the stove, she briefly turned around to check on Sarah who is resting comfortably in the bassinet basket next to the table. She then quickly glanced at Steve who was bottle feeding and whispering to their son. She smiled then turned back around and focused on the task at hand of finishing up dinner.

Peggy turned off the stove and covered the pot of steaming vegetables, satisfied on how the vegetables were cooked. She then briefly adjusted the apron tied around her waist then put on her yellow oven mitts that were on the counter to get ready to remove the food from the oven. Peggy turned off the gas then bent down and opened the oven, and pulled out a fully cooked chicken. Just as she placed the hot oven dish on a stove top, she heard a knock at the door. Steve looked up from Michael, "Must be Angie."

Peggy nodded, "I'll get it," she said evenly.

Steve shifted as he bottle fed Michael, "I can get it. I have a feeling Michael will be done soon anyway." He had a gut feeling that feeding time will be over because Michael has been attached to the baby bottle for a while now.

Peggy chuckled as she started to untie her apron, "It's okay, darling, I can get it. Supper is pretty much done, anyway." She removed her apron and placed it on the counter then left the kitchen to answer the door.

Peggy opened the door and was surprised to see Sousa along with Angie standing on the porch. She smiled, "Hello there, you two."

Angie was bundled nice and warm in her dark brown wool winter overcoat but had her arms crossed over her chest to contain more heat from the cold winter evening. She smiled, "Hey, English, hope you don't mind that I brought Daniel with me. I told him all about what we talked about and planned,
and figured to bring him along so he can meet your family." Sousa, who also wore a black heavy winter coat, gave Peggy a nod and reassuring smile.

Peggy gave a genuine smiled at the pair, "No it's okay, I don't mind. You two are always welcome in our home." She stepped aside to let Angie and Sousa enter, "Come on it, get out of that horrid cold." Angie smiled and nodded a silent thank you as she walked into the house with Sousa limping close behind with his crutch. Peggy quickly shut the door behind them to stop the cold air from rushing into her warm house, "Steve is in the kitchen currently feeding our son," she said with a smile.

Angie removed her coat, draped it over her arm, then turned and gave Peggy a big hug. "Thanks, Peggy, for doing this and letting us into your home."

Peggy happily reciprocated the hug, "Of course, Angie." They broke the hug. She smiled at Sousa, "Glad you can come over too, Daniel."

Sousa had his coat draped over his arm as well, "Thank you for letting me over, Peggy. Always good to see you and Steve," he said with a smile.

Peggy smiled, "Come on in," she said directing the two of them to the living room. As the trio walked into the living room, Peggy called out to Steve, "Darling, Daniel and Angie are here."

As Sousa and Angie stopped by one of the couches they heard Steve's voice coming from the kitchen, "Coming!"

Peggy turned and smiled at the pair, "Take a seat, make yourselves comfortable." She held out her hand, "Let me take your coats, and I'll hang them up in the closet."

Sousa and Angie smiled and handed Peggy their winter coats. Sousa nodded with a warm smile, "Thank you, Peggy."

Angie nodded in agreement, "Thanks, English."

Peggy chuckled, "Mhmm," she turned and headed toward the downstairs closet near the stairs.

Just as Peggy walked out of the living room, Steve walked in from the kitchen with Michael James in his arms, "Angie, Daniel! Good to see you two!" He expressed happily. Luckily, he finished feeding Michael just as Angie and Sousa stepped through the door.

Angie gasped, "Oh my goodness! He's so cute!" She quickly approached Steve, "Your son looks so much cuter in person!" Michael James was staring at Angie with eyes full of wonder and curiosity as Angie gushed over him. Angie gasped again, "And he's so much bigger than I thought." Steve chuckled. Angie then quickly gave him a brief hug, "It's good to see you again," she said as she broke the hug.

Steve smiled, "Likewise."

Sousa limped over to Steve and smiled, "You have a cute kid, Captain." He chuckled, "He's so adorable."

Angie looked over at Sousa, "Isn't he?"

Sousa chuckled then nodded at Steve, "Great to see you, Steve."

Steve smiled, "Always a pleasure, Chief." Steve then focused his attention on his son and bounced him in his arms, "Michael, say hello to Auntie Angie and Uncle Daniel." Michael just stared at the

Angie gave a playfully waved to Michael, "Hi there, it's me. Your Auntie Angie." Michael cooed softly in Steve's arms in response.

Peggy then walked into the living room and smiled, "Darling, I'm going to get Sarah then join you in the living room."

Steve smiled, "Okay, hon." He shifted Michael in his arms and nodded to the couches, "Come on, let's take a seat. No need to be standing around," he said with a smile.

Angie chuckled, "Sure," she said as she and Sousa turned around and returned to the couches. The couple sat down on one couch while Steve sat down on the adjacent couch with his son still comfortable in his arms.

Steve smiled, "So, Angie. Heard I got another nickname from you."

Angie grinned at Steve then at Sousa, "Isn't it hilarious." She laughed, "I'm so glad Peggy told you about that."

Sousa raised a brow, "Do I want to ask?"

Steve propped up Michael and placed him against his chest, "Probably not," he said with a grin. He looked back at the kitchen briefly, "I know I'm going to give you some pointers and what not about what to do to get an acting gig, but I'll tell you once Peggy gets back." He smiled, "She might have something to say in case I miss something."

Angie and Sousa nodded calmly. "No worries," Angie said plainly.

Peggy entered the living room with Sarah Amanda in her arms, "look who's here, Sweetie," she spoke sweetly to her infant daughter. "It's Auntie Angie and Uncle Daniel," she said happily.

Angie gasped, "Oh my goodness! Peggy!" She put her hands up to her mouth, "Your daughter is so cute! Just like your son!"

Steve chuckled, "Well, they are twins." Sousa and Steve both laughed at the corny joke earning sarcastic unamused looks from the two ladies.

"Isn't she?" Peggy said as she sat down next to Steve then leaned up against him. She then carefully took Sarah's delicate hand and waved to Angie and Sousa, "say, hi, Sarah," Peggy said softly.

Angie smiled, "Can I hold her?"

Peggy nodded, "Of course." The two ladies stood up then Peggy slowly and carefully handed Angie her daughter. Angie carefully held Sarah in her arms then produced a pure smile on her lips. Peggy smiled, "Make sure you support the head."

Angie nodded without looking up from Sarah, "I got it, Peggy," she said as she slowly turned and sat back down next to Sousa. Angie looked up at Sousa, "Look at her, Daniel. Isn't she precious," she said angling Sarah toward Daniel.

Sousa smiled warmly, "Very," he responded softly. "She looks so cute." He chuckled lightly, "I have a feeling she's going to grow up to be a very beautiful girl."

Angie nodded, "Yeah. I think so too." She looked up to Michael, "And their son to be a very
handsome boy."

Peggy and Steve shared a glance with each other and smiled. Peggy leaned into Steve and started to tickle her son in Steve's arms. Peggy rested her head on Steve's shoulder and smiled at Angie, "Sarah isn't crying which means she's comfortable around you too, even though you saw her only once since she was born."

Angie looked down at Sarah and the little baby merely cooed softly. Angie laughed, "She cried then. Both of them did."

Peggy chuckled, "Well, they were only a few days old."

Sousa nodded, "This is true."

Steve laughed, "Okay, so ready to get started?" Angie nodded silently while dividing her attention between him and the baby in her arms.

Peggy noticed the distraction then stood up to get her daughter. "Here," she said as she bent down and gently took her daughter back from Angie.

Angie whispered and smiled, "thank you."

"Mhmm," Peggy hummed in response as she returned to her place next to Steve.

Steve smiled and rubbed Michael's back to make sure he wouldn't cry, "Right, so you need to meet Ronan Gale, he's a talent agent in New York City and was in charge of getting me tours with the USO around the country and movies as Captain America during the war." He carefully dug into his pocket to get a business card and tried not to disturb Michael against his chest. Once he got the business card he carefully stretched his arm out and handed it to Angie sitting nearby. He nodded, "I called in some favors on him and he's setting you up with an interview for this Wednesday."

Angie looked at the small white card then looked back up at Steve, "Thank you, Steve. But don't you think it's a little soon? I mean meeting him?"

Steve shrugged, "That's when he's available and the only day he'll do it."

Angie took a deep breath, "Okay," she said nervously. "What would the process be?"

"So essentially, he's going to ask personal questions to get to know you, ask for a performing resume, and definitely ask you to audition your talents for him," Steve said plainly. "What you need to bring is a few headshots of yourself, acting or singing resume if you have one, and a cover letter. If you don't have a resume, don't sweat it because I vouched for you," he said with a friendly smile.

Angie nodded, "Okay, hope I don't let you down." Sousa sensed her hesitation causing him to reach over and grip her hand affectionately. Angie looked at him and he produced a warm and understanding smile. Angie relaxed and looked back at Steve.

Steve chuckled, "You won't. He's not that bad of a guy." He leaned back into the couch, "But if he messes up, wrongs you, or abuses you, I'll be there to beat his head like a drum." Everyone laughed.

Peggy smiled, "You'll be fine, Angie," she said as she rocked Sarah back and forth.

Steve lowered Michael so he was laying in his arms, "So, do you want to be a singer, actress, or do a little bit of both?"
"Sing and act," Angie responded confidently.
Steve nodded, "I can see you doing that," he said smiling. He briefly checked on his son in his arms
then looked back up at Angie, "Let's see what you got."
Peggy smiled, "Yes! Love to hear her sing."
Angie looked surprised, "You want me to sing? Right here, right now?"
Steve nodded, "Why not?"
Sousa looked at her, "Come on, Angie. You sing beautifully," he said continuing to hold her hand
on her lap.
Peggy encouraged her as well, "Daniel is right, I heard you sing, you are wonderful."
Angie hesitated but felt a gentle squeeze on her hand from Sousa. She nodded, "I'm sorry, I'm just a
little nervous because this is a vote of confidence."
Sousa smiled, "Don't be nervous. We aren't going to think any less of you."
Peggy smiled, "Remember what you told me a few years back when I was sitting in the automat?"
Angie nodded quietly. "You just got to pay your dues even if it takes a while. You got the talent. It's
only a matter of time before Broadway calls your name, Angie." She leaned forward, "I think your
dues are paid. It's time for your big break."
Steve nodded, "Be confident in your voice. Even if you get the words wrong make it sound like they
are right." He chuckled, "I'm not a professional vocal or acting coach but I can tell you right now that
confidence is everything."
"He's right, Angie. If you sound and look confident, the audience would hear and see you better and
will be more entertained by you. Confidence is essential in anything," Peggy added.
Angie nodded, "That makes sense, okay."
Peggy chuckled and nodded to Steve, "You should hear him sing, Angie." She brought her daughter
close, "Every time he sings, he needs to catch me when I swoon," she said with a loving gaze at
Steve.
Steve chuckled, "Oh no."
Angie laughed, "Oh so much confidence."
Sousa laughed, "She's got a point, Captain."
Steve sighed defeated, "Got a point." He carefully stood up then looked at Sousa, "Daniel, want to
hold my son?"
Sousa smiled, "Don't need to ask." Steve took a step toward their couch and leaned over and
carefully handed Sousa the baby. Sousa gently cradled the baby in his arms and smiled, "hi there."
Michael simply cooed in response in his arms.
Steve walked over to the center of the living room, "Any song requests?"
Peggy continued to rock Sarah side-to-side in her arms, "sing the song you sing to me," she said with
a smile."


Steve chuckled, "Oh no. That's for us," he smiled.

Angie laughed, "Oh curious."

"I got one." Steve paused, "Peggy will you come up here with me," he said with a smile.

Peggy chuckled, "Okay, Sweetheart." She stood up carefully to not bother her daughter, "Angie would you like to hold my little girl?"

Angie smiled happily, "Of course!" She beamed excitedly. Peggy carefully handed her daughter over to Angie then joined Steve at the center of the living room. Angie smiled at Sarah and angled the baby girl to see her parents, "That's your mommy and daddy. They're going to sing for us."

Peggy smiled up at Steve, "Where do you want me?"

Steve gently took her hand, wrapped his arm around her waist, and brought her close, "Right, here." Peggy smiled lovingly up at him. Steve started to hum the beat to Frank Sinatra's "Day by Day." As he hummed he started to sway with Peggy in his arms in a slow dance.

Steve began to sing the slow song and slowly dance with Peggy,

Day by day, I'm falling more in love with you
And day by day, my love seems to grow
There isn't any end to my devotion
It's deeper, dear, by far than any ocean
I find that
Day by day you're making all my dreams come true
So, come what may, I want you to know
I'm yours alone, and I'm in love to stay
As we go through the years day by day

He brought Peggy close and rested his cheek against her hair as she rested her head against his chest. The couple swayed slowly as Steve hummed the instrumentals of the song that he remembered. Sousa and Angie watched the couple with happy eyes. The love Peggy and Steve share is very obvious to see when they interact with each other and it can also be seen in the eyes of their infant children. It's very heartwarming to see how they interact. Steve sang again,

I'm yours alone, and I'm in love to stay
As we go through the years day by day.

Steve finished the song then let go of Peggy and smiled, "that's it." Peggy gave him a brief kiss on the lips with a smile.

Angie gasped, "Wow, Steve really can sing."

Sousa chuckled, "If my hands weren't full, I'd be clapping."

"Every time Steve does something…Peggy, I swear you hit the jackpot," Angie said with a laugh earning laughter from both Sousa and Peggy. Angie smiled, "that was very good."

Steve started to walk over to Sousa, "Thank you." He bent down, "I got him from here, thanks for holding him," he said gently taking the baby from Sousa.

Sousa nodded, "Anytime, Cap."
Peggy did the same with Angie, "Your turn, Angie," she said gently taking Sarah from Angie's arms.

As Steve and Peggy sat back down together on their original couch, Angie stood up and walked to the center of the living room. Steve cradled his son and smiled at Angie, "Sing whatever you like." Angie nodded calmly. "Breathe, I know you want to sing good for us, so be confident." Angie again nodded.

Peggy chuckled, "You're singing in front of friends, don't sweat it."

Angie's started to sing "The Way You Look Tonight." Her voice carried with almost harmonic and angelic rhythm,

Someday, when I'm awfully low  
When the world is cold  
I will feel a glow just thinking of you  
And the way you look tonight

Yes, you're lovely, with your smile so warm  
And your cheeks so soft  
There is nothing for me but to love you  
And the way you look tonight

Steve and Peggy looked at each other and smiled, truly blown away by Angie's opening verse of the song. The couple smiled up at Angie as she continued to sing. The young aspiring singer/actress has a very strong voice and at the same time very harmonic making her sound absolutely wonderful.

With each word your tenderness grows  
Tearin' my fear apart  
And that laugh, wrinkles your nose  
Touches my foolish heart

Sousa smiled lovingly up at Angie as he fell into a love trance of her singing. He has no doubt that she can make the stage as a singer and or actress. Without any sort of formal training and practice from vocal coaches, Angie sounds wonderful.

Steve whispered, "She's going to make it..." Peggy looked at him with a smile.

Wednesday, January 1948

Office of Ronan Gale: Talent Agent

Ronan Gale sat behind his desk patiently in his small office while Angie finished singing "The Way You Look Tonight," the song she chose to audition after the initial interview. Angie stood in the middle of the small room and sang the song with the same confidence she did while over at Steve and Peggy's house.

Lovely, never, never change  
Keep that breathless charm  
Won't you please arrange it?  
'Cause I love you  
A-just the way you look tonight

Ronan Gale did his best to keep a straight face as she sang but couldn't help but crack a pleased grin. Angie didn't see it and continued to sing to the best of her abilities.
And that laugh that wrinkles your nose
It touches my foolish heart

Lovely, don't you ever change
Keep that breathless charm
Won't you please arrange it?
'Cause I love you
A-just the way you look tonight…

Mm, mm, mm, mm,

At the final verse, Angie stretched the last note of the song, "Just the way you look… toooonight…." She gave a dramatic pause and smiled confidently. She then relaxed and smiled at Gale, "Well?" she asked curiously.

Gale stood up and clapped loudly, "Girl! That was outstanding!" He expressed enthusiastically. He held out his hand, "I will be happy to represent you. And I can assure you we can give you a shot to your big break."

Angie smiled widely and could barely keep her excitement in as she shook his hand energetically, "Thank you, Mr. Gale!"

Gale smiled, "You can call me Ronan, now that we are working in partnership." He took out a representation agreement from his desk and handed it to Angie, "Just sign here and we'll get you rolling."

Angie smiled, "Thank you!" she said ecstatically. She grabbed a pen from Gale's desk and started to fill out the representation agreement then signed the bottom.

Gale nodded, "I understand you're excited which is good, but let's put that motivation and excitement to your next audition."

Angie put the pen down, "Next audition?" she asked curiously.

Gale nodded, "Mhmm, there's an upcoming musical on Broadway and they're looking for a female lead. I reckon I can get you the audition, and I'm betting you can get the part."

Angie again beamed happily, "That will be great, Ronan! Thank you!"

Gale chuckled, "Let's get you vocal and acting coaches first then get you the audition."

"You're the boss," Angie said respectfully.

Gale shook his head, "I'm not the boss. We're working together on this, remember that." Angie nodded and smiled. He chuckled, "I'm glad Captain Rogers recommended you."

Angie smiled, "Me too."

"Did he say anything about me?"

Angie chuckled, "He said you helped him along with tours and what not during the war." Gale nodded approvingly. "He also said if you wrong me in any way he will essentially kick your ass."

Gale laughed, "Good to hear he thinks highly of me." He nodded, "Well that concludes everything for today. I'll call you soon."
Angie smiled, "Thank you, Ronan. Looking forward to it." She shook his hand one last time and left
the office with an excited spring in her step. Ronan followed her with his gaze and simply smiled at
the things she can accomplish with her talents.

In the lobby of the building, Angie couldn't help but rush over to the pay phones and call Peggy at
her house to tell her the news. She heard the phone connect and Peggy speak into the phone,
"Rogers Residence."

Angie smiled, "Peggy!"

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**BONUS SCENE**

**Wednesday, January 1948**

**Stark Industries New York Facility**

**1500 (2 PM)**

Inside the Stark Industries Facility in New York located at the very outskirts of the city, Howard
Stark walked into his office on the top floor with Steve following close behind. Stark was of course
dressed nicely in a silver suit and matching tie, while Steve was dressed formally in a dark blue suit
and tie. Howard sat down at his desk, "Got to say I'm surprised you're here to visit me here, Steve.
Last time I saw you was before the twins were born. Congratulations again, Steve."

Steve smiled and closed the office door, "Thank you."

Howard nodded, "So, what's this about?"

Steve walked over to Stark's desk and took a seat at one of the office chairs in front of his desk. "It's
about Peggy."

Howard raised a brow, "That's unexpected. What about?"

Steve leaned back in his chair, "You probably understand the human body better than I do."

Howard leaned forward, "Uh…I'm not quite sure that I follow."

Steve rubbed the back of his neck, "Okay, so Peggy has gotten more fit in the last month faster than
any average person can. She lost over twenty-three pounds in that time frame. I didn't think that was
possible for an average healthy person." He sighed, "What I'm saying is, she has metabolic
similarities to me and sharp physical improvements since giving birth to the twins."

Howard nodded, "Interesting. You sure about this, Steve?"

"We talked about her physical improvements and weight loss a few days ago. She doesn't seem to
have any idea. It begs the question…"

"Whether your serum was able to transfer some of its qualities to her while she carried the twins?"
Howard added.

Steve nodded, "Exactly. She is training and rapidly returning to pre-baby while also taking care of
the twins. Something has definitely changed within her."

Howard nodded, "I'll look into it. This seems very interesting and something we should definitely
look at. I have no idea what the serum did or how it would affect her or your babies. But I will definitely look into it."

Steve nodded, "Thanks, Stark."

"I'll try and talk to her, but...you know how she is around me," Howard said with a grin.

Steve chuckled, "Yeah, well she might be the next Captain America."

Howard laughed, "Well from what you have told me. The serum effects on her are increasing slowly. It's not like you when you were injected with the serum directly." He shrugged, "She might not have the full serum and might only get a fraction of it, but it will still probably be enough to affect her greatly. Possibly even your kids." Steve leaned back with a worried look. Howard waved his hand, "It's okay, Cap. I'm sure the effects of the serum on your family are mostly positive."

Steve chuckled nervously, "Mostly."

Howard shook his head, "Come on, Cap. It's just like you. Anyway, it's safe to assume that she got the serum from either carrying the babies, sexual intercourse, or both."

Steve shook his head, "I don't think it was sex, Stark."

"How are you sure?"

Steve sighed, "Peggy is going to kill me if she finds out I'm talking about our sex life," he whispered. He shrugged, "Because we had sex plenty of times before she conceived the twins and she hasn't had any signs of the serum."

Howard nodded, "Maybe. Well, nonetheless, I'll look into it, Steve."

Steve nodded, "Thanks, Stark."

Howard smiled, "That everything?"

"That's all I got," Steve said as he stood up. Howard did the same and the two men shook hands. Steve smiled, "Got to get back to the wife and babies."

Stark smiled, "Say hello to all of them for me."

"Will do..."

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**Another LONG Chapter!**

The Introduction of my chapters that talk about the Cold War, the SSR, and SHIELD don't seem relevant to the current chapter at times, but I assure you they are setting the stage for an important future chapter.

*Line from Uncharted 4*

For Peggy's medical improvements, I took it from Battlestar Galactica when the Cylon humanoid known as Athena develops human antibodies for carrying a human baby.

Tried looking up Steve Rogers religion but got too many conflicting answers, so I went with Catholic solely because his parents were Irish immigrants and Catholicism is a pretty major
denomination in that country.

Songs: Day by Day: Frank Sinatra 1945

The Way You Look Tonight (Bing Crosby Version 1936)
It's another early morning in February before sunrise in the Big Apple, and the winter cold still clings to the sprawling city with snow and ice still blanketing the vast metropolis. The city still looks like a winter wonderland with snow draping the dim city streets and grasping every branch and twig of the trees and bushes. The pitch black sky was clear with small dark sporadic clouds moving slowly across the sky. The weather was below-freezing with temperatures dropping to 24 degrees Fahrenheit or -4 degrees Celsius making anyone not want to be outside for long, especially this early in the morning. But even in the below-freezing temperatures that didn't stop Steve, Peggy, and their respective teams from getting into position to raid a rundown apartment complex in the middle of downtown New York City. As Peggy and her team approached the front of the building from the street, Steve and his commandos approached the back from the alleyway. It was "all hands on deck" for this raid meaning that all of eight of the Howling Commandos and all three of Peggy's team were present.

Peggy and her team, wearing all black armed with Thompson submachine guns and holstered pistols, took cover behind a car across from the target apartment complex and observed the dim exterior of the building. The small brick four-story apartment complex looked dark with the only dim lights coming from a few windows. Even in the dark, the apartment complex looked like typical New York City architecture with brick exterior, rectangular windows, and exposed metal fire escapes. Thompson ducked his head behind the car and breathed uneasily. Peggy looked over at him, "What's wrong?"

Thompson whispered, "explain to me why Captain Rogers and his military commandos are here again instead of other SSR agents?"

Li chimed in before Peggy could answer, "They are SSR agents technically. Captain Rogers and the Howling Commandos are under the direct authority of the SSR, remember?"

Thompson nodded, "Oh right."

Peggy looked over at her team, "Steve is here because we know this Neo-Hydra group is extremely dangerous and well-armed. We can use all the help we can get. Also who else is better to call to help for something like this?" She said softly. She looked back up at the building, "Our investigation of illegal weapon shipments and armed robberies of government RND facilities and military trains pointed us to discover this particular sect and evidently pinpointed them here. We know their capabilities so we shouldn't take them lightly." Peggy checked her weapon as she spoke, "James Wyatt is the one in charge of this Hydra Group. Remember, we need to take him alive."

Thompson nodded, "Got it."

Ramirez nodded, "Good thing we got them here then."
Peggy nodded, "Get ready for Steve's call." Her team simply nodded in confirmation of her order.

While Peggy and her team waited, Steve and his commandos made their way through a dark alleyway to a small court yard behind the apartment complex. Like Peggy's team, the commandos wore all black and armed with Thompson Submachine guns and .45 caliber pistols. Steve was the only one not wearing black since he's wearing his stars and stripes combat uniform with helmet on and shield in hand for the raid. Steve stopped right before exiting the alleyway to the court yard and quietly observed the dark court yard and apartment building. Though it was three in the morning, Steve had a bad feeling about the raid. He felt tense and gripped his shield.

Dugan inched closer to Steve and whispered, "What's wrong, Cap?"

Steve turned his head slightly, "Something doesn't feel right."

Jim cocked his Thompson Submachine gun, "What's not to like? We got the drop on Hydra. I think it's about time since that 'SHIELD Incident' a while ago."

Sawyer sighed, "I think the Captain might think it's a trap."

Pinkerton sighed at Sawyer, "Damn it, Sam. That negativity is eating you alive." The commandos chuckled softly amongst themselves.

Gabe chuckled, "This is why we can't do stealth missions. We talk too much." Everyone chuckled again.

Dugan shrugged, "Well, Cap. IF it is a trap, we can always kill them."

Steve nodded in agreement. He turned around to speak to his team, "Get ready."

The commandos quickly quieted down and nodded in confirmation. He then focused on Dugan, "We'll continue as planned. Nice and quiet as long as possible."

"Right," Dugan confirmed.

Steve reached down to his war belt and grabbed his small multiband inter/intra team radio developed by Stark and radioed Peggy, "Team B, in position."

Peggy, still behind the car, replied on the radio, "Team A in position." She double checked her team then radioed Steve once again, "We're moving out." Peggy clipped her radio to her belt then silently gave the hand signal to move forward to her team. Her team nodded in confirmation then quietly stood up with Peggy.

Steve clipped his radio back on its place on his war belt then turned to his team, "Let's go." He then turned and quietly ran out to the court yard with the rest of the commandos close behind him.

Almost instantly the quiet building erupted with heavy machinegun fire causing the commandos to quickly disperse from the alleyway and take cover behind trees, rocks, short walls, or anything they could find. Steve instantly brought his shield up, crouched down on one knee, and hid behind is Vibranium shield as the heavy high caliber rounds snapped and pinged off his shield. The machinegun rounds snapped at the ground and hissed through the air, pinning down Steve and his commandos in their current positions. At the front of the apartment, just as Peggy and Ramirez exposed themselves from behind the car, machineguns opened fire at them like Steve and his commandos. Thompson quickly grabbed Peggy by her waist and threw her down behind the car. Agent Li did more or less the same, but grabbed Ramirez by his belt and threw him down to the ground behind the car.
As the high velocity machinegun rounds zipped and hissed past the car, Thompson yelled above the cacophony of gunfire, "God Damn it!" He looked over at Peggy, "You alright, Peggy?"

Peggy nodded calmly, "I'm alright." She gripped her submachine gun and was preparing her next move.

Li briefly stood up and fired off a short burst from his Thompson Submachine gun as Ramirez sat up and crawled closer to the car. Ramirez shook his head, "They were waiting for us."

Thompson ducked as a round snapped through one of the car windows. "No shit," he said sarcastically.

Peggy nodded, "We need to get moving." She called out over the gun fire, "We need to get Wyatt alive!"

Thompson ducked his head, "I'm getting the feeling he doesn't want to be taken alive!"

Behind the apartment, the commandos were all spread out and taking cover behind anything they could find. Steve was the only one in the open but was protected thoroughly by his shield. Dugan who was behind a short wall called out to no one in particular, "Well that was subtle!"

Jim who was prone on his belly behind a large tree at the opposite side of the court yard from Dugan, called out to Steve, "They got us pinned, down!" Jacques and Pinkerton were able to squeeze off a few rounds at the building before being suppressed again by the machineguns.

Pinkerton called out, "Third floor! The gunners are on the third floor!" The machine guns were all located on the third floor and gave Hydra a perfect vantage point to suppress the commandos and the SSR agents on both sides of the building. Spotting the machine guns were easy at night, but it was hard to shoot back accurately without getting shot.

Steve gripped his shield and looked over at Dugan, "I'll move forward and draw fire! Once I draw fire, open up on the guns!"

Dugan nodded, "We got it!"

Junior Juniper who was behind Dugan called over the gunfire, "How do we know that Hydra would focus on him!"

Steve got up and maintained a low profile as he held his shield out in front of him and inched his way slowly to the apartment. Just as expected, the Hydra machine gunners quickly focused on Steve to try and stop him from getting to the apartment building. The high caliber rounds did nothing to Steve shield other than snap and ping off of it leaving him completely unharmed. Steve began to run and aggressively charge the apartment building to draw Hydra gun fire and get into the apartment. The Hydra gunners were quick to focus all their efforts to stop Captain America from entering the building.

Dugan quickly stood up from his cover and fired his submachine gun at one of the gunners in the windows, "Well, he got their attention!" The rest of the commandos quickly followed suite and peered out of their respective covers and opened fire at the gunners in the windows. Some of the gunners shifted their fire back to the commandos to try and reestablish fire superiority, while the remaining machine guns continued to try and stop Steve. Though the commandos were at a height disadvantage, they were able to shoot relatively accurately at the Hydra positions and suppress them. The Howling Commandos continued to trade shots with the Hydra fighters in the buildings while Steve got below the line of sight of the machineguns. Without stopping, Steve lead with his shield
and smashed through the boarded wooden back door to the apartment.

Out in front of the apartment, the SSR agents remained pinned down by intense machinegun fire. Peggy and her team remained in cover behind the bullet riddled car as incoming fire snapped and hissed past them. Peggy was desperate to make a move, "We need to get moving!"

Thompson ducked as a machinegun round snapped over his head, "We're kinda pinned here, Peg!"

Ramirez nodded, "I'm sure the neighbors are up now!" Li chuckled as he scooted closer to Ramirez to avoid get shot in the elbow or exposed shoulder.

Peggy quickly peeked over the hood of the car then ducked behind cover again. "I have an idea!" Peggy called over the gunfire. Her team looked at her curiously, willing to find any way out of their current situation. Peggy pointed at her team, "Draw their fire, when they focus on you, I'll run forward!"

Ramirez and Li looked at each other with concern over Peggy's safety and idea. Thompson shrugged at them, "The lady is the boss." Ramirez nodded in agreement and reloaded his submachine gun. Thompson got his weapon ready, "Alright, Peggy. Get ready." Peggy nodded and repositioned herself so she was in a better position to run. Thompson looked at Ramirez and Li, "On my go, we open up on the guns. Stay low and try not to get shot."

Li called over the sustained machinegun fire, "We got you covered, Peggy!"

Ramirez sighed, "Jesus, do these ass holes ever reload?"

Thompson looked at Peggy, "I think you might be crazier than Captain America." Peggy grinned to herself. "Go!" Thompson yelled as he, Ramirez, and Li quickly peered over the car and opened fire on the guns. Peggy quickly bolted out from behind the car and sprinted to the apartment complex. Almost as soon as they stood up, Thompson, Ramirez, and Li ducked behind cover as the machineguns quickly focused on their exact position. The trio instead blindly fired their submachine guns over the car to continue to draw Hydra gunfire from focusing on Peggy. The car the three SSR agents hid behind looked like metal Swiss cheese at this point.

As Peggy neared the front door of the apartment, one of the Hydra machine gunners spotted her and started to shoot in her direction. As she sprinted across the street, machine gun rounds began to snap at the ground behind her, mere inches from her heels. Peggy was incredibly fast on her feet and was able to get below the line of sight of the Hydra gunner which prevented him from shooting down at her. In fact, Peggy was a lot faster than she ever was in her entire life which helped her not get shot in her mad dash across the street. She credited her new physical abilities to rigorous training with Steve, but it was not the case.

Peggy leaned up against the wall adjacent to the front door of the apartment and grabbed her radio from her belt, "I'm at the front door."

Steve quickly replied on the radio, "I just got into the building. My team is pinned down outside."

"Meet up at the lobby," Peggy said quickly. "I'm going in," she said briefly then clipped the small radio back on her belt.

Inside the dimly lit apartment building, Steve quickly turned around and smashed the rim of his shield into the jaw of a Hydra fighter sending him rocketing into a wall. Steve brought his radio up so he could speak into it, "I'll be there in a second." He lowered his radio then twisted again and smashed another Hydra militant in the face with the concave surface of his shield knocking the man
down onto the floor with a practically bloody rearranged face. Steve then bolted down the hallway toward the front of the building to regroup with Peggy.

At the front of the apartment, Peggy kicked the door in and was greeted by four zealous Hydra thugs in the small lobby. Without pause or hesitation, she shot all four of them in rapid succession before they were able to act or retaliate. She then cautiously entered the dim building with her Thompson Submachine gun at the ready. She checked the corners of the small lobby and spotted a dark doorway which she assumed lead to the stairs to the upper floors of the apartment. Peggy then made her way to the center of the lobby and scanned the room for any potential threats. It seemed the Hydra thugs were mostly gathered in the upper floors. Suddenly, she heard a thud and a high pitch scream coming from the hallway behind her. Peggy rapidly turned around just as a body slid into the lobby. She then saw Steve jog into the lobby with his shield attached to his forearm.

Peggy smiled, "You're late."

Steve shrugged, "I had to take out the trash." Peggy smiled in response. He noticed she's alone, "did you charge the building by yourself?"

Peggy nodded, "I see you did too."

Steve smiled, "That's gutsy, Peg," he said in admiration.

"I learned from the best," Peggy said playfully.

"Alright," he said plainly. Steve looked around the lobby, "Looks like both of our teams are stuck outside until we eliminate those guns. Let's go." He said running to the doorway to the stairs. Peggy heard his hesitation but followed him to the stairs.

Steve took the lead up the stairs with his shield up to cover both him and Peggy as they cautiously walked up the stairs to silence the guns. The chaotic sounds of the machine guns were muffled in the stairwell but were loud enough to mask the footsteps of the Rogers climbing up the stairs. As they neared the third floor, Steve spoke up, "All the guns are on the third floor. Get ready."

Peggy whispered, "I'm ready," she said as she reloaded her submachine gun.

Once they got to the door to enter the third floor the sound of the Hydra machine guns filled their ears. Steve nodded at Peggy, "Ready?"

Peggy nodded, "Let's do it."

Just as Steve was about to open the door, a bullet snapped past him and Peggy and hit the ceiling above them. He quickly ducked then peaked over the metal railings of the stairwell and spotted a dozen Hydra thugs running up the stairs to get them. Steve turned to Peggy, "I'll take care of these guys. Think you take the guns yourself?"

Peggy nodded, "Definitely."

Steve gripped his shield, "Be careful."

"You too, darling," Peggy said barging into the third floor hallway. Steve then charged down the stairway to face the Hydra thugs pursing them.

Moments after the Rogers entered the building, multiple police cars showed up to aid the SSR and Howling Commandos, but they too were unable to make any traction into the building due to intense
gunfire. But the NYPD were quick to establish a one-block parameter around the building to assure no one gets in or out who aren't law enforcement or government agents. But while Peggy and Steve were fighting inside, the commandos, SSR agents, and a few police officers remained pinned down in their respective positions by intense machine gun fire for what seemed like forever.

Dugan got down behind cover again after shooting off a quick burst from his submachine gun, "What's taking Cap so long?"

Junior Juniper ducked his head, "he is fighting an entire building full of Hydra thugs by himself."

Jim yelled above the gunfire, "Yeah! But he cut through Schmidt's bunker like butter by himself!"

Almost like magic, the machine guns suddenly went silent like someone just turned them off. Dugan quickly peeked his head over the short wall he was hiding behind to check if the machine guns ceased firing then turned and called out to the rest of the commandos, "It's now or never. Let's go!" He yelled as he stood up and charged the apartment building. The rest of the commandos quickly got up and followed suit, charging the apartment. Dugan stopped short of the front door to let the rest of the commandos to assemble near him. He turned and nodded, "Falsworth and Sawyer, stay out here with the cops. Watch our backs and make sure no one gets out this way."

Falsworth nodded, "On it."

"You got it," Sawyer replied plainly. As Sawyer and Falsworth returned to the court yard to regroup with the police, Dugan and the rest of the commandos entered the building.

In front of the apartment, the machine guns ceased firing as well. Thompson was quick to react, "Alright, we're going in." He looked at Li, "Li, get with the cops, update them on the situation and make sure no one leaves the building who isn't one of our people," he said pointing to the police officers nearby who are taking cover behind their patrol cars in the middle of the street.

Li nodded, "Got it."

"Let's go, Ramirez!" Thompson yelled, as he ran out from behind the car and charged the apartment building.

Steve entered the third floor after dealing with the Neo-Hydra thugs on the second floor. After killing a handful of zealous Hydra thugs, the remaining opposition on the second floor quickly surrendered to him. Not many of the Hydra thugs were particularly keen on fighting Captain America, especially in a confined area such as a hallway or room. The thugs on the second floor posed no problems now. Steve walked through the doorway to the third floor and noticed complete silence in the hallway. He gripped his shield, "Peggy?" He walked deeper into the hallway and called out for his wife again, "Peggy?" He then grabbed his radio and called to her, "Peggy, come in," he said calmly on the radio. He heard nothing in response. He bit his lip and called for her on the radio again, but again received nothing. He was starting to get a little nervous since she didn't reply. Steve then peeked into a nearby apartment with its door kicked in, and saw two dead Hydra thugs hunched over a .30 caliber machine gun at the window. The apartment looked no bigger than a broom closet and is remarkably similar to his when he was living in an apartment all those years ago.

Steve stepped back out in the hallway and spoke on the radio again, "Peggy, do you read me?" He asked with a little bit more desperation in his voice. He gritted his teeth as he power walked deeper into the hallway. He noticed the apartments all along the hallway all had their doors broken in and they all had dead or unconscious thugs on the floors. Obvious signs that Peggy was there. As Steve quickly walked down the hallway with worry slowly creeping up his nervous system, he suddenly
heard a man yell in pain in a nearby room which broke the painful silence of the hallway. Steve quickly rushed toward the sound, but just as he got to the apartment, a man stumbled out of the room with his face beaten so bad he could barely tell any of his facial features. The man slammed against the wall then slumped down to the floor. Steve looked at the man confused then back at the doorway just as Peggy walked out of the small studio apartment.

Peggy smiled, "Hi, dear."

Steve raised his eyebrows, "I was looking for you. I couldn't reach you on the radio," he said with a relieved grin.

Peggy raised her broken radio, "Couldn't call you," she said with a smile. "Did you worry?" she said softly.

Steve chuckled, "of course I worried."

Peggy chuckled, "Nothing I couldn't handle."

Steve nodded to the unconscious man, "Looks like you cleared this floor out without a hitch."

"Piece of cake," Peggy said with a smile. Since the apartment complex wasn't that big, clearing the third floor and eliminating the machineguns were nothing she couldn't handle. With surprise in her favor, she was more than a match for the eight enthusiastic Hydra thugs occupying the floor.

Steve chuckled, "Let's go find our guy."

Peggy nodded, "Right. My gut says he will be upstairs."

Just as Peggy finished her sentence, James Wyatt, their target, appeared at the opposite end of the hallway with a pistol in his hand. Instinctively, Steve quickly stepped in front of Peggy and brought his shield up just as Wyatt fired two shots at him. "Hail Hydra!" Wyatt yelled as he took off down the stairs.

Steve lowered his shield and shook his head, "Why do they always say that?" he said deadpanned.

Peggy looked confused, "Um. Darling…shouldn't we…"

Steve shrugged, "That problem should take care of itself." Seconds later he heard James Wyatt gasp in pain down the stairwell. Steve chuckled and looked at Peggy, "See? backup is here." Peggy chuckled and shook his head.

In the stairwell, James Wyatt didn't make it far when he ran into Dugan, Jim, and Pinkerton walking up to the third floor. Dugan was quick to tackle him onto the stairs, disarm him, then turn him over to handcuff him. The whole sequence took no more than a minute, but Dugan made sure to make it as painful as possible for him. "You're going away for a long time, buddy," Dugan said as he searched Wyatt for any weapons and information. He chuckled, "the SSR has a special place for you."

Jim chuckled, "Yeah, like the electric chair." Wyatt grinded his teeth in frustration.

Peggy's voice drew the three-commando's attention, "Go easy on him boys," she said while walking down the stairs to meet them with Steve close in tow.

Steve holstered his shield on his back, "Any casualties?"

Pinkerton shook his head, "All the commandos are good to go."
Peggy stopped in front of the three men, "Where's my team? My radio is broken."

Jim spoke up, "Your team is all good. Two of them are securing the second floor."

Peggy smiled, "Thanks, Jim."

Steve nodded, "Let's wrap this up and get this guy back to the station." He chuckled, "I got to pick up our babies from our babysitter. They been with him all night." Peggy smiled.

Dugan nodded, "We'll get moving." He leaned over Wyatt, "Look at what you did. This lovely married couple here are busy fighting you Hydra thugs instead of being at home with their two small infants. What's wrong with you?"

Wyatt gritted his teeth, "Cut off one head, two more…"

Dugan cut him off by stuffing a rag in his mouth, "that gets annoying, quick." Peggy chuckled.
Dugan hoisted Wyatt up, "Get up! We're going for a ride."

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SSR New York City Branch "Bell Co. Office"

Interrogation Room

6 AM

James Wyatt sat isolated at the lone table in one of the dimly lit windowless SSR interrogation rooms, waiting for an SSR agent to come in and interrogate him. He leaned back in his chair calmly, not worried about being questioned by the SSR, and stared blankly at the one-way mirror in front of him. Part of Wyatt wondered if Captain America or his wife would be the ones to interrogate him. He and everyone else in Hydra knew Captain Rogers is married to Margaret "Peggy" Rogers because not only did the Press run the story of their wedding, but Captain America and Agent Rogers are notorious enemies of Hydra. Knowing the lives of both of them is knowing their enemy. But Wyatt wasn't worried if Peggy is the one to interrogate him because he didn't really take her seriously since she was a woman. He chuckled softly at the thought of Mrs. Rogers being the one questioning him. Wyatt crossed his arms over his chest and shook his head. He didn't think he would have any issues with her and was more concerned with being interrogated by the other male SSR agents and Captain America.

Moments later Peggy entered the interrogation room with a thin file in hand with Thompson following close behind with a thick wooden stick tucked under his armpit. Both of them were out of their field gear and now dressed in more appropriate business attire with Thompson wearing a dark suit and Peggy wearing a long sleeve light blue blouse and dark blue business skirt. Wyatt chuckled to himself as Peggy dropped the thin file on the table and took the seat opposite of him. Thompson closed the door to interrogation then stood in the corner behind Peggy.

Peggy turned on the gooseneck lamb on the table then opened the file, "Mr. James T. Wyatt," she said calmly.

Wyatt chuckled, "That's me, sweetheart." Thompson removed the stick from his armpit and gripped it tensely.

Peggy shook her and removed a few papers from the file, "I'm sure you know why you're here and know what you did, and I'm not going to waste my time talking about…"

Wyatt chuckled, "What's wrong, sweetheart, not a fan of foreplay?"
Peggy remained calm and patient against this man who was obviously trying to push her buttons because she's a woman. "Only with my husband," she said plainly. Peggy leaned back in her chair, "let's skip this crap and talk about Hydra. I know you operated a Neo-Hydra group and I'm betting you have been in contact with the other Hydra groups since the incident with 'SHIELD.'" Wyatt didn't take her seriously enough and smiled at her. Peggy tilted her head and nodded at him, "I need names and general locations of all your Hydra friends."

Wyatt shrugged, "I'm just a small fish, sweetheart. I can't help you."

Peggy nodded, "A small fish who owned a building and lead a small army of Hydra thugs to attack government trains and buildings." She leaned back, "I know Hydra didn't just fall apart and simply just went underground. Give me names."

Wyatt chuckled, "Got to talk to the bosses."

"I'm sure you know who they are and generally where they are," Peggy shot back.

Wyatt laughed and looked at Thompson, "Are you fellas serious? You lead your interrogations with this broad?" He shook his head and looked at Peggy, "Let me guess, you're the sweet cop and that guy over there is the bad cop," he said referring to Thompson. Wyatt leaned forward, "Look, sweet lips, I suggest you go back to Captain Rogers and do your wifely duties." He chuckled, "You know… Zola was right, you're weak with Captain Rogers in your life. You have everything to lose," he said calming down. He spoke in a harsh tone, "Come to think of it, your husband Captain Rogers is just vulnerable as you. We get one; we get the other," he said with a dark chuckle. That comment alone destroyed all of Peggy's calm and patience as did for Thompson standing in the corner, but neither of them showed any emotion toward Wyatt. The two SSR agents remained visibly stoic to Wyatt's comments. Wyatt continued to press, "Anyways, Does your husband even know that you play federal agent?"

Peggy sat forward, "Okay that's enough of that," she said calmly, not wanting to give Wyatt the perception that he controlled the room. She then closed the file and stood up from her seat and slowly made her way around the table. Thompson eyed her, curious of what she would do next.

Wyatt laughed, "Oh, did I hurt the girl's feelings," he said tauntingly. He calmed down and watched Peggy walk calmly around the table and stop next to him.

Peggy chuckled, "That's cute." She started to laugh a little harder causing Wyatt to laugh. As the two of them continued to laugh, Thompson watched Peggy carefully to see what she would do next. But without warning, Peggy quickly calmed down and grabbed Wyatt by the back of the head, and slammed his head into the table with tremendous force creating a shallow hole in the wood table. Wyatt grunted in extreme pain as blood poured out of his broken nose. Thompson raised his eyebrows in surprise but then smiled in satisfaction at Peggy's sudden action. Peggy leaned forward while maintaining pressure on Wyatt's head, "I'm not particularly a fan of beating the answers out of someone, but threatening my family is never a good idea. Especially when you're locked in a room with us," she said viciously. She looked at Thompson, "Jack," she said simply.

Thompson stepped forward to the table as he tapped the wood stick against his palm, "You messed with the wrong lady, mac."

Wyatt continued to grunt in pain while Peggy held his head down against the table. Blood pooled in the hole of the table but Peggy didn't seem to care. "Threatening Steve is one thing, but threatening my family is never a good idea. Especially when you're locked in a room with us," she said in a harsh tone. Peggy spoke sternly, "You're going to cooperate one way or the other. So how about you tell me what I want to know." Wyatt remained silent. Peggy smiled, "Okay then. Silence is your
answer." She let go of Wyatt's head then she stood up, "This was the easy way, now we are going to do it the hard way." She nodded at Thompson, "Well I'll let my friend get better acquainted with you."

Peggy moved aside from Wyatt to let Thompson take her place. Thompson tapped the stick on the table, "Suddenly you have a loss of words, James." Wyatt didn't sit up and simply closed his eyes in fear. Thompson grabbed him by the collar and picked him up off the table, "Don't worry, I'm going to make you scream, sing, and shout for our lovely lady here," he said referring to Peggy. Thompson brought the stick up to Wyatt's mouth, "You might want to bite down on this."

Wyatt suddenly spoke, "I'll talk!" he yelled frantically. Thompson looked at Peggy and nodded.

Peggy stepped forward, "I want names and locations."

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After questioning Wyatt, Peggy and Thompson walked into the adjacent observation room to speak with Sousa who was watching the interrogation. Wyatt gave her the information she wanted to know to the best of his abilities without either her or Thompson beating it out of him. Sousa nodded at Peggy, "Good work on getting Wyatt to talk. Never thought I'd see the day that you would get physical with someone during interrogation."

Peggy stopped next to Sousa and stared into the interrogation room at Wyatt, "He did get under my skin when he threatened Steve and my family," she chuckled.

Thompson stayed near the door and leaned against a desk in the room, "I guess we have to get a new table for that interrogation room, huh?" he said mentioning the table Peggy made a hole in with Wyatt's head.

Sousa chuckled, "I don't blame you. He's a terrorist, an enemy of the state, and charged with treason." He nodded toward Wyatt, "What do you think about the information he provided."

Peggy spoke calmly, "I think he's pointing us in the right general direction. Many of the names he provided I recognized from the files we recovered during the SHIELD incident, and we listed them as 'Persons of Interest.' Now we can actively pursue them."

Thompson nodded in agreement, "Yeah, Chief. The problem is where to track these guys down. The raid we conducted earlier was nothing stealthy and very public. Anyone who is or is associated with Hydra will likely go to ground again. Much like the Shield Incident."

Peggy spoke up, "Jack is right, Chief. Especially since not everyone in our 'Persons of Interest' list is under surveillance. It will be hard to find and track these people down."

Sousa nodded, "We need to move on this immediately against Hydra before we lose the trail. Got to get more agents out there." He leaned on his crutch, "Unfortunately, the government and all its wisdom thinks the Soviet Union and communism is the biggest threat so we're practically on our own."

Thompson chuckled, "The FBI isn't as helpful as they say. Big surprise there."

Sousa sighed, "If only Hydra could've have died with Schmidt when Captain Rogers killed him."

Peggy gave a small smile, "If only."

Sousa nodded, "Alright, let get to work. Peggy, get your team and work on the information we got from Wyatt. Start with the locals."
Peggy nodded, "Got it."

Sousa turned to Thompson, "Jack, get Wyatt processed to go to the SSR Delta Maximum Security Prison." The SSR Delta Maximum Security Prison is a state of New York SSR facility that houses traitors, terrorists, and war criminals, and housed the recently deceased head of Hydra Armin Zola and Leviathan Doctor Fennhoff. The Delta Prison is the Northern equivalent for the infamous SSR Rat Prison or simply known as "The Rat" located in the Appalachian Mountains in North Carolina. The Rat Prison is called "The Rat" because much of it is buried deep in the mountains and the prisoners, in particular, scurried like "rats" when being moved from place-to-place.

Thompson nodded, "Will do."

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SSR New York City Branch "Bell Co. Office"

Operations Floor

After leaving the interrogation room, Peggy walked directly back to the Operations Floor to get started on her work. As she turned the corner to the main operations room, she saw her team, and the Howling Commandos, in civilian clothing, gathered around her desk at the far side of the room joking and laughing. Peggy smiled as she walked down the room toward them, but then noticed that Steve wasn't with the commandos. She neared her team and the commandos and greeted them with a smile, "hello, boys."

Her team smiled and greeted her. Li chuckled, "so I heard you made a hole in a table with Wyatt's head."

Dugan chuckled, "Really?"

Peggy looked confused, "Word of that got around already?"

Ramirez shrugged, "Can blame, Jack."

Peggy rolled her eyes and chuckled, "Of course."

Falsworth laughed, "What did that poor chap do?"

"Aside from his sexist remarks, he pretty much threatened Steve and my family," Peggy said with a shrug.

Pinkerton raised a brow, "I don't know why he thought threatening her was a good idea, especially when he was sitting in an interrogation room."

Jim spoke up, "So you smashed his head into the table for that and made a big ass hole in it?"

Peggy hummed in response, "Mhmm."

"Okay…" Jim said a little frightened.

Junior Juniper whispered to Jim, "I'm glad Peggy likes us, now."

Peggy chuckled, "I don't know if I'd use the word, 'like.'"

Dugan smiled, "I knew you were strong but didn't know you were that strong, Peg." He walked over to Peggy and gripped her upper arm to feel her muscles. He laughed, "Did you get stronger overnight or something? Whatever you're taking I want some of it." Everyone laughed.
Li chuckled, "Peggy is way stronger than she looks."

Ramirez laughed, "Should've seen her this morning running into gunfire. Boy can Peggy run."

Li nodded, "Yeah, you fellas should also see her during some of the SSR sparring matches during the combative training periods." He nodded to Peggy, "She's quick, she's strong, and barely anyone is able to touch her." The commandos all turned to Peggy who waved them off modestly.

Ramirez nodded, "She's our top hand-to-hand agent in the SSR. For this office, anyway." He chuckled, "it used to be Thompson."

Peggy shrugged, "Cut it out, boys. I've just been training and practicing with Steve."

Dugan chuckled and started making a humping motion with his hip and arms, "Yeah, close contact indeed. With intense frequency and…"

Peggy raised her voice, "That's enough, Timothy," she called out while blushing with a small smile creeping on her lips. She quickly changed the subject, "Where's my husband anyway?"

Dugan pointed to the briefing room, "He's in there."

Peggy raised her hands, "Then I don't know why I'm talking to you then," she said jokingly as she turned and made her way to the briefing room.

Sawyer chuckled, "I knew she didn't love us." Everyone laughed.

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**SSR New York City Branch "Bell Co. Office" Briefing Room**

Peggy walked into the briefing room and saw Steve sitting at the head of the meeting table looking at the bulletin boards with all the key SSR intelligence on Hydra and Leviathan posted on it. She saw that Steve was out of his combat uniform and dressed in casual clothes consisting of dark dress pants, blue collared shirt, and a brown leather jacket. Peggy closed the door behind her and smiled, "you look good in leather, darling."

Steve turned around and smiled, "Hi."

Peggy went over to Steve and leaned on the table and smiled, "I like that jacket. I think you should wear it more often." She bent down and kissed Steve on the cheek earning a warm smile from him.

Steve chuckled, "Thanks, Peg."

Peggy looked at the bulletin boards then looked at Steve, "Why are you in here alone, Steve?"

Steve stood up and walked to the boards, "Just looking at all the information you have on Hydra and Leviathan. Specifically, Hydra."

Peggy tilted her head, "Anything in particular, darling."

"There's something bigger we aren't seeing," Steve said calmly. He looked at the documents, photographs, and maps posted on the board, "We rediscovered Hydra during the SHIELD Incident, and we stopped them, but after that, they went strictly on the defensive till recently." Peggy listened intently as Steve spoke. "I don't think they're as disorganized as we believe or on the defensive. They got to be planning something big. Call it a gut feeling."
Peggy hummed, "I'm not trying to disagree with you, but is it a possibility that Hydra is only acting out of desperation?"

Steve nodded and faced Peggy, "Maybe. But you know Hydra as well as I do. Deception is the name of their game. Look back during the war and the SHIELD Incident, Hydra always tries to deceive us. Always smoke and mirrors." Peggy nodded. "Everything seems too easy. Before the SHIELD Incident we thought that Hydra was gone for good, but it wasn't." Steve sighed, "My gut is telling me that they got something up their sleeve. Something big and bad... I just don't know what."

He shook his head, "I got no evidence to support this, so you can call me paranoid."

Peggy hummed in response, "I see what you're saying. I'll look into it because if you're wrong then you're wrong, but if you're right and we have our backs turned..."

Steve nodded, "exactly," he said walking over to his wife.

Peggy smiled, "Your gut's in the right place, darling."

"So, find anything at the apartment complex," Steve said changing the subject.

Peggy shrugged, "Our initial sweep found the illegal weapons but we didn't find any of the stolen RND technology. SSR teams are at the apartment complex right now searching the building top to bottom."

Steve chuckled, "At least we know that none of Stark's technology was stolen this time."

Peggy smiled, "Yes, Howard managed to actually get better security for his work."

"Let me know what you find?"

"Of course, I will, dear," Peggy said with a loving smile.

Steve laughed, "So I heard you made a hole in a table with Wyatt's head."

Peggy rolled her eyes, "Goodness, did everyone hear about that?"

Steve shrugged, "Pretty much," he said with a light laugh.

Peggy laughed, "The man is a pig and... let's just say he threatened the wrong people."

Steve stepped closer and kissed her on the cheek, "that's my wife right there." Peggy smiled at the comment. Steve then checked his watch, "Well I got to pick up our babies from our informal babysitters, the Jarvis'. They been with them practically all night." Steve and Peggy couldn't decide on a nanny or babysitter to take care of the twins by the time Peggy returned to work back in January, so they opted to call in a favor with Stark to allow Jarvis to look after the infants for the time being. Stark was reluctant to let his butler be a part time babysitter for the Roger twins, but Peggy firmly reminded Stark of how many favors he owes her and Steve. Jarvis turned out to be an excellent babysitter. Though Jarvis as a babysitter was supposed to be a short-term solution, Steve and Peggy couldn't decide on a babysitter for weeks. Peggy specifically was very picky and suspicious of all the potential babysitters and nannies. So, Jarvis turned into the on-call babysitter for Steve and Peggy. But after all this time, neither Steve nor Peggy have ever met Ana Jarvis, Edwin Jarvis' wife, even when they pick up the babies after work.

Peggy smiled and stood up, "Say hi to them for me."

Steve briefly kissed her on the lips, "I will."
Peggy tilted her head up, "Oh, don't forget. We're having our date night tonight. First one in a long while." She smiled, "I'm excited we get to watch Angie's debut musical together."

Steve chuckled, "Why would I forget that? I wouldn't miss it for the world." He smiled, "Haven't had a date in a while."

Peggy leaned into him and kissed Steve on the lips, "I love you," she said as she pulled away.

"I love you too," Steve said softly. "One last thing," he said bringing her close, placing his hands on her hips.

Outside the briefing room, the Commandos and Peggy's team were watching the couple at a short distance through the windows. Jim looked at Dugan, "Do you think they're always like that?"

Dugan nodded, "Yup."

Ramirez chuckled, "You know the boss will kill us if she sees us staring."

Inside the briefing room, Steve spoke softly, "Be more careful of taking unnecessary risks... Like charging into a building under intense machinegun fire." He sighed, "I know, I always worry, and I know you're strong and fully capable, but... I can't..." He hesitated, "I can't lose you and neither can Sarah and Michael." He sighed, "I know I'm not the...best example of not taking risks, but at least I have a shield to protect me from danger. Though you're strong and fast, you aren't invincible. Bullets don't care if you're a good person or have a family. They aren't prejudice." He sighed again, "What I'm saying is, just be more careful... I can't lose you." Steve shook his head, "I'm sorry, love. But can you blame me for being worried?"

Peggy nodded in understanding, "No, you're right," she said softly. She frowned, "I should be more careful and not take such stupid risks, especially when I lecture you about it. I'm sorry for worrying you," she said genuinely. She gave a small smile, "To be fair, I too always worry about you, darling."

Steve chuckled, "Look at us. We're just a couple full of worry."

Peggy smiled, "We just need to learn to be more careful. Especially now since we have kids."

Steve nodded, "I just wanted to tell you that." He kissed her on the lips again, "You and our twins are my world." He smiled, "Alright, I'll go relieve Jarvis of our babies until tonight."

Peggy kissed him on the lips one last time, "Good. I think it's time we leave this room, I fear the boys outside are watching and hoping to see something they shouldn't dare imagine."

Steve laughed and turned to leave. Before he opened the door, he turned around, "You think the SSR would be mad if I used their government car a little longer?"

Peggy smiled, "I can convince, Sousa to let it go."

Steve smiled, "Thanks, dear."

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**Jarvis Residence**

**New York City Suburbs, New York**

Steve parked his "borrowed" SSR car by the curb in front of the Jarvis' Residence then got out and
made his way to the front door. He knocked firmly on the front door and waited for Jarvis to answer so he can bring his babies home. After waiting patiently for a moment, Steve was utterly surprised at who answered the door. Steve had a look of pleasant surprise at Howard Stark who stood at the front door of Jarvis' house. Steve smiled, "Stark. What are you doing here?"

Howard Stark, dressed handsomely like usual in a nice pressed suit, smiled, "Well, that's quite a story."

Jarvis arrived at the front door with Michael James in his arms, "Ah, Mr. Rogers, please come in. I am a little tied up at the moment as you can see. I just got the little Rogers fed a few moments ago."

Steve nodded and stepped into the house, "Thank you for being available to take care of them, Jarvis at such short notice."

Jarvis smiled, "It's my pleasure to help you and Mrs. Rogers."

Steve immediately greeted his son in Jarvis' arms, "Hey there, buddy. Daddy is here to get you. How are you doing?" Michael James only cooed in content at the sight of his dad. Steve beamed happily and looked at Jarvis, "I'll take care of him from here."

Jarvis nodded, "As you wish, sir," he said as he carefully transferred the baby to Steve's arms. Steve held his son up right and kissed him on the cheek gently then carefully cradled the little baby in his strong arms.

Stark closed the door behind Steve and chuckled, "When I said you and Peg can ask me for anything, I didn't know you were going to ask for my butler to be your indefinite babysitter."

Steve laughed as he rocked Michael side-to-side, "Sorry. To be fair, we weren't intending to make Jarvis our permanent babysitter. He's a temporary one while we find a permanent one."

Stark shook his head, "It's been weeks. How have you not found one yet? I thought this was going to be temporary."

Steve shrugged, "Ask, Peggy. She's the one who has the final word about who to hire. With all the babysitters we've interviewed so far, either she doesn't trust them or she doesn't think they are qualified."

Stark chuckled, "Why am I not surprised."

Jarvis bowed briefly, "If you excuse me gentlemen, I'm going to check on Ms. Rogers in the other room."

Steve nodded, "I'll join you shortly." He looked back at Stark, "If you have a problem with us hiring Jarvis as our babysitter, you can always take it up with Peggy."

Stark shook his head, "Oh no. I know what's good for me," he said with a chuckle.

Steve laughed, "Okay, so why are you at Jarvis' house? As I recall, doesn't Jarvis go to you?" He gave a smirk, "You miss him? I know Jarvis is your main guy for nearly everything."

Stark chuckled, "Jarvis is actually pretty good at multi-tasking even while taking care of your precious babies. He still gets the job done." He smiled, "I actually told him to take the day off since he's on call for you all day. But the reason why I'm here is because I knew you would be here."

Steve raised a brow as he rocked Michael in his arms, "That sounds ominous."
Stark chuckled, "Oh no, it's nothing bad, my friend. Just wanted to talk to you about our little 'research project,'" he said with air quotes.

Steve nodded, "Right. What do you need."

"Follow me to the living room," Stark said nodding to the living room. Steve followed him without hesitation. "Well, bad thing first, I need your blood again."

The two men stepped into the living room and saw Jarvis changing Sarah's diaper with one hand while holding a baby book, likely provided by Peggy, in the other. Jarvis looked up and nodded at the two gentlemen, "If you need anything, sirs, I will only be a moment. Ms. Rogers had an oopsie and needed attention." Sarah didn't seem to be crying which made Steve happy because that means his daughter isn't giving Jarvis trouble. Steve always thought Sarah cried a lot less than her twin brother, but of course, it was hard to tell because the twins did cry frequently. He just thinks Sarah might cry at a lesser degree than her brother.

Steve smiled, "We're fine, Mr. Jarvis. Carry on." He looked at Michael who was staring at him with curious eyes, "Are you going to be next?" The little baby boy only cooed in response at his father's voice. Steve chuckled, "well, I'm here for you buddy." He looked at Stark, "Now... where were we?"

Stark nodded, "Your blood."

"Right. Why do you need it? And don't you have my blood from before during the war?" Steve asked.

Stark shook his head, "well...the government exhausted its supply of your blood trying to crack the code of the serum, and they currently want me to unlock the secrets of the serum again by any means necessary. Oh, and the other two vials the government didn't have, you and Peggy poured into the sea," he said with a smirk.

Steve looked down, "Right. I remember now."

Stark raised his hands, "But honestly I'm not going to draw your blood for the government in hopes to replicate the serum. I will ask for it later if I really need it." He waved his hands, "Getting off topic, I need your blood and subsequently Peggy's blood so I can run some tests and compare them on the cellular level to see how she changed. Might be other molecular, cellular, and health tests I need to do to be thorough, but we can start with the blood for now."

Steve nodded, "Sounds good." He looked at him with a questioning grin, "How do you expect to ask Peggy for her blood."

Stark shrugged, "I'll sweet talk her to let me."

Steve laughed, "She might shoot you. Just don't get me into trouble, okay?"

Stark waved his hand, "We'll be fine."

Steve chuckled, "I hinted at the fact she might have the serum, but I think she just blew it off."

"Well we will find out soon enough." Stark nodded at the couch where Sarah lay, "Take a seat and I'll take a few vials."

Jarvis wrapped up cleaning and changing Sarah's diaper then looked up at the two gentlemen, "Captain Rogers, I can take Michael while Mr. Stark draws your blood." Sarah kicked her hands and
feet happily and comfortably, not truly knowing what's going on in her surroundings.

Steve looked at Stark curiously, "You're going to draw my blood here?"

Stark laughed, "Of course. If I just wanted to talk I would've just called you." He nodded at the couch, "Take a seat, Steve and remove your jacket and roll up your sleeve." He then left the room for a moment to get his case that had the necessary medical supplies to draw blood.

Steve conceded, "Alright." On cue Jarvis walked over and gently took Michael James from Steve's arms. As Steve removed his jacket, he looked up at Jarvis, "If Sarah used the bathroom, it's only a matter of time before he does too," he said referring to Michael.

Jarvis nodded, "I'll be ready when the time comes, Captain Rogers," he said courteously.

Steve draped his jacket on the arm rest of the couch then took a seat, "You know, Mr. Jarvis," he began as he started to roll up his sleeve on his right arm.

"Yes?" Jarvis responded plainly as he swayed slowly side-to-side with Michael in his arms.

"This whole time we known you, Peggy and I never seen or met your wife before. You mention her often but we never met her," Steve said evenly.

Jarvis smiled, "My Ana is usually away during much of the day at work. On the weekends, she's here all day. But, I generally save the evenings around eight o'clock for her."

Steve smiled, "Oh? What does she do?"

Jarvis smiled, "She's a tailor in one of the large clothing stores in the city near Time Square."

"That's nice," He said genuinely. He smiled, "Hope we get to meet her."

Jarvis nodded, "You will this evening, Captain Rogers. When you and Ms. Rogers go to Ms. Martinelli’s musical, Ana and I will be at your house babysitting your twins." He smiled, "She did say it was time to meet the two of you finally."

Steve chuckled, "That should be wonderful. Thank you for being our temporary babysitter, Jarvis."

Jarvis bowed his head, "The pleasure is all mine." He felt Michael fidget it in his arms causing him to bounce the little baby in his arms.

Stark arrived back in the living room with a leather briefcase in hand, "I'll tell you what, Steve. Ana is a fine lady. You and Peg will definitely like her."

Steve nodded and smiled. "So how much do you need?" Steve asked as Stark kneeled down in front of him and opened his briefcase.

Stark removed a smaller pouch from his briefcase and opened it to reveal three empty blood vials, "About three to be safe," he said calmly.

Steve shook his head, "I hate needles."

Stark chuckled, "I don't say I blame you," he said as he got the vials ready.

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Steve & Margaret Rogers Residence, Scarsdale, NY
Peggy walked through the front door of the house and removed her hat and placed it on the console table, "Darling, I'm home!" she called out just as she began to remove her heavy dark blue winter coat.

Steve walked downstairs already dressed for the evening in a well pressed black three-piece suit with a white dress shirt, silver tie, and polished black shoes, "Hey, welcome back, Hon," he said smiling at his wife as he approached his wife at the front door.

Peggy draped the coat on her arm and smiled seductively at her husband, "you clean up nicely, darling. Keep dressing like that and you'll have to catch me when I swoon."

Steve smiled, "I will do more than catch you," he said softly. Peggy leaned forward and captured his lips. After a moment, Steve broke the kiss and smiled, "Here, let me take your coat," he said taking her coat from her arm.

Peggy smiled, "Thanks, Steve."

Steve turned around and made his way to the downstairs closet to hang the coat, "The Jarvis' will be here soon to babysit while we're gone."

Peggy looked surprised, "Oh? Ana is coming with him?"

Steve nodded, "Mhmm. She wants to meet us finally."

Peggy smiled, "Great. Let me say hi to the babies then get ready for our date. Hopefully before the Jarvis' arrive."

As Steve hung Peggy's coat in the closet he called out to his wife, "They missed mommy."

Peggy giggled as she passed Steve. Before she walked up the stairs she turned around and asked, "Have they been fed?"

Steve closed the closet door and faced his wife, "Not yet. Think it's a little early. I changed their diapers though."

Peggy smiled, "Thanks, dear. Just have to add that on the list to tell Jarvis," she said as she walked up the stairs.

Peggy walked into the nursery and saw her two angels cuddled together in their crib with a thick blanket covering their little bodies to keep them warm. The sight of her two small babies in the crib always melted her heart. She made her way to the crib and lowered the side of the crib so she can bend over her infants and greet them. Peggy hovered over her little twins, "Hey there, my darlings," she said tickling their small bodies with her hand. The twins cooed in content in response to their mother. Peggy smiled and kissed them on their forehead, "Mama and dada have to go out tonight and will be back later, okay?" Both Sarah and Michael looked up at Peggy with curious looks in their eyes. Peggy chuckled and leaned down and kissed them on the forehead briefly. As she put the side of the crib back up she smiled, "I love you," she said softly. "Mama will be back later tonight," Peggy said in a hushed voice as she turned around.

It was about 5:45 in the evening when Steve heard a knock at the front door. He got up from the couch and put his book down on the coffee table and made his way to the front door. Steve opened the door and revealed the Jarvis' standing patiently on the porch bundled nice in warm. Steve smiled, "Mrs. Jarvis, Mr. Jarvis, good to see you," he greeted them courteously.
Edwin Jarvis smiled, "Hope we aren't too late. We left rather late, I'm afraid." Ana smiled at her husband for a moment before looking back at Steve.

Steve chuckled, "Your timing is perfect. Thanks for coming, come in," he said stepping to the side to let the couple inside. Steve noticed Mrs. Jarvis looked very thin and youthful with bright red hair and had a very lively spring in her step. Once the Jarvis' stepped inside, Steve closed the front door behind them, but before he could do anything else Ana quickly embraced him in a friendly hug. "Oh," Steve gasped in surprise before returning the hug.

Ana smiled, "Pleasure to finally meet you, Captain," she said letting Steve go.

Edwin smiled, "I must warn you, Captain, Ana is quite the hugger."

Steve smiled, "I noticed." He smiled at Ana, "May I take your coat, Mrs. Jarvis?"

Ana smiled at Steve, "yes, please. You can call me, Ana, Captain," she said beginning to remove her heavy winter coat.

Steve took the coat from her and draped it over his arm, "And you can call me, Steve. Though your husband never does," he said with a smile. He then silently offered to take Edwin's jacket so he can hang it in the closet along with Ana's.

Edwin removed his jacket and graciously handed it to Steve, "You and Ms. Rogers never called me by my first name either."

Steve chuckled as he draped Edwin's jacket over his arm with Ana's, "True, but 'Mr. Jarvis' has such a good ring to it." He turned and walked around the corner to the downstairs closet.

Edwin smiled, "One can argue, Captain Rogers has a good sound to it too."

"Can't argue there," Steve said as he hung the Jarvis' coats in the closet.

Ana chimed into the conversation, "I'm going to be completely honest with you, Steve. I didn't rightly believe that Edwin here knew you personally. Didn't believe he knew the famous Captain America." Edwin smiled at his wife. She chuckled, "Not until he started babysitting for you."

Steve stepped around the corner and smiled, "It's only temporary until my wife decides on a permanent babysitter."

Edwin bowed his head, "Oh, but I do love the young Sarah and Michael. They are so adorable and cute," he said genuinely.

Ana laughed, "I think Edwin might be enjoying being a babysitter more than being a butler for the rich Howard Stark." She chuckled, "I can't blame him. Sarah and Michael are oh so sweet little babies." Though Ana doesn't get to spend as much time with the twins as her husband due to scheduling, the moments she had with the Roger twins were always pleasant. She quite adored them.

Steve chuckled at the comment, "Well, Peggy and I practically took your husband away from Stark so he practically works for us now."

Ana looked at Edwin, "This is true, isn't it?" she said with a chuckle.

Steve nodded in the direction of the living room, "Please, come in and make yourselves comfortable. I'll go and let Peggy know you're here."
Ana smiled, "Thank you, Steve." Jarvis bowed his head and gave a small but warm smile at Steve in response. The Jarvis' then followed Steve to the living room where he immediately excused himself to let Peggy know that they arrived.

Ana watched Steve disappear up the stairs and said evenly, "I like him. He's very kind and gentle, but visibly strong." She looked at her husband, "I can see why Peggy married him."

Edwin raised an eyebrow, "But, Ana…you haven't met Ms. Rogers and you only just met her husband."

Ana waved her hand dismissively, "Come off it, Edwin. I don't need to know Peggy to see why she married him in the first place." She chuckled, "I like his first Impression, and as I always say, 'first impressions are lasting.'" She shrugged, "And from what you told me about Peggy, she is a very strong and determined woman. She sounds like the perfect woman for Steve."

Edwin smiled, "She is."

Ana made a questioning look on her face, "though… how you talk about Peggy, I expect her to be rather…rough and a little masculine. I guess it's okay as long as Steve is attracted to that sort of thing." She shrugged, "I must say I'm curious to see her for the first time." She smiled, "She can't look too masculine because her babies have very fine features."

Edwin chuckled, "Ms. Rogers will surprise you."

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Steve walked into the master bedroom and called out to his wife, "Peg, the Jarvis' are here…" He stopped in his tracks when he saw his wife in front of the standing mirror near their bed putting on her earrings. Peggy is dressed in a stunning silk off the shoulder long red evening dress with a dark red sash tied around her stomach in an elegant bow. She wore makeup with red lipstick and wore her dark brown shoulder length hair down in wavy curls. In all aspects, she is beautiful. Steve remained completely motionless as he stared at his wife, completely enthralled by her beauty.

Peggy finished putting on her earrings and noticed her husband staring at her from the door with his jaw on the floor. She smiled and turned around to face him, "Like what you see, darling?" she said gently twirling side-to-side in her long silky red dress.

Steve nodded and walked over to her, "very much." He stopped in front of her, "You look, beautiful. I mean you always do, but right now you…"

"Shhh," Peggy said softly as she put a finger to his lips. She smiled, "Just kiss me," she said seductively.

Steve smiled, "Yes, Ma'am," he said as he gently took her by the waist, brought her close, and kissed her deeply.

After a moment, Peggy broke the kiss and smiled up at her husband, "We keep going, we won't make it to the musical."

Steve chuckled, "That's true." He smiled, "The Jarvis' are waiting downstairs."

Peggy smiled, "Great." She nodded, "One last once over. How do I Look?" she asked as she spun around.

Steve smiled, "Gorgeous and stunning," he said lovingly. He spread his arms, "How do I look?"
Peggy smiled, "Dashing." She nodded to her husband, "I'll be down in a moment, darling. Let me finish up." Steve nodded quietly and planted a kiss on her cheek before head out the door.

Steve walked downstairs and saw the Jarvis' cuddled together on the couch with their backs turned to him, "Peggy will be down shortly." He made his way to the couches and sat down on the adjacent couch from the Jarvis'. Ana chuckled upon seeing Steve. "What?" Steve said with a smile.

Edwin smiled, "You seem to have a little lipstick on you, Captain."

Ana giggled, "I see you and your wife got a little intimate in the few minutes you were gone."

Steve shook his head, "Can't blame a guy for loving his wife," he said standing up from the couch. "I'll be right back," he said turning to the kitchen.

Just as Steve left for the kitchen, Peggy walked down the stairs with her heels clicking against the wood stairs as she supported her long dress so she wouldn't step on it as she walked. She smiled when she saw the Jarvis' on the couch, "Mr. and Mrs. Jarvis, thank you for coming," she called out to them as she approached the living room.

The Jarvis' both stood up and turned to the sound of Peggy's voice. Edwin smiled at Peggy, "You look radiant this evening, Ms. Rogers," he said as he and Ana met Peggy halfway in the living room.

Peggy smiled, "Thank you, Mr. Jarvis." She looked around for a moment and didn't see her husband, "Where's Steve?"

Ana spoke up, "You left a little something on his lips and he went to wash it off." Peggy chuckled in response.

Peggy then focused on Ana to introduce herself, "You must be Ana Jarvis. I heard so much about you, I'm Margaret Rogers. I go by Peggy…" before she could finish, Ana stepped forward and hugged Peggy tightly. Peggy gasped in surprise.

Edwin chuckled, "Fair warning, my wife likes to hug."

Peggy returned the hug prompting Ana to let her go, "I noticed," she said with a warm smile.

Ana beamed happily, "You're the woman I heard so much about. The one who took my husband in all the adventures a few years ago, and the woman who wooed Captain America." Peggy remained silent and had a dumfounded look across her face. Ana looked confused, "What's that look?"

Peggy shrugged, "Uh…I don't know…I was expecting someone more like…"

Ana chimed in with a playful smile, "Edwin in a girdle?" Peggy nodded. Edwin just smiled proudly. Ana chuckled, "Forgive me, but how Edwin described you, I thought you would be a lot more masculine." She smiled, "But looking at you now, you look like a goddess. I'm quite surprised how feminine you look."

Ana chuckled, "Forgive me, but how Edwin described you, I thought you would be a lot more feminine." She smiled, "But looking at you now, you look like a goddess. I'm quite surprised how feminine you look."

Peggy shrugged, "Thank you, Ana." She smiled at her, "It's a pleasure to finally meet you after all this time." She shrugged, "Was starting to think you might've been fake," she said jokingly.

Edwin shook his head, "I would never…"

Ana looked back at her husband, "She was joking, Edwin, relax." Both Peggy and Ana laughed.

Edwin nodded, "Quite right."
Ana took Peggy by the arm, "How was my Edwin during your adventures?"

Peggy saw Steve walk out of the kitchen then she chuckled as she looked back at Ana, "That's a topic for another time. There's a lot to say," she said carefully.

Edwin sighed, "Oh dear…"

Ana laughed, "I'm sure we'll have time to talk about it next time."

Steve smiled at Peggy as he leaned against the wall, "Ready to go, Peg?"

Peggy nodded, "mhmm."

Steve walked over to Peggy and wrapped an arm around her, "I left the list of everything you need to know on the kitchen table so I wouldn't lose it." He turned to Peggy, "I'll grab our coats," he said as he walked to the downstairs closet.

Peggy nodded at the Jarvis', "The twins haven't been fed yet, they need to be in the crib by eight, nine at the latest. The formula is in the refrigerator on the middle shelf," she said listing off everything the Jarvis' need to know. "The twins also need to be on the same schedule so they need to be put to bed at the same time. Michael tends to cry m…"

Ana cut her off, "Don't worry, Peggy. We can handle it. Besides, my husband has been babysitting your babies for a few weeks now."

Peggy nodded, "Right. I just want…"

Steve walked into the living room again with his thick black winter overcoat on, and Peggy's winter jacket draped over his forearm, "Don't worry, Ana. Peggy tends to do this every time. Even when I get left alone with the babies too," he said with a chuckle. He looked at his wife, "Let's go, Hon. We're going to be late, the Jarvis' got it under control," he said getting ready to put Peggy's jacket on her.

Peggy nodded and allowed Steve to help her put her dark blue winter coat on, "Sorry, Ana, I just want to make sure everything is okay."

Ana smiled, "I understand, Peggy. Don't worry, your little ones are in good hands with us. Edwin is always so good with them anyway."

Peggy buttoned up her jacket, "Thank you, Ana, Edwin."

Edwin bowed his head, "It's our pleasure."

Steve wrapped an arm around his wife, "Let's go, Hon." Peggy smiled at her husband which prompted him to start walking to the door with his arm still around her.

As Steve opened the door and let Peggy out first, Peggy briefly turned around and called out to the Jarvis, "See you later, be back in a few hours!"

As Steve closed the door the Ana called back, "Enjoy your evening you two!" Once she heard the front door close, Ana turned to Edwin and smiled happily, "I want to see the little babies before we do anything," she said excitedly.

Edwin chuckled, "I'll see what the Rogers left for us to do while you greet the young Michael and Sarah." Ana glowed happily and quickly made her way to the stairs in a very youthful manner.
After grabbing a nice dinner in a fancy quiet restaurant near the Broadway theater, Steve and Peggy made the show right on time for the musical to begin. Though the Rogers primary purpose of the evening was to watch Angie in her debut musical performance on Broadway, they ultimately made it into a nice date night for the two of them. Their first date they've officially taken since the twins were born. It's turning out to be a very romantic evening so far, just the two of them. The musical their seeing is called "Broadway Rhythm" where Angie makes her debut as the main character and lead female role as Kathy O'Connor a poor farm girl from Oklahoma aspiring to be a show girl on Broadway during the Depression.

Steve and Peggy took their seats in the middle of the Orchestra section giving them a perfect view of the stage. Angie was the one to provide them with the tickets and seats to the show with no additional charge which made the Rogers incredibly grateful and happy. Peggy wrapped her arm around Steve's and leaned into him just as the orchestra started playing and the curtain lifted. Peggy smiled and whispered, "I love you." Steve smiled warmly and gently nudged her in response.

Once the curtain was raised, they immediately saw Angie dressed in overalls, gray button-up shirt, and black boots in front of the set that was constructed to look a lot like a conventional farm in Oklahoma during the 1920s. Peggy and Steve couldn't help but smile fondly at their friend on stage. Angie was doing the action of hanging clothes on the clothesline as she began to sing. Her strong yet elegant voice carried throughout the entire theater as she sang beautifully to the audience. She's an excellent singer and so far, an excellent actress too.

Steve whispered to Peggy, "She's good."

Peggy smiled and nodded, "Very. This is going to be good."

Two and a half hours later

After the end of the musical, Steve and Peggy exited the audience and walked through the lobby of the theater with their arms linked together. The musical was a total hit and the cast earned a standing ovation. Judging by the crowd's reaction and people talking after the musical, Angie did a great job and the musical was an outstanding hit for the first day. Needless to say, Steve and Peggy loved it and adored Angie's performance. Of course, critics will always have something negative to say, but the Rogers are confident that the review will be overall positive. As Steve and Peggy made their way outside, they could hear many people praise the musical and the lead female star which made both the Rogers extremely happy for Angie.

Peggy leaned into Steve, "The musical was great. I knew Angie belonged on stage," she said with a warm smile.

Steve smiled, "It was. She's a great singer and actress, and damn anyone who says otherwise."

Peggy giggled and tightened her grip around his arm as they walked down the sidewalk, "This was nice. We got to do this again."

Steve looked at her with a questioning look, "See a musical?"

Peggy laughed, "Not necessarily a musical but a date night with only the two of us."

Steve smiled, "that's an excellent idea." He chuckled, "How's once a week sound?"
"Sounds perfect," Peggy said softly. She shivered from the cold which prompted Steve to unhook his arm from hers and wrap his arm tightly around her shoulders.

"Let's go home. I'm sure Sarah and Michael are missing us," Steve said softly. Peggy smiled and in turn wrapped her arm around her husband and held him close.

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**Steve & Margaret Rogers Residence, Scarsdale, NY**

**11:30 PM**

Peggy walked through the front door of the house followed closely by Steve, "Mr. Jarvis, Ana, we're home!" she called out to the Jarvis'. The Rogers felt the relief of warm air from their house which was a welcome feeling from the cold winter outside. Peggy figured that the Jarvis probably made a fire in the fireplace which made the house feel very pleasant.

Ana called back from the living room, "We're in the living room."

Peggy removed her winter coat and handed it to Steve so she could greet the Jarvis', "Can you hang this for me, darling?"

Steve nodded, "Of course," he said with a smile.

Peggy smiled, "Thanks, love," she said as she turned and walked into the living room.

Once Peggy entered the living room she saw the Jarvis' cuddled nicely on the couch facing the fireplace. She smiled, "How are my darling?"

Ana quickly sat forward and turned to face Peggy, "perfect as always. I never get sick of seeing them. They are so precious." Peggy smiled warmly at Ana.

Edwin turned around and smiled, "How was the musical? Ms. Martinelli do well?"

Peggy smiled, "Oh, yes. She was outstanding and earned quite the standing ovation."

Edwin smiled, "I'm glad. She deserves the applause."

"Everything with the babies go okay? Find everything and got them settled?" Peggy asked curiously.

Ana nodded, "We found everything without issue. The twins were fed, changed, and put to bed in their crib on time."

Peggy smiled, "Perfect, thank you." She paused, "Thank you for babysitting, Mr. Jarvis, Ana."

Ana smiled, "No need to thank us. It's our pleasure," she said genuinely.

Edwin smiled, "I do enjoy them very much."

Steve walked into the living room and smiled, "Mr. Jarvis, Ana, thank you for babysitting for us while we were out."

Ana smiled, "It's our pleasure. You two babies were oh so very good." She chuckled, "They hardly cried and they were a joy to be around," she said happily.

Peggy smiled, "Let me get your pay, so you two can go home. It's awfully late."
Edwin nodded, "Thank you, Ms. Rogers."

Suddenly the couples heard the sound of a baby crying from the nursery upstairs. Ana smiled, "Uh-oh. Someone's up," she chuckled. Mere seconds later they heard a second baby join the loud crying. Even from downstairs, the cries from the twins was pretty loud. Ana laughed, "They missed you."

Peggy chuckled, "I'll be right back."

Steve stopped her by putting a hand on her arm, "it's okay, hon. I'll take care of our little one," he said with a smile.

Peggy smiled, "Thanks, dear."

Steve smiled at the Jarvis, "Thank you, Mr. Jarvis, Ana for babysitting. Have a good night and drive safe." With that he turned and left the living room to go upstairs to comfort the crying infants.

Ana smiled, "He's a real keeper, Peggy."

Peggy chuckled, "That he is." She smiled, "I'll be right back to get your money," she said as she turned and walked to the kitchen.

About an hour later, Steve was still in the nursery putting Sarah Amanda to bed in the crib moments after finally getting Michael James to sleep. The babies cried for much of the hour but Steve managed to stop the crying and begin the process of putting twins to bed in the crib. Steve swayed side-to-side with Sarah in his arms as he hummed a quiet lullaby. Peggy quietly stepped into the room with her high heels in her hand and watched her husband with her daughter. She leaned against the door frame with a loving smile growing on her lips at the sight of Steve caring for their babies.

Steve smiled at his daughter as he saw Sarah's eyes start to get heavy which signaled she was going to sleep. He continued to hum the lullaby and rock her until he was confident she was fast asleep. Peggy chuckled quietly and walked out of the room. As she stepped into the hallway she put her high heels down on the floor and began to remove her dress. She let her dress fall freely to the floor so she was practically naked minus her underwear. Peggy stepped over her discarded dress and took a step to the master bedroom door then removed her underwear and left it on the floor so she was completely naked. She smiled over her shoulder then walked into the bedroom to wait for Steve.

Steve finally was satisfied that Sarah was asleep so he gently put her down in the crib next to her twin brother then gently covered them with a thick baby blanket to keep them warm. He leaned down and softly kissed the twins on the forehead and whispered, "I love you, good night, little ones." Steve then raised the side of the crib then quietly made his way out of the nursery, turned off the lights, and closed the door. Outside the nursery door, he sighed in relief that he managed to put the babies to bed without much difficulty. Steve smiled and turned around to see Peggy's clothes on the floor making a path to the bedroom.

Steve chuckled and slowly made his way to the bedroom. Upon entering the bedroom, he immediately saw Peggy laying on the bed naked with a seductive grin on her face. Peggy spoke sweetly, "You going to join me? Or do I have to wait?" Steve was in awe. He seen her naked plenty of times but each time it's like the first time. Peggy raised a brow, "Well?"

Steve chuckled, "I'll be right there," he said as he removed his suit jacket while simultaneously closing the door behind him.

Another chapter in the Bag. Little Fluffy with some gun action.
The Musical is titled from a song from the movie "Singin' In the Rain."

Slowly introducing how Peggy earns her Fearsome reputation in Hydra

No idea where the RAT prison is located.
Chapter 26 SHIELD

I don't Own Captain America

The much-anticipated government intelligence agency, the Strategic Homeland Intervention, Enforcement, and Logistics Division or better known by its acronym "SHIELD" finally went active on Monday, March 8, 1948. Though SHIELD went active at the beginning of March, it didn't reach full operational status until Monday, May 3rd when all SSR assets and resources were effectively turned over to SHIELD about two months after it initially went active. In spite of initial setbacks when Hydra was planning its insider attack through SHIELD, the newly developed intelligence agency had quickly turned into a critical intelligence apparatus for national security. SHIELD's primary purpose is to protect the United States from all threats with its vast information network, espionage, advanced weaponry, scientific research, and highly trained field agents. In addition to intelligence gathering and surveillance, it is also tasked with counter espionage and development of advanced technology and weaponry. As always intended, the SSR was absorbed and became an efficient subdivision as a research and development branch for SHIELD. Just as soon as SHIELD went active, it took over all current SSR operations and projects. SHIELD quickly conducted its missions, projects, and activities both in foreign nations and at the home front to protect the country from threats posed by Hydra and the Soviet Leviathan deep science and espionage agency. Though many of SHIELD's functions and subdivisions, like the SSR, are enigmatic, its personnel are regarded as mysteries by mainstream intelligence officers in the CIA and government officials. Though SHIELD is brand new, the agency is very secretive. SHIELD personnel, especially agents, are often referred to as "spooks" much like many others participating in espionage. Agents are given special trust and confidence, and latitude in the discharge of their duties. Agents often acquire vast amounts of government resources to achieve their ends with already questionable morality.

A week before SHIELD was activated, Colonel Chester Phillips was officially and unanimously named the Director of SHIELD by the senate 94-0. Though he was named Director immediately after the SHIELD Incident, his appoint before the Senate in March was final and public confirmation. A day later, Phillips retired from the U.S. Army on March 2, 1948. As Director of SHIELD, he answers directly to the President of the United States. With SHIELD under the leadership of Director Phillips, he quickly made the agency into an effective intelligence service in impressive time. Additionally, SHIELD was given a new regional headquarters by Washington DC called the Tempest which was a former CIA administration building. Though ownership of the building changed, the purpose of the building has not. The Tempest is a heavily secured office building that houses much of the administration and analytical sections of SHIELD. It is also used for briefings and conferences with ranking SHIELD officers, authorized government personnel, and the President of the United States, so they don't need to travel to the Aegis, the main SHIELD HQ located in New York City.

Upon activation of SHIELD, Agent Margaret "Peggy" Rogers became Deputy Director Rogers working out of the SHEILD Aegis Headquarters building. She's no longer a Senior Field Agent but now is the second highest official in the new intelligence agency. She's the first woman in the history of the United States to earn a director position in an intelligence service and a high ranking government job. Peggy was quick to adapt to her new position as Director, and no doubt earned and commanded tremendous respect from her subordinates and equals. Her reputation precedes her as someone who deserves the respect of everyone working around her and under her. As a woman in a male dominated industry, she felt the need to be strict at the same time fair to make sure her subordinates didn't think she was weak or a pushover. She quickly found a healthy balance between
the two. Though SHIELD is still a new agency, her reputation in the American intelligence community is well known, so not many have tried challenging her. Though some try, it never turns out well for them.

Some government officials challenged the fact that Peggy isn't a national born U.S. citizen, so she shouldn't be trusted as a Deputy Director of SHIELD due to foreign ties. Though Peggy is an American citizen by marriage, she earned the position because of her service record during the war and her exemplary service in the SSR along with the stunning recommendations from many Army officers including Colonel Phillips (ret.). President Truman did not renounce his decision of accepting Peggy as Deputy Director of SHIELD and made it clear that he was very supportive of her abilities. Though Peggy knew that other government officials would try challenging her as Deputy Director again, she isn't worried about it in the slightest.

Peggy did miss being a field agent, but at the same time she felt honored and humbled as Deputy Director. The downside of being the Deputy Director is that she can't go in the field anymore, conduct missions, and directly solve problems. But the positive side of being a director is that she can see her family more and have a "safer" job. She loves her family, and she loves her work, so she thinks she got the better end of the deal. Peggy liked to think that the Deputy Director job is more of a family friendly job than as a field agent. Plus, she knew raising her kids would be easier as Deputy Director than a field agent. As always, family is everything to her and her husband. Steve, no doubt is very supportive and proud of her.

Shorty, after SHIELD went fully operational, Captain Steven Grant Rogers, was discharged from active duty in the US Army and became an active SHIELD Operative. Director Phillips needed to make him a full active duty SHIELD agent, not only because of his military service during the war and his time in the SSR but because of his vast abilities and particular skill set he possesses which would make him an effective SHIELD operative. Though he is no longer in the Army, he still holds the title "Captain America" since the title was graciously bestowed on him during the war. As a SHIELD operative, he was assigned to lead the newly formed SHIELD Special Purpose Unit or known by the acronym, "SPU." The SPU is primarily the military and combat arm of SHIELD where the unit's purpose is to conduct high-risk asset acquisition and assaults, hostage rescue, black ops, etc. So far, the SPU has only one unit based out of the SHIELD Aegis HQ in New York City, New York as of this year. It's under the newly formed "Direct Intervention Division" located at the Aegis Headquarters. The Direct Intervention Division as the name describes is a newly formed division with the intentions to conduct covert and military operations in any part of the world. The SPU is the main arm of that division. The members of the SPU consist of Captain Rogers, the Howling Commandos, and three highly trained former military SHIELD agents making a total of twelve operatives. Though the Howling Commandos are now the SPU Strike Team the commandos still identify as the Howling Commandos over being part of the SPU. But since the SPU is brand new, Steve needed to make special training requirements and standards for the unit and future candidates. He needed to make sure the unit can handle any situation, so he set the bar high and demanded that everyone meets it without exception. Since its purpose is to be a first response unit, the physical and mental demands are high. The SPU is being groomed to be the most elite tactical unit in SHIELD, but for all intents and purposes, the SPU is essentially an experiment for quick reaction situations. Though Steve's requirements are demanding and challenging, Director Phillips and Margaret Rogers agree with Steve's ideas full heartedly and give him complete leeway on training and established standards. Both Phillips and Margaret Rogers eventually plan to form new SPU teams around SHIELD field offices to have greater coverage and response times and incorporate everything Steve has accomplished with the unit.

Though some of Howling Commandos aren't US citizens and belonged in the military of foreign countries, they enjoyed serving in a battle-tested multinational American military unit based in mainland United States. Collectively, they are one of the most lethal military units in the country at
the conclusion of the war. Every member of the commandos was asked to join SHIELD, and every single one of them accepted. But some of the Howling Commandos, like Pinkerton, Falsworth, and Dernier were barred from joining the agency because they weren't U.S. citizens. But Director Phillips, through complex political back channels, was able to grant citizenship to them if they truly wanted to continue to serve in the United States as SHIELD operatives. No one turned down the offer amazingly. In the end, all the commandos remained in service which surprised Steve and Peggy. Steve was sure many of the commandos wanted to go off and get civilian jobs and reap the benefits of peacetime, but all the commandos expressed that camaraderie, purpose, and the new SHIELD pay is better than any job the civilian sector can provide. Plus, SHIELD provided the commandos their own apartments in the city since most of them used to live in Camp Lehigh. SHIELD provided and paid the commandos more than any civilian job could offer them. Besides, thousands of recently discharged men flooded the job market so obtaining a well-paying civilian job was a little bit more difficult.

Steve had no issues of being a subordinate to his wife in SHIELD. Many men would, but he had no problems with it. He would often joke that going to work at SHIELD was a lot like home because even at their house Peggy was in charge. Steve's personality, Peggy's character, and even their relationship was breaking societal norms, and they were thoroughly okay with it. Though Steve's new job in SHIELD is just as demanding as his last job in the SSR, he still believes his greatest mission and greatest adventure is being a good father to his kids and a good husband to his wife. Nothing will ever take precedence over that. Although there have been many positive life changes recently, Steve and Peggy have been happily married for almost two years with many more years to come. In fact, their anniversary is nearing.

Not much changed with Howard Stark since SHIELD started. He continued to live his rich playboy lifestyle, partying with many high-class celebrity women, and even sleeping with many others. He is, however, one of the founders of the newly reformed SHIELD, and is the head of the Weapons and Technology Department. Though after the events of Hydra and Leviathan, he wanted to be more involved with the intelligence gathering and espionage that the agency would be prescribed to do. He also diverted much of his resources to develop new technologies for the agency and sometimes for the military. But one thing that remained consistent with Stark was his imagination and desire to improve the quality of life through technology. He did, however, gradually start to focus more on making technologies to improve life and the future instead of money and profits. Stark and his company Stark Industries was concentrated on making weapons for a very long time due to demands of the war. But the events of Hydra and Leviathan reinvigorated Stark's vast imagination to change the world with technologies of peace for the future. He found the healthy balance between making technology for the agency and technology for the everyday Americans.

It's been about three months since SHIELD went fully operational and the agency is already deeply involved with missions domestically and abroad to counter Hydra and the Soviets, specifically Leviathan. While SHIELD became increasingly involved and already drastically stretched to combat Hydra and Soviet covert threats in areas such as South America, Eastern Europe, Western Europe, and Asia, SHIELD became heavily involved in supporting the Berlin Airlift. Countering any covert Hydra and Soviet attempts to stop the supply of resources to the people in Western Berlin is SHIELD's top priority. With the Berlin Airlift in effect and millions of U.S. dollars spent in economic aid to the people in West Berlin, the fear of the spread of Communism has slowly taken a hold on the American public. Though the United States is enjoying peacetime, the Second Red Scare has taken a drastic hold on the American public, but fears haven't quite boiled into mass hysteria. But much of the American public has eyes on the ongoing Berlin Airlift after the Soviets initiated a blockade in an attempt to starve the western half of Berlin. Though, the events in Berlin didn't help the fears of communism in the United States…
Peggy cautiously walked through the dark hallway with her pistol drawn to the sound of her babies crying in the nursery. Her leather jacket was torn at the shoulder and elbow, and her pants were ripped at the knees as if she was in a brawl. Thunder boomed over the sound of her babies hysterical crying from the storm outside as Peggy slowly skirted along the wall to the nursery. The cries from her two infants inflicted a deep chill down her spine as she progressed forward. So many questions were running through her mind. What was happening? Are Michael and Sarah okay? Where’s Steve? Is he alright? All these questions she couldn’t answer because honestly, she didn’t know what was happening. Suddenly, a loud thud snapped her back to reality, and she noticed that the picture frames of her and her family that were once on the walls were shattered on the floor with broken glass littering all along the hallway. She did her best to move quickly but silently through the maze of broken glass and picture frames. But just as she got to the nursery she heard a wrinkle under her boot causing her to pause and look at her foot. She quickly moved her foot when she noticed she was stepping on a severely tattered photograph on the floor. She tilted her head and saw it was one of her favorite photos with her, Steve, and her two young infants posing on the couch. Peggy gripped her pistol and turned the corner into the dimly lit nursery and was immediately shocked at what she saw. Peggy’s heart dropped when she saw Steve on the floor leaning against the crib with two gunshot wounds in his chest. He was bleeding severely on the floor and was gasping for air in pain while Sarah Amanda and Michael James continued to sob loudly. Peggy suddenly realized a shadowy figure was standing over the crib and her two crying infants. She quickly raised her pistol and shot without giving the figure a chance. But she missed her mark because the figure vanished before she even pulled the trigger. Peggy lowered her pistol in confusion as she calmed her breathing, cautious of what just occurred. The sound of her twins crying return to fill her ears as she focused back into the present.

Suddenly she heard Steve speak weakly, "Peg…"

Peggy raced to Steve, dropping her pistol on the floor, and kneeling beside him, "Darling, I'm here," she said softly as she applied pressure to his bleeding wounds. In the dim light, she could tell that Steve was pale. She felt a tear run down her cheek at the sight of her husband bleeding in her arms.

"Take care of them for me…” Steve said weakly. "I did my best..."

Peggy started to cry a little harder, "I know you did, darling. And don't you dare talk like that. We're raising them together and we're growing old together. Just like you said."

Steve frowned, "I have to break my promise this time…” He coughed up blood, "I…I love you…” He said as he started to fade away.

Peggy put more pressure on his wound in the futile hopes of stopping the bleeding. "No…Steve, don't you dare."

"Hydra…” Steve said with his dying breath. Just as he said his last word, his body fell limp in Peggy’s arms. She couldn't hold her tears any longer and cried hard into the hair of her dead husband. She kissed the top of his head for the last time overcome with sadness. The sound of her small infant twins crying motivated her to stand up because she knew that her two babies needed her more than ever. She walked over to the opposite side of the crib and lowered the side gate, and bent down to comfort her two crying infants.

Peggy kissed the two of them on the head gently, "It's okay, little ones. Mama is here." She gulped, "Daddy isn't with us anymore and he wants to let you know that he will always love you." She gave a sad smile, "I will take good care of you…”
Peggy, dressed in her rose pink short nightgown, felt a slight nudge on her exposed shoulder causing her to react instinctively and without thinking against the potential threat that woke her from her sleep. She hastily death gripped Steve's wrist and utilized all her body weight and strength to toss him over her shoulder and clear over the bed onto the floor. Then in a split second, she quickly drew her pistol she had hidden in the bed somewhere and got onto her knees and pointed it down at Steve who was left completely surprised on the floor.

In that short second of complete utter surprise, Steve found himself on the floor looking up at Peggy who had a pistol trained at his head. Steve gave a small smile, "Good morning to you too, hon." He let out a light chuckle, "I'm glad you still got it but is the pistol really necessary?" He didn't think he would ever see Peggy pointing a gun at him again since the last time during the war. He gave a sheepish smile, "And happy anniversary."

"OH, MY GOD! Darling! I'm so sorry!" Peggy gasped in absolute shock as she quickly lowered her pistol. As Steve slowly got up, she placed the pistol down on her nightstand and covered her mouth in embarrassment and shock. She looked at Steve with apologetic eyes and said quickly, "I was having a bad dream then suddenly I felt a nudge and something on my face…and I just reacted!" She shook her head as she sat back down on their bed, "I'm so sorry!"

Steve fixed his shirt and tie, and suit pants as he sat next to her, "It's okay, Peggy," he said gently.

Peggy again shook her head, "No, I could've killed you. I just held a gun on you. You. My husband and my love. Again…" she said slightly referencing the time she actually shot at Steve during the war. Luckily that shield which would become his icon protected him. Peggy felt absolutely guilty about it again.

Steve chuckled lightly as he wrapped an around her and brought her close to him, "You know it's not the first time."

Peggy pulled away from Steve and spoke in a tense voice, "this isn't funny, Steve. I seriously could've killed you." She shook her head again, "Oh my God. I'm so sorry, darling."

Steve wrapped his arm around her again, Peggy allowed herself to fall back into his muscular form, "But you didn't, Peggy. And you realized it and better judgement prevailed."

"What if our kids did that, I could've scared them. All because of a bad dream and bloody reflexes," Peggy said softly.

"Peggy, I'm alright. The kids are alright. Everything is okay. We've been married for two years, things like this were bound to happen based off of our personal experiences," Steve said in a comforting tone. He shrugged, "Don't worry about it. Next time I won't wake you up when you're having a bad dream." He smiled at her warmly and planted a soft kiss on her soft brown hair.

Peggy nodded, "I'm still sorry, darling. I just don't want to do that to our kids in the future on accident.

"And you won't because knowing you, you won't ever do anything like that to our kids. You're aware of it now so I know you'll do everything in your power to fix whatever is bothering you," Steve said confidently. Peggy smiled and turned in his grasp to plant a tender kiss on her husband's list. Steve smiled then his voice turned with concern, "Now that I know you had a bad dream…You okay? What was it about? It had to be intense for you to react the way it did."

Peggy nodded, "It…You were murdered by someone in Hydra."
"Me?"

Peggy nodded again, "Your last words were 'Hydra' as you bled in my arms leaving me alone with the crying twins." She started to ramble of the bad dream, "Someone was in the house, strong enough to kill you and quick enough to elude me when I confronted whoever attacked us." She shook her head, "I never saw the person. Just saw our crying babies and my dying husband… Our family was in danger…" Peggy paused at the traumatic dream she had witnessed. Quite honestly, Peggy's worst fear is losing Steve and her kids. The loss of her family is something she couldn't bear to stand.

Steve nodded his head in understanding, he too had his fair share of bad dreams and always had Peggy there to help him through them. He vowed to help her as she did for him. He kissed her temple, "love, it was only a dream. It may not have felt like it then, but you're here with us now. We're safe." He spoke gently to her, "I may not have all the answers or have the definitive resolution to overcome your nightmare but…"

Peggy cut him off and leaned into him, "No, you are the answer." She looked up at him, "when I realized what was going on when I woke up, I instantly felt better when I saw you," she said honestly. She smiled, "Minus the fact I felt instantly bad for pointing a gun at you."

Steve chuckled, "I think we can let that slide."

Peggy continued with comfort in her voice, "I know I could overcome and do anything by myself, but you taught me that I don't always have to. Everything is better when you're around. And all I need is you and our family." She kissed his lips briefly, "As I said, just being with you instantly makes me feel better, darling. Just like how you feel when I comfort you."

Steve smiled and kissed her lips again in response, "I love you."

Peggy smiled back, "I love you too." She leaned deeper into his grip and rested her hand on his muscular chest, "Happy anniversary, darling."

"Happy anniversary," Steve repeated softly. He chuckled, "if you're looking for ways to make up pointing a gun at me again, I do have an idea."

Peggy sat up and looked at him with a mock knowing look, "Hm? And what is that, my dear?"

Steve smiled, "Make anniversary dinner for tonight and a little extra something, something," he said with a chuckle.

Peggy laughed, "I do think I deserve that. Hopefully I don't have to work later than usual, so I don't think it'll be a problem."

Steve laughed, "I was joking, hon. It's our anniversary, so I'll make dinner."

Peggy shook her head in protest, "Steve…"

Steve smiled, "I proposed and knocked you up, it's only fair that I make dinner for our anniversary," he said with a laugh.

Peggy shook her head with a smile, "You ass." She kissed him, "I chose you, so half of all this is my fault," she said with a chuckle. Steve smiled. Peggy nudged him, "You made dinner last year for our anniversary, let me make it this time. How about that? Plus, you do so much for me and the babies as it were I feel like I need to be a better wife."
Steve chuckled, "You're a perfect wife, hon."

Peggy smiled, "So after work, dinner and a relaxing evening? Maybe even go out and see a movie get Kathryn to come back and babysit?"

Kathryn Ottis is the babysitter that Peggy and Steve interviewed at the beginning of March to watch and care for their babies while they were at work. Kathryn Ottis was one of many babysitters that Peggy and Steve interviewed and was the only one who barely made Peggy's standard for a sitter. Of course, Peggy was the one who did most of the interviews and was very strict at the qualification of the sitter and type of person the sitter is. Steve, however, thought the whole detailed interviews of the babysitter was absurd but went with it anyway because he understood that Peggy just wanted to be careful who she chose to watch over their kids, and she was right to be cautious. He's careful too but not to the extent of Peggy's caution. But in the end, they both wanted a good babysitter, and they both feel comfortable that they finally found one. Peggy admitted that Kathryn was the absolute best choice for the person to look over their children when she and Steve went to work.

Steve smiled, "How about we just go out for dinner directly after work and have a relaxing evening out and we just have Kathryn watch them for the day?"

Peggy thought for a moment, "That does sound much easier."

Steve chuckled, "and you can make dinner some other time."

Peggy smiled, "Deal." They shared a quick kiss for a moment. Peggy broke the kiss then quickly looked at the clock on her night stand and saw that it read "6:40." She gasped, "Oh! Shoot! I'm going to be late!" She shot off the bed, "I still got lots to do! I still need to wake and feed Michael and Sarah before Kathryn, and the cars get here." Since Peggy became deputy director of SHIELD, the agency now drives her to and from the headquarters building in a motorcade of three cars for security and because of her rank in the agency.

Steve cut her off and stood up calmly, "Relax, Peggy. I took care of it." He wrapped his arms around the small of her back, "I fed them, changed them, and even played with them for a while before getting tossed by you."

Peggy smiled and relaxed into his grasp, "Oh, thank you, darling. Why am I not surprised?" She gave an apologetic look, "Sorry about that toss."

Steve shrugged with a humorous smile, "Honestly not one of my favorite moves that you can do."

Peggy smiled seductively and stood up on her tip toes and whispered into his ear, "How about tonight after all this I'll do your favorite 'move.'"

Steve chuckled and kissed her lips briefly, "this day just gets better and better."

"Happy anniversary, darling," Peggy replied happily. She then patted her husband on his chest, "Now, I got to get changed for work and get my tea going."

Steve let go and smiled, "Don't worry, I took care of breakfast and made tea for you already." He chuckled, "If you hurry, the tea and breakfast won't be cold."

Peggy smiled and turned for the bathroom, "You're so good to me," she said with a wink. Suddenly they heard their doorbell ring causing Peggy to gasp, "Shoot, Kathryn's here!" She quickly disappeared in the bathroom, "the motorcade won't be far behind!"

Steve laughed, "Better hurry, hon." He turned for the bedroom door, "I'll get the door."
Steve, carrying Sarah Amanda in his arms, quickly opened the front door revealing Kathryn standing pleasantly and patiently at the door. She had her long blonde hair in waves draping her shoulders and wore a light green frock that went just below her knees with a belt wrapping her thin stomach. Steve adjusted Sarah in his arms and smiled, "Kathryn, good morning, thanks for coming. Come on in," he said pleasantly.

Kathryn smiled, "Good morning, Mr. Rogers," she said as she walked into the house.

Steve closed the door behind her with one hand and kissed his eight-month year old daughter on the cheek, "Can you greet, Miss Kathryn with a smile, sweetie?" Sarah only kicked her legs, waved, and babbled happily to greet her babysitter.

Kathryn smiled and leaned forward to the little baby in Steve's arms, "Good morning, pretty girl. It's always a delight to see you and your brother," she said in a cheery tone. Sarah babbled happily again and waved her little arms at her direction.

Sarah and Michael were a shocking eight months already and had been growing up at a considerable rate. The twins can now crawl, pick up toys, and they even have strong grasps with their tiny hands. Because they can now crawl and pick up things, Peggy and Steve had to be extra careful to keep small objects away from their reach that can potentially choke them because whatever they pick up will most likely end up in their mouths. Additionally, Sarah and Michael have more diversity in their food during mealtime and eat little more solid food such as a few fruits and vegetables. They still, however, still drink formula and breast milk but that will soon change as well. On top of eating more variety of food, Sarah and Michael have been very "talkative" the past month with constant babbling especially when they're next to each other. They can now understand the meaning of a few basic words, like "bye-bye" and "milk," and can follow commands such as, "Say hi," or "Wave bye-bye." They have grown considerably in the past few months, and Steve and Peggy have been trying to hold on to every moment they possibly can. Their house is no doubt swarming with photos in frames of family moments as it should be.

Steve smiled at Kathryn, "Sarah is always happy to see you." He kissed Sarah on the cheek, "Michael too of course."

Kathryn chuckled, "I'm always glad to see them too."

Steve turned and walked toward the living room, "Michael is in here in their little play pen." The two stopped by the couch in the living room and smiled down at Michael who was in the playpen on his belly conformably laying on a soft pillow holding onto his favorite stuffed teddy bear. Steve smiled but didn't look at Kathryn, "My wife will be down in a second. She had a late start."

Kathryn smiled, "That's quite alright," she said as she put her purse down on the couch.

Steve walked to the play pen and kissed Sarah on the cheek before putting her down by her twin brother. He then kissed his son gently on the head before standing up, "So they've been changed and fed already so they should have their next meal by 11 or 12." He chuckled, "but you know them, so they might get hungry before that so they might need a little 'snack' before then."

Kathryn nodded, "I'll take great care of them," she said with a warm smile.

Steve smiled back, "I know you will." He laughed as he looked down at his babies, "It's funny how much they can eat. Good lord, can they eat. It's almost like they're abnormal."

Kathryn chuckled, "I assure you they aren't abnormal. Their just babies. Babies love to eat as much
as they like to cry."

Steve chuckled, "True that."

Peggy, with her long brown wavy hair draping her shoulders, entered the living room dressed nicely in a red blouse, black business skirt, and black heels with her black suit jacket draped over her arm, her favorite brown purse across her body, and a black SHIELD briefcase in hand. She stopped by the couch and smiled, "Sorry, I didn't greet you sooner Kathryn, I'm running awfully late."

Kathryn chuckled, "It's quite alright."

Peggy smiled, "Okay so, Steve already fed and..."

Kathryn smiled and touched Peggy's arm gently, "Your husband already told me."

Peggy smiled and looked at Steve, "Did he tell you about tonight?"

Kathryn raised an eyebrow, "What about tonight?"

Steve chuckled, "I was getting to that."

Peggy laughed and looked over at Kathryn, "Well, it's our anniversary."

Kathryn smiled happily, "Awe! Congratulations you two."

Peggy smiled, "Thank you, Kathryn. So, if you don't mind watching them a little longer this evening, Steve and I will be out a little late to celebrate. We can pay you extra since we're..."

Kathryn raised a hand, "Say no more, Mrs. Rogers. You don't need to pay me extra. I love babysitting Sarah and Michael. They're always so wonderful." She smiled, "Just have a great evening."

Peggy smiled, "Thank you, Kathryn." Suddenly Peggy saw a group of three black cars pull up to the curb through the window which meant her ride was here to drive her to SHIELD. She nodded, "Just in time," she chuckled. "Thank you, Kathryn. I have to go."

Steve nodded, "As should I." Though Steve and Peggy end up in the same place at work, they go separately because they don't always go home at the same time. So, while Peggy leaves by motorcade, Steve either drives the car or his motorcycle to work and sometimes stops by at a coffee shop to pick up some coffee before checking in at the SHIELD headquarters in the city. But there have been a few times Steve and Peggy go home together when they leave work around the same time.

Kathryn nodded, "Enjoy your date," she said with a smile.

Peggy smiled, "Thank you, Kathryn." She stepped over to Steve and kissed him on the lips briefly, "See you later?"

Steve smiled, "Definitely. Have a good day at work, beautiful."

Peggy smiled, "You too. I love you," she said as she turned to the door.

"I love you too," Steve said staying behind for a moment.

Steve turned to Kathryn, "If you need anything, just give our work a call."
Kathryn nodded, "You got it." With that Steve turned for the door, grabbed his shield by the console table, and left his house and his kids behind with the trusted babysitter.

Peggy walked down the short steps off the porch, down the path, passing the front yard maple tree toward the awaiting motorcade at the curb on the other side of her fence. As Peggy reached the cars, she turned around and saw Steve finally stepping out the house with his shield in one hand. She waved at her husband one last time as she opened the car door, "see you later, my darling."

Steve smiled, "See you later, Peg." He held up his hand which showed car keys, "I'll take care of your baby," he said humorously about his wife's car.

Peggy shook her head with a smile, "You better." She waved goodbye one last time and stepped into the car and closed the door. As soon as she closed the door, her motorcade pulled away from the curb and headed directly to the SHIELD HQ in the city.

Steve held a purely happy smile as he calmly walked to the sidewalk to pick up the newspaper. Not in a million years did he think he would end up with this good of a life. From being a poor ninety-pound asthmatic soaking wet who a lady wouldn't even think about dance with, to being a super soldier with a family. Of course, they aren't living a normal life, but he wouldn't change it. He tucked the newspaper under his arm and calmly walked to Peggy's dark blue Chevy and got ready to drive to work...

Time Square, New York City, SHIELD: AEGIS HEADQUARTERS

Peggy's motorcade entered the SHIELD HQ parking garage which is located adjacent to the HQ building and spanned five levels below street level and didn't interfere with the NYC subway and the other subterranean levels of SHIELD. The parking garage itself has extremely tight security, continuously monitored by roving security personnel, and a new Stark Industries security system complete with automated retractable barriers, gates, and blast shields. The security is so tight that Phillips often jokes that the White House and the Pentagon security is only a fraction of what SHIELD has. Peggy's motorcade stopped at the doors labeled BG1 or Basement Garage Level 1 where Rose stood at the curb waiting patiently with a folder black business folder.

Once the motorcade stopped the SHIELD agents, dressed in uniform black suits and ties, in the first and last cars stepped out and calmly but quickly formed a half circle perimeter around the cars to protect Peggy as per SHIELD VIP protocol. At the moment, the agents formed their perimeter Peggy stepped out of the car and greeted Rose her secretary. Peggy often believed that Rose deserved a job outside of being a "telephone operator" for the SSR and gave Rose a choice where to work and Rose hastily volunteered to be her secretary. Peggy couldn't refuse and even felt endeared by Rose wanting to work for her because that meant she can see and work with her friend. Peggy smiled at Rose, "Good morning, Rose."

Rose smiled, "Good morning, Director," she said out of respect for Peggy's title and professionalism.

Peggy smiled and nodded to her driver, "Thank you, Floyd. You don't need to drive me tonight; my husband will be picking me up."

Floyd, her driver, nodded, "understood, Director."

With that Peggy and Rose turned and headed to the clean glass doors that lead to the elevators. The two ladies stepped through the doors and Rose immediately stepped in front of Peggy and called for the "up" elevator. Peggy looked at Rose, "Anything I need to know today?"
"Director Phillips is here to see you," Rose said calmly.

The "up" elevator dinged and the sliding door opened in front of the ladies, "He's here now?" Peggy said surprised as she stepped into the elevator. She pushed the button labeled "19" which is the top floor where her office is located.

Rose nodded, "He arrived shortly before you did."

As the elevator started to rise, Peggy responded calmly, "hope I didn't keep him waiting. Is there anything else? Any reports from our agents in the Berlin situation and Greece?" On top of SHIELD conducting several espionage operations against Leviathan and other Soviet agencies in Berlin during the Soviet Berlin Blockade, Peggy initiated several clandestine operations in support of the Greek government in their fight against the Greek Communist Party. In other words, Greece is in a violent Civil War against Communism.

Rose nodded, "You have many reports on your desk, Peg."

Peggy smiled, "Thank you, Rose."

"Of course," Rose said cheerfully. She smiled at her friend, "Like your suit by the way…and happy anniversary," she said letting her professionalism drop for a moment since they were in private in the elevator.

Peggy smiled, "Thank you." She chuckled, "Surprised you remembered my anniversary, to be honest."

Rose chuckled, "I wouldn't if I didn't have it written down on the calendar."

"You have it written down on your calendar?" Peggy said in surprise.

Rose chuckled, "Of course I do. Your big day was a big deal for me." Peggy chuckled in response.

At the top floor, the elevator doors slid open, and the two ladies stepped out at the same time into a wide waiting room with a long wood half circle desk in the middle, "Well, thank you, Rose. I'll let you know if there's anything else." In addition to the wood desk in the middle, the waiting room had a large clock on the wall behind the desk, three couches along the walls directly to the left of the elevator, and a large window to show time square to the right. The room much like of the rest of the building had smooth old growth hardwood wall paneling giving a very modern feel to it.

Rose smiled, "I'll be here if you need anything," she said heading to the desk at the center of the room. With that Peggy walked to the left of the desk and down the long hallway to her office. Peggy walked down the hallway with her heels clicking on the hard floor, passing the large windowed walls of the conference room on her left then turned right at the far end of the hallway to her office door. As she pushed open her office door, she instantly spotted Director Phillips in a black suit looking down at Time Square from her office window behind her desk.

Peggy's office is rather spacious with her desk located front and center of the row of rather large and tall windows. To the right of her desk under one of the windows are a row of filing cabinets, and to the left against the wall are a row of tall bookshelves housing books, binders, other unclassified material, and a reinforced safe on the bottom shelf of one of the bookshelves. In front of her desk are two chairs for visitors, and behind them is a sitting area complete with three leather two-seater sofas forming a C-shape over a large white fluffy rug with a glass coffee table at the center of the C-shape. Of course, there are plenty of additional décor in her office, including recent SHIELD awards, pictures of her taken in SHIELD, and photos taken with the President and other government
officials. Her office also has a few plants she takes care of during the week. Naturally, her desk has pictures of Steve and her family.

The sound of Peggy opening the door prompted Phillips to turn around. He greeted her with a welcome smile, "Ah, Peggy, Good morning."

Peggy walked into her office toward her desk, "sorry I'm late, Director."

Phillips chuckled, "I didn't wait long. You aren't usually late anyway, so you probably have a good reason."

Peggy put her briefcase next to her desk then removed her purse and placed it on the file cabinet behind her desk, "It is I assure you. It's my second anniversary with Steve."

Phillips smiled, "Already? Seems like it was a lot shorter since I've been to your wedding."

Peggy smiled, "Yes, it is." She chuckled, "Sometimes feels like it," she said as she stepped behind her desk so she was closer to him. She noticed a stack of files on her desk that she assumed were the reports Rose mentioned she left for her to read.

Phillips took a look at his friend and gave a warm smile, "I see why you were late now. I know he didn't forget and probably did something nice," he said referring to Steve.

Peggy smiled happily, "That he did. He's so sweet," she said genuinely. Phillips raised an eyebrow in a knowing look. Peggy caught the look, "No, nothing like that, Director," she said in defense.

Phillips gave a light chuckle, "I'm only joking, Peggy. Happy anniversary."

"Thank you, Director," Peggy replied warmly.

Phillips turned, "good, well let's get to business," he said as he sat down on one of the chairs in front of Peggy's desk.

Peggy sat down at her desk as Phillips reached into his briefcase at his side and removed a stack of files. "What is it?" Peggy asked, seeing another stack of files she will most likely have to read today.

Phillips handed Peggy the stack of files, "Vice President wants more ex-Nazi and ex-Hydra scientists to aid us to defeat the Russians in this new arms race in the Cold War." Peggy moved the reports Rose left on her desk to the side to make space for the new files Phillips handed her, then immediately sifted through them as Phillips spoke. "As you know one of our biggest fears is the Soviets obtaining nuclear weapons. It's simply not a question of 'if' but a question of 'when.'" Phillips leaned back in his chair, "After the Stark Case you know there are far more worse weapons in Starks mind. Anyway, you also know Hydra had some of the most advanced weaponry we ever encountered. If weapons like that fell into Soviet hands there's no telling what can happen."

Peggy closed the files, "I see what you're getting at."

Phillips lifted a hand, "let me finish. We need to interview the ranking imprisoned Hydra members in the Delta Prison to see if they want to work for us in exchange for their freedom." He reached into his briefcase one last time and took out one last file and dropped it in front of Peggy, "list of war criminals we need interviewed asap," he said emphasizing the words "war criminals" betraying his true feelings of the task to his subordinate and friend.

Peggy opened the new file, "I don't like this. These men are war criminals for a reason. Some massacred towns, villages, and scores of surrendering men."
Phillips nodded, "I don't like it any more than you do."

Peggy squinted sharply at one name. Former Hydra General Werner Reinhardt was on the list. She scowled at the name. Peggy remembered his cruel experiments to wrongfully imprisoned innocent people, including children, crazy experiments with strange objects she and Stark don't rightfully understand, and numerous other crimes against humanity. Immediately after the war, she made sure he went to prison for his crimes and remained there for the rest of his life. She was immediately angered that the government is thinking about releasing him. Peggy looked up and spoke sternly, "I'll interview them myself. Can't trust anyone else for this, except for my husband. But no offense to him, he isn't exactly good with these types of things."

Phillips smiled, "Hoping you'd volunteer so I didn't have to ask you to go. I don't trust anyone else with this." He nodded, "When you go to the Delta Prison, bring four agents with you for extra security."

Peggy nodded, "understood. It's almost like you don't trust the guards at the Delta Prison."

"I don't. Hydra plays to our vulnerabilities and they are a very opportunistic enemy. We already know they like to attack where we think we're safe," Phillips said in a serious tone.

"Understood," Peggy said taking what he said to heart.

"That's about it, Director Rogers. Let me know when you're done with those interviews and report your findings. You should be able to knock 'em all out today," Phillips said as he stood up prompting Peggy to do the same. Phillips raised his finger, "one last thing. I know you're thorough, but don't let any of them get an easy pass." To the untrained ear and someone who didn't understand the dynamics and implicit communication between Phillips and Peggy, one can assume that Phillips simply told Peggy to not go easy on the interviews. But there was definitely more to that sentence than what was said.

Peggy nodded, "I'll take care of it."

Phillips shakes her hand, "I know you will. Give Steve my best, and happy anniversary."

Peggy smiled, "I will and thank you, Director."

"One last thing, I'll be back this evening for a debrief of how it goes. I'll be back around five or six," Phillips said as he let go of Peggy's hand.

Peggy smiled, "Sounds good." With that Phillips took his leave and left her office.

Once Phillips left her office, Peggy sat back down then picked up her phone and paged Rose, "Rose, get me the SPU, please."

After a moment, Peggy hears the line connect and instantly hears Dugan's voice on the other end of the phone, "Howling Cave of Pain," he answers humorously. Peggy smiles at the humor of her friend.

In the background, she heard Falsworth scold Dugan, "will you stop answering the phone with that. We aren't the Commandos anymore, we're the SPU."

Sawyer chimed in with his usual negative tone, "Yeah, soon Director Rogers will stop sending us on missions and instead send us for tea and coffee."

Dugan retorted, "she got Steve for that."
Peggy sighed, "BOYS!" she yelled on the phone.

"Sorry, Peg." Dugan replied.

Peggy ran a hand through her hair, "Did Steve arrive yet?"

There was a brief pause before Dugan responded which meant he had to check. "Yeah, he just arrived, need him?" he said.

Peggy smiled, "Yes, send him up to my office, please."

"ooooohhhhh," Dugan emphasized.

Peggy knew what he was implying, "Dum Dum…" she said in a mock cold tone.

"Sorry, I'll get him for you," Dugan said quickly.

"Thank you," she said before she hung up the phone.

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**SPU Team Room**

The SPU (Special Purpose Unit) Team Room is practically in the basement of SHIELD but is very large to suit its purpose as both a preparation area and a strategic planning area. Though it's called the "SPU Team Room" it actually consists of multiple rooms. The "team room" is complete with a spacious locker room and lounge as the main room, an adjacent secured armory separate of other SHIELD armories in the building, strategy room, and a rather spacious SPU only gym. The locker room is very open with dozens of new lockers on one half of the room, and the other half is a sitting area complete with couches, armchairs, tables, radio, and chalkboards. The locker room is essentially both a lounge and a locker room though the lounge functioned much like a strategy/meeting room for tactical mission planning. To prevent the room from smelling, Steve has the team do its absolute best to keep it neat and clean. The armory in the adjacent room is secured by a 5-inch reinforced blast door, reinforced armored inner walls, key-pad protected, and time lock. Behind the reinforced doors and walls, the SPU armory houses a variety of deadly weapons from rifles, submachine guns, machine guns, rocket launchers, and specially designed weapons from Stark Industries. The gym, located behind the locker room, has arguably every piece of workout equipment capable of sustaining Captain America's workout regimen for extended periods of time.

Steve entered the SPU Team room and greeted his team with a confident smile, "Morning, Fellas," he said as he made his way to his locker which was toward the front of the locker room. The team greeted him in return with their usual enthusiastic energy including the three new agents who were still learning the dynamics of the team. Much of the SPU team is dispersed around the lounge area talking amongst themselves or in the locker room preparing for the day ahead. Steve stopped at his locker and placed his shield down by the bench behind him then started to unlock his locker.

Dugan came by from the lounge and leaned against the wall of lockers next to Steve, "Hey, Cap. Peggy needs you at her office."

Steve opened his locker exposing dozens of photographs of Peggy and his family taped to the inside of the locker door, "Now?"

Dugan nodded, "Yeah, now."

Steve nodded, "Hm. I'll be there shortly then." It had to be something important concerning SHIELD business because he literally just saw his wife an hour ago when they left for work together.
Jim appeared around the end of the lockers behind Dugan, "What did you do this time, Cap?"

Steve chuckled, "What do you mean this time? She's probably calling me because of you slackers."

Sawyer called out from his chair in the lounge, "It's Dugan's fault."

Dugan turned around and scowled, "Sawyer, you're killing me with this negativity."

Junior, who was sitting next to Sawyer responded in favor of him, "Yeah, Dum Dum never answers the phone correctly."

"That means I just have a sense of humor, fellas," Dugan responded earning a chuckle from Jim and Steve.

Steve turned to his locker and started to undo his tie, "Well, I'll find out once I'm done getting my gear together." He removed his tie and shrugged, "She might be giving us a new mission. You guys ever think of that?"

Falsworth, who was sitting on another armchair reading a magazine, raised an eyebrow, "That sounds about right." He chuckled, "why are we even making such a big deal about this."

Gabe, who was reading a book on one of the couches in the center of the room next to one of the new guys, spoke without looking from his book, "Because Dugan was the one who answered the phone."

Pinkerton laughed, "That's the reason right there."

Dugan raised a brow, "OR…she's asking about dinner plans for tonight," he said observing the family pictures on the inside of Steve's locker door.

Steve began unbuttoning his shirt, "nah, we talked about that already."

"That's a nice one of Peggy and your two babies, Cap," Dugan said mentioning a black and white photo that Steve took of Peggy smiling happily holding both Michael and Sarah in her arms on the couch.

Steve looked at the photo and smiled, "Yeah, that's one of my favorites. Aren't the three of them beautiful?" he said proudly.

Dugan chuckled, "Definitely." He nodded at Steve, "So you two going on a date tonight?"

Steve removed his shirt and hung it in his locker, "close, it's our anniversary." Suddenly the whole lounge and locker room let out a series of enthusiastic comments and happy cheers for their leader and friend.

Jim smiled, "You've been married for what, two years?"

Steve smiled, "Two happy years, already two kids, and many more happy years to come," he said as he took out his stars and stripes combat uniform.

Falsworth chuckled, "and more kids to come?"

Steve smiled, "Maybe," he said not going into detail of his last comment. He started to put his uniform on, "Thanks, fellas. I'll go see what she needs."

Sawyer commented calmly, "Good luck."
Dugan laughed, "What does he need that for? He already knows she's a hellcat at work and at home."

Jacques spoke up in his usual thick French accent, "Oh Captain, Director Phillips was here earlier."

"Hm," Steve hummed as he finished putting his gear on. "He must've been here for something important, and probably why Peggy asked for me. I'll let you boys know what Peg needs."

Jim nodded, "Got it."

After a few more minutes Steve finished gathering his gear, leaving his shield in his locker, and left
the team room to meet with Peggy on the top floor. The three new guys to the team stood around the
radio and watched the Captain leave the room. One of the new guys by the name of Samuel Ward, a
former Marine Raider who served in the Pacific, spoke up, "I realize, he's not like most officers," he
said calmly. He chuckled, "He acts more like a big brother than one of those usual know it all
officers." Ward had short dark black hair, clean shaven, and wore a well pressed black suit like many
other agents in SHIELD.

Gabe smiled and put his book down, "That's why we like him so much."

The other new member, James T. Wheatley known as "Wheat" from the Howling Commandos a
former Army Ranger with brown hair joined the conversation, "Where did he meet the director?"

"Yeah, she's really easy on the eyes. A real beauty if you ask me," said John Terselic, the third new
member of the Commandos, an Italian-American who served as a US Army Pathfinder in Europe.

Dugan spoke sternly as he leaned up against a locker, "Better watch what you say next, boy. Not
only is Peggy our boss but she deserves tremendous respect."

Jim spoke up in defense next to Dugan, "We served with her in Europe and she fought as well as
any man. So, be careful with what you say about her." Falsworth rose his cup of tea in support of
Dugan and Jim.

John rose his hands in defense, "I meant nothing by it. I meant to compliment her. Captain Rogers is
a very lucky man," he said worried that he angered the team.

Gabe nodded, "Good answer."

Dugan then decided to finally answer Wheats question, "They met when he first joined the Army,
but nothing significant happened between them until we attacked Hydra headquarters in '45. The
same day he disappeared for a while" He chuckled, "We knew way before either of them realized it
that there was something between them. We all knew Captain Rogers had something for, at the time,
Agent Carter, and we even knew she felt something for him too." He chuckled, "We gave them a
nudge here and there…"

Jim sighed, "Luckily, Stark found the Captain when he was lost in the Arctic, and everything worked
out in the end." He laughed, "Now look at them. All happy and stuff."

Dugan nodded, "Yeah. It all worked out…"

Wheat smiled, "Yeah, I'm glad did," he said in agreement.

Ward chuckled, "Can you, those who are the original commandos, imagine serving under someone
else?" The original Howling Commandos let out a collective, "No," in response. Though it's been a
few years since the end of the war, the publics interest of Steve and Peggy's relationship hasn't
dissipated. Steve is still a celebrated famed war hero, so, for the time being, he is treated much like a celebrity since the war is fresh on everyone's mind.

Jacques smiled, "As you said, Ward, not like most officers."

Dugan sat down on the couch, "He's the God we pray to on the battlefield, the man who fights alongside us, and proud to call him our leader and brother." The three new guys smiled. Dugan smiled confidently, "do as he says and trust him. He's never wrong."

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**Peggy's Office**

Steve walked into Peggy's office calmly, dressed in his stars and stripes combat uniform ready to tackle any mission he's assigned, "Director, you needed to see me," he says professionally as he shut the office door behind him.

Peggy rolled her eyes and chuckled, "Darling, you're my husband and in my office, you don't need to be too professional with me." She walked around her desk to meet Steve halfway, "Plus, a husband can still show affection to his wife as long as it isn't over the top," she said with a loving smile.

Steve laughed and met Peggy in the middle of the office, "Shield has ears everywhere."

Peggy rolled her eyes then wrapped her arms around her husband and planted a kiss on his lips, "you're unbelievable sometimes, Steve," she said after breaking the kiss.

Steve chuckled and kissed Peggy one more time, "I'm sure you didn't call me up here for a kiss. Though it's nice."

Peggy smiled, "Yes, well, I miss you during work. Can you blame me? Separated by nineteen floors." She chuckled, "One last thing before I reluctantly let you go, Phillips wishes us a happy anniversary," she said with a happy smile.

Steve looked surprised, "he remembered our anniversary?"

Peggy waved her hand, "I don't know, he'd just clever like that. You know how he is." Steve simply shrugged with a wide smile. She then finally reluctantly let go of her husband, "Well back to business, the reason I called you up is for more of a topic of personnel." With that, Peggy turned around and walked back to her desk and sat down in her chair prompting Steve to follow and sit at one of the chairs facing her.

Steve nodded, "So, what are we talking about?"

Peggy leaned forward and frowned, "Director Phillips was here and asked me to interview former ranking Hydra personnel in the Delta Maximum Security Prison to see if they're willing to aid us in the Cold War and swear loyalty to the United States."

Steve sighed, "I don't like that idea…after all these insider attacks they still want us to have them work for us."

Peggy nodded, "I don't like the idea either. But that's why Phillips asked for me. He knows I won't let them go easy…probably won't let them even breathe freedom ever again. I fully intend not to let anymore Hydra operatives gain the ability to do anymore insider attacks." She sighed, "The damage they've done and they have the potential of doing is a risk not worth taking to recruit them."
Steve smiled, "I agree." He raised an eyebrow, "But what do you need me for?"

Peggy nodded, "Right, I need to go to the SHIELD Delta Prison and I was told to bring extra security of four additional agents into the prison. Think I can grab two of your precious commandos?"

"Ha, precious," he chuckled in response. "Dugan would love to hear that," Steve said with a grin. He leaned back in his chair and nodded, "But all seriousness, no problem. You can take the whole team if it means you'll be safe." Peggy smiled lovingly at her husband's overprotectiveness. She couldn't help but to adore that of him even though he knew she could take care of herself. "You can grab Jim and Pinkerton as security."

Peggy nodded, "Now darling, the reason I didn't ask you is because I got a mission for your team." She chuckled, "Believe me, if I had you, I wouldn't need four agents for security…"

Steve smiled, "I know you have a reason for everything." He nodded, "What do you got for us?"

Peggy picked up a file off her desk and reached over her desk to hand to Steve. Steve leaned forward and took the file as Peggy started to give him a brief synopsis of his task, "Suspected undercover cell of Leviathan operates at a warehouse by pier 94." She leaned back in her chair, "Investigate the warehouse. If you have reason to believe that the individuals working in the warehouse are Leviathan then you're clear to go in and arrest anyone involved." She smiled confidently, "I'm sure I don't have to tell you to capture any important documents."

Steve nodded, "You can count on us."

"Thank you, Darling. See you tonight?" Peggy said with a loving smile.

Steve chuckled, "No doubt." He nodded in her direction, "Who else are you bringing?"

Peggy smiled, "Why, worried about your wife?"

"Ha. I'm always worried for my wife," Steve responded cheekily. He turned serious, "But seriously. Who else are you taking?"

"Thompson and Ramirez." Peggy sighed, "Always expecting trouble from Hydra. There is no telling what they can do."

Steve nodded, "That's for sure." He then stood up and gave his wife a kind smile, "See you tonight, hon." Peggy responded with an affectionate smile.

Just as Steve was about to step out of her office Peggy called out to him, "You make sure Jim and Pinkerton wear business attire, no combat uniforms!"

Steve stopped and turned around with a smile, "Yes, dear," he said affectionately.

Peggy's motorcade consisting of three cars drove down a quiet windy forested road in upstate New York on the way to the SHIELD Delta Maximum Security Prison. The motorcade seemed to be in the middle of nowhere with nothing to be seen for miles but dense green forests and rolling hills. The lead vehicle and rear vehicle had the same security team Peggy always traveled with, in addition to Pinkerton, but her vehicle now carried herself, Jim, Thompson, and Ramirez who replaced Floyd as her driver for this trip. The motorcade continued down the seemingly never-ending stretch of road of rural New York until they finally came upon the first turn away for over fifty miles. The trio of vehicles turned right down the two-lane forested road and immediately came upon a checkpoint with
a guard house and a metal gate. Peggy's motorcade is now on the final stretch to the SHIELD maximum-security prison.

The "Delta Prison," as its simply called, was built to house traitors, terrorists, spies, dangerous individuals, and war criminals that SHIELD and the US government deemed too dangerous or committed extremely heinous crimes against humanity to be housed in other federal prisons. Many of the prisoners are Hydra, Leviathan operatives, Soviet spies, Nazis, and American citizens who were caught spying or sabotaging for Nazi Germany or the Soviet Union. The prison is about thirteen miles off the main road and carved out a 40-acre portion of the forest away from any source of civilization. The prison is built in an octagonal shape with tall reinforced concrete walls, razor wire, and towers with one main gate meaning only one-way in and out. In the interior of the walls, the prison has one central octagonal building with multiple arms as housing units for the prisoners. The central structure had six floors while the arms of the structure had two-four floors. The prison has 1400 remote-controlled blast doors, 500 guards, and staff, and was designed so that the prisoner has no knowledge where he or she is in the facility. The guards also monitor the prisoners 24-hours a day and have random patrols throughout the prison.

Peggy's motorcade passed through the checkpoint without issue and proceeded down the road to the main gate. "Here's the deal," Peggy began to speak to her additional security team from her seat in the back. "Need one commando and one agent outside the interrogation room and the other two with me inside at all times." She spoke firmly, "We know how incredibly deceptive Hydra is, so don't let your guard down."

Jim who sat next to Peggy in the back seat nodded at her, "No worries, Peggy. We don't trust them either."

Thompson nodded from the front seat , "That's right," he said from the front passenger seat.

Peggy smiled confidently, "Good. Then, I want Thompson and Jim in interrogation with me." She looked over at Ramirez in the driver seat, "Ramirez and Pinkerton posted outside the room."

Jim nodded, "I'll let Pinkerton know when we get to the prison." He paused for a moment then turned to Peggy, "Hey… isn't this the prison that someone shot Zola and that one Russian guy?"

Thompson spoke up, "yeah, even with such tight security someone was still able to get in and kill both of them."

Peggy looked out the window, "More like executed. This is why we shouldn't take chances regardless of how much security is in the prison," she said looking back at her new security team. Peggy looked through the windshield and saw that they were quickly approaching the main gate of the prison that was located just outside the tall prison walls. She could see the final hundred yards of road behind the main gate that contained numerous barriers that approaching vehicles had to slowly weave through in order to get to the prison. She spoke up again in a strict voice, "Remember, trust no one from Hydra regardless of their sob story."

Thompson agreed, "No doubt."

Jim smiled, "I'd just kill them but somehow that's not the right thing to do…"

Peggy's motorcade passed through the main gate quickly then proceeded to slowly weave through the barriers that were designed to prevent unauthorized vehicles from breaking through to the prison. On either side of the road are broad and deep anti-vehicle ditches in case a car swerved off the way to get around to the prison. If an unauthorized vehicle or truck tried to swerve off the road
intentionally, it would be trapped in the ditch rendering the vehicle immobile.

Peggy's motorcade made it past the barriers, through the tall walls of the prison, and pulled up in front of the primary entrance of the central structure. Her car came to a complete stop in front of tall armored double doors that lead into the prison itself. In front of the main entrance there stood four SHIELD guards in grey uniforms and black hats, and a man dressed in a fancy grey suit. The moment the motorcade stopped, the security team in the first and last vehicle, including Pinkerton, stepped out of their cars and automatically formed a circle perimeter around the cars to protect Peggy as per VIP protocol. Her security team, outside of Pinkerton, did this as if it was second nature to them. Right after the security perimeter was established, Thompson stepped out the car and opened Peggy's door prompting the rest of the commandos to step out at the same time as Peggy.

Peggy stepped out of the car and fixed her gaze on the man in the grey suit who looked to be important. The man stood straight and greeted her, "Good morning, Director."

Peggy nodded, "Good morning," she said plainly as Thompson, Ramirez, Pinkerton, and Jim joined her by her side.

The man stepped forward, "Ma'am, I'm Warden Curtin, I'm in charge of security, safeguard, and operations in the prison." He looked around at the numerous SHIELD agents surrounding Peggy, "As this is a maximum-security prison I don't think you need this much security."

Peggy nodded, "I appreciate the concern, Warden, but let me worry about my own security, thank you."

Curtin nodded, "Of course."

"Do you know why I'm here?" Peggy asked in plain speak.

Curtin nodded, "Yes, director."

Peggy nodded, "Then let's get to business."

"Follow me, Ma'am," Curtin said respectfully.

Peggy turned to her main security team, "stay here, I'll take these four with me," she said referring Jim, Pinkerton, Thompson, and Ramirez.

"Yes, Director," said one agent.

With that Peggy and her four-additional security followed Curtin into the main building of the Delta Prison. As they walked through the doors, Peggy noticed that the lobby had four guards, two additional guard posts, and a front desk. Past the front desk are two security checkpoints with chain-link gates for authorized personnel to go through.

Curtin stopped at the front desk to talk to the men at the desk, "Need four authorization passes with level 5 clearance. Director Rogers is here."

The men at the desk went wide eye for a moment before quickly responding to the Warden's request. One of the men at the desk spoke up quickly, "Are they carrying weapons, sir?"

Curtin turned around and glanced at Peggy and entourage briefly then turned back to the desk, "Yeah, their carrying."

"Understood, sir," the man said. He peered over to look at Peggy, "May I see some ID, Ma'am?"
Curtin turned to Peggy, "Just for security, Ma'am," he said explaining to her the reason.

Peggy stepped closer to the front desk, grabbed her ID from her purse, and showed the men at the desk, "I understand perfectly," she said evenly. The other four agents and commandos accompanying her quickly took out their wallets and flashed the men their ID.

The men at the desk nodded in approval of the identification as they stamped five passes then handed them to Curtin. "They're good to go, sir," one of them said.

Curtin turned around and handed Peggy, Jim, Pinkerton, Thompson, and Ramirez their passes. He nodded, "We won't send you through security, these passes are for the benefit of my men guarding the prison. It lets them know you're authorized to be here." He turned to one of the guards at one of the guard posts, "Sergeant Cooper, please escort Director Rogers to the interrogation room on level five."

Sergeant Cooper stood up from his desk, "Yes, sir."

Curtin nodded, "She has a list of prisoners she needs to interrogate, make sure she gets whoever and whatever she wants here."

Sergeant Cooper walked around his desk and stepped in front of Peggy and her entourage, "Yes, sir," he responded almost robotically.

Warden Curtain looked back at Peggy, "Director, Sergeant Cooper will get you whoever and whatever you need for your interrogations of the prisoners. I need to attend to operations of the prison, if you need anything let Sergeant Cooper know and I'll be happy to make it happen."

"Thank you, Warden," Peggy responded briskly. She turned to Sergeant Cooper, "Let's get this started."

1200 (12PM)

Pier 94, New York City

The Howling Commandos or officially now known as the SPU Strike Team lead by Steve approached the warehouse on the pier from their trucks parked down the street. They were all dressed in full battle rattle with everyone carrying Thompson submachine guns except Steve who was equipped with his shield and his usual .45 pistol. Though it was another bright July day, the commandos managed to sneak through the tall perimeter chain-link fence of the pier and use the tall rows of containers and crates as cover and concealment as they moved closer the warehouse. As the team of twelve slowly made their way toward the warehouse, Steve halted them at the end of a row of crates to do a quick peek of the target building. He slowly peered around the crate and saw the tall warehouse doors with a large freight truck and trailer parked in front of it guarded by four men with an assortment of rifles and automatic weapons, and numerous other men roving around the building and pier with firearms. Steve noted that the men are dressed like ordinary civilian dock workers, but the fact they were carrying military grade weapons did not bode well with his gut. His orders from Peggy were to investigate to see if they were Leviathan but from observation alone, he can't tell if these men were Leviathan or a smuggling ring by the dock.

Dugan whispered behind Steve, "What's the word, Cap? These jokers the Reds?"

Steve looked back at him, "Either these guys are Leviathan, or we just stumbled upon another crime syndicate smuggling ring."
Gabe whispered, "well, this won't be the first time we took down a smuggling ring in the area."

Sawyer nodded, "Yeah but those groups were tied to Leviathan, and we had actual knowledge of it. Our orders this time is to investigate."

Suddenly the group heard a car entering the Pier; Wheat spoke up, "Hey, car coming into the pier," he said as he saw a black car drive slowly down the road toward the warehouse.

Steve peered around the container again just as the black car stopped next to the cargo truck. A man in a suit got out of the back seat of the car with his back turned preventing Steve from seeing his face. The four guards by the truck and entrance of the warehouse looked to be talking to the unknown man and appeared to be waiting for something to happen, but Steve couldn't tell what. Suddenly he spotted a new man with bleach blonde hair emerge from the warehouse with a clipboard in hand and a leather bag in another.

Steve pulled out his binoculars from his war belt to get a better look and immediately saw the blonde man hand over the bag to the unknown figure. The unknown character nodded and opened the bag revealing a bag full of money. Steve turned to his team, "Right time, right place. We just stumbled on a transaction of some kind. Still, no clue if these guys are Leviathan." Just as he looked into his binoculars again, he saw two men step out from the back of the truck carrying a silver metal crate with the Hydra symbol stamped on the side. He looked over at Dugan, "That answers that. They got crates with the Hydra symbol painted on the side..."

Dugan whispered, "What is the transaction?"

Steve looked down his binoculars again but couldn't tell what was being shown because the crate is behind the car which blocked his view. "The crate is behind the car. I can't tell," Steve said. He turned to his team, "This is reason enough. Hydra material is being bought and sold, and whether these guys are Leviathan or not, those crates are of interest to SHIELD which means we are within our rights to go in. We're no longer investigating and we're now seizing any and all Hydra material and important documents in the area of this pier and warehouse."

Terselic smiled, "let's do it."

Steve nodded, "B-team flank around the front, stay out of sight and seal the exits. A-team with me." His team nodded in acknowledgement of his commands without hesitation. "DO NOT engage until B-team is in position," he stressed. He leaned forward and put his binoculars away in his war belt, "be prepared to take prisoners." He looked over at Gabe, "Gabe radio when you're in position, go."

Gabe nodded, "Got it. Ward, Terselic, Jacques, and Happy Sam, follow me," he said as he quietly got up and left the group with his team in tow down the direction they came originally.

Steve removed his shield from his back and got ready for a fight he knew that would ensue.

Dugan whispered to Steve, "Do you think they'll go down without a fight and just surrender?"

Steve chuckled, "Why you want them to? Never thought you wouldn't want to fight."

"I'm hoping they won't. Just don't want to put my hopes up," Dugan responded with a cocky grin.

Falsworth chuckled, "We're men without a war, gentlemen," he said jokingly.

Steve smiled confidently at Falsworth, "There's always someone else to fight." He looked ahead and fixed his helmet with his free hand, "Just be ready." No one in the team knew whether he was talking about the fight ahead of them or to be prepared for a future war. But regardless of the last
SHIELD Delta Maximum Security Prison

Peggy sighed as she leaned back on her chair as yet another Hydra prisoner was taken out of the interrogation room by a guard to go back to his cell. The iron door closed in front of her as she ran a hand through her long brown hair. She spoke up as she placed a single pen at the center of the table and closed the file in front of her, "What do you two think?" She asked Jim and Thompson who were positioned in front her flanking the door. They've spent all day interrogating former Hydra agents, doctors, scientist, and specialists of different kinds to see if they're willing to work for the US in exchange for their freedom. Obviously, Peggy isn't giving anyone a free pass and relentlessly questioned, tested, and observed every prisoner that sat in front of her.

Thompson spoke up first, "I don't like it."

"Me neither," Jim replied.

"These guys are a bunch of weasels trying to get out of prison by any means necessary," said Thompson. He sighed, "And there is always more to the story."

Peggy nodded in agreement, "Yeah, they're definitely still organized in her and loyal to their cause. That much is certain."

Jim crossed his arms, "We know these guys will say anything to get out of here, but how can you tell from what they said that they're still organized and loyal to Schmidt's and Zola's ideology? If we didn't have that huge incident last year I wouldn't be so cautious now," he asked curiously because it always seemed like Peggy was right.

Peggy gave Jim a confident smile, "Women's intuition." Thompson chuckled at her answer. Peggy then leaned forward and rested her elbows on the table, "Steve, Phillips, and I believe that their planning another insider attack. Where, when, and how is the questions we can't exactly answer yet."

Suddenly there was a loud knock on the iron door followed by Pinkerton's voice, "Director, the next one is here."

Peggy leaned back in her chair, "Send him in," she said knowing exactly who was next. They were about half way done with the long list of prisoners she needed to question. These interviews/interrogations are taking longer than expected because of how thorough Peggy is with her work. Jim and Thompson immediately went silent and went back to their positions flanking the door as it opened.

The iron door swung open and in entered former Hydra Lieutenant General Werner Reinhardt escorted by two guards. He still possessed his same glasses but his hair looked like it has greyed considerably since his capture in 1945. He's dressed in the prison grey uniform with a tag numbered "G3635," and wore hand and leg shackles. Peggy smiled confidently at Reinhardt, "Werner Reinhardt."

As Reinhardt sat down at the seat in front of her, the two guards quietly left the room and closed the door behind them. The man looked down at the pen for an uncomfortable long moment before he finally looked back up at Peggy silently. He chuckled, "Neat trick."

Peggy cocked her head at angle, "I'm sorry I don't follow."

Reinhardt chuckled again, "It's a pen. You wanted to see what I would do with it." He shrugged,
"Since there are so many uses, no? Escape, confession, homicide…” Peggy looked down and smiled at his wit. "Suicide," Reinhardt finished with an emphasis.

Peggy leaned forward, "It's true I wanted to find out what kind of man you are." She opened the file in front of her to take notes on her scratch paper, "And now I know."

Reinhardt again smiled confidently, "Pens are also used for signatures."

Peggy flared her brows, "You want a deal, shocking."

"The US government have recruited many German scientists to further their gains against their former allies the Soviet Union."

"They'll send rockets into space," Peggy countered.

"They'll show you parlor tricks, give me a second chance and you can save all of humanity," Reinhardt said defiantly.

Peggy locked eyes with Reinhardt, "I seen all your home movies," she said with icicles in her voice. "Bodies left in your wake, that girl you caged up." She smiled coldly at him, "I'm telling you right now that there will be no second chances for you."

Reinhardt smiled, "You must be dying…to understand all the items you have recovered. They're fascinating, no?"

Peggy continued with her cold stare, "I suppose you won't tell me where they came from."

Reinhardt shrugged, "There's a story. A myth from the East…of stars that fell from the heavens."

Peggy chuckled, "You don't strike me as a believer."

"Oh… I based my whole life on it," he chuckled lightly. "History just has the details wrong."

Peggy leaned forward, "Then set history straight."

"These visitors… they didn't come to save the world… they came to conquer it," Reinhardt said calmly. He smiled confidently, "Well… are we going to discuss a deal?"

Peggy leaned back, "I think you failed to remember the statement I said about you not having a second chance."

Reinhardt laughed, "Outside of these ‘artifacts' I used to have in my possession and hold a great deal of knowledge over… I have a wealth of technological and scientific designs and expertise that your former Nazi scientists can only dream of."

Peggy smiled, "You remember Doctor Armin Zola, correct?" Reinhardt simply responded with a cold stare at her. "Yes, the man who continued the Neo-Hydra group after being recruited by the US government. He told us the same thing." Reinhardt continued to stare at her with defiance. "I'll be clear with you. I'm the one who is blocking you and your fellow Neo-Hydra members from getting out of prison and returning to power. My husband and many other individuals are the ones purging your group on the outside from ever becoming a problem." She leaned her elbows on the table and continued, "I'm not naïve, former General. I know you won't sway allegiance to Hydra. I don't know your plan, but I assure you I'll find out. And when I find out, nothing will stop us from stopping Hydra for good," she said in a cold tone.
Reinhardt smiled, "Then you already know..." He chuckled, "It won't ever stop. You can't simply stop the inevitable from occurring, Ms. Rogers," he emphasized. "You aren't untouchable...and neither is your American champion, Captain America. You, your family, you and your precious agency are more vulnerable than you can imagine. I'll be careful if I was you."

Peggy leaned back. "Where have I heard that before." She looked to the door and called out, "Guards!" The prison guards hastily entered the room. She nodded at them, "Take them away. And tell Sergeant Cooper I'm done with all the interviews... I've heard enough."

One guard nodded, "Yes, Director," as the pair of them hoisted Reinhardt out of his seat.

As Peggy exited the main building to her awaiting motorcade she realized it was late in the afternoon. It felt like she's been in the prison interrogating former Hydra members all day long which was partially true. As she walked to her car she spotted a row of armored SHIELD trucks unloading prisoners to one of the in-processing doors off to her left on the side of one of the arms of the building. Though the truck was quite a bit away from them, Peggy could tell that many of the prisoners heading into in-processing wore bandages on their heads, had broken limbs, gunshot wounds, and even some on stretchers. As one of her security team opened her door for her, Peggy stopped and asked him, "What's all this?" she asked regarding the new prisoners.

The guard smiled, "Captain America just finished raiding a covert Leviathan cell. He reports that all evidence has been secured at the HQ."

Peggy smiled, "That's my husband." She turned Jim, Pinkerton, Ramirez, and Thompson, "Let's go." Peggy got into the car prompting the guard to respectfully close the door behind her then left for the lead vehicle. Ramirez, Jim, and Thompson got into the car and sat in their same seats with Thompson taking the driver seat again. Everyone else started to load into the vehicles and quickly began the long drive back to the city.

Jim looked over at Peggy, "I had enough of this place."

Peggy chuckled, "You and me both, Jim." She looked over at Thompson, "Let's get a move on. I got a date tonight."

Thompson looked back at her through the rear-view mirror, "Yes, ma'am."

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**Time Square, New York City, SHIELD: AEGIS HEADQUARTERS**

**Peggy's Office**

**1800 (6PM)**

After the long drive back to the office, Peggy went straight to her office to give Phillips a debrief of how the interviews and interrogations went. Like this morning, Peggy arrived shortly after Phillips did and they were quick to get down to business because neither of them wanted to stay in the office longer than they needed to. Peggy was tired of a long day of work and driving and just wanted to hurry up and spend her relaxing anniversary evening with her husband.

Peggy leaned back in her chair behind her desk, "I'm going to state what we already know. No one in Hydra should be recruited let alone released. They're definitely planning something. Hydra General Reinhardt was the one who hinted at it the most." She sighed, "I don't know if their plans are originating from the prison or other Neo-Hydra cells on the outside but the ones I questioned..."
somehow know that Hydra are still organized and have big plans. But how do they know that?"

Phillips looked down disapprovingly, "Unless we have a rat in the nest." He leaned back in his chair in front of Peggy's desk.

Peggy shook her head, "Exactly. But I can tell you for certain that they're still organized in prison. Still loyal to Hydra and each other even though many of them don't see each other, and live in solitary confinement."

Phillips nodded, "I agree with your conclusion. No one from Hydra will be released, and I'll make sure the Vice President knows." He sighed, "But, this news that their organized in the maximum-security prison is disheartening. There's no way to prove that we have a mole for sure unless we do an investigation under the table." He shook his head, "Which we might just do." He shook his head, "We were very careful on making sure we didn't recruit or have any moles or traitors in S.H.I.E.L.D…I guess we didn't do enough."

Peggy nodded, "Director, our business is espionage and the national security of the United States, the possibility of having a mole here is far greater than having a mole in an agency such as the FBI."

Phillips nodded, "Right you are. This agency is brand new and we already have a rodent problem."

Peggy chuckled, "I'm sure the CIA has the same issue too. They aren't exactly the most careful organization."

"Well, we'll need to keep this investigation secret and only notify the need to know," Phillips said calmly. He stood up and buttoned his suit jacket. "Your husband needs to know about this in case we need to act swiftly and violently."

Peggy stood up and grabbed the file on her desk and handed it to Phillips, "I'll let him know."

Phillips tucked the file under his arm and smiled, "I'll let the Vice President know our decision."

Peggy raised a single brow, "Will he listen?"

"He better. If not, I'll just go to the President if he gives me any trouble," Phillips said calmly. Peggy smiled in response.

There was a sudden knock on the closed office door, interrupting their conversation. Peggy turned her head to the direction of the noise, "Come in!" she called to her unknown guest.

Steve opened the door and entered the office dressed in a suit, "Oh, sorry, didn't mean to interrupt." After the raid on the pier, Steve showered thoroughly in the SPU Team Room and got dressed back into the well-pressed suit he was in earlier in the day, and ready for his anniversary date with his wife.

Phillips smiled at Steve, "No, it's okay we're finished." He looked back at Peggy, "There anything else, Peggy?"

Peggy shook her head and crossed her arms under her chest, "Not at this point."

Phillips smiled, "Then enjoy your evening together you two." He turned for the door and smiled at both of them, "And happy anniversary."

Peggy smiled, "Thank you, Colonel," she said referencing his old title as a sign of respect.
"Thank you, sir," Steve said respectfully as he held the door open for Phillips.

Just as Phillips was about to step out of the office he stopped and turned to Steve, "Also, good work on that warehouse, Steve. Got a lot of good intel from it. Keep up the good work," with that he turned and left the office.

Steve nodded, "Thank you, sir," he called out to the Director before turning his attention back to his wife. He smiled at his wife, "Ready, hon?"

Peggy grabbed exposed files on her desk and turned to one of her bookshelves and locked them away in the safe on the last shelf, "Just about," she said as she locked the safe with a key and randomized the safe dial. She stood up and fixed her coat as she turned to face Steve, "Okay, no I'm ready to get out of here." Peggy turned around grabbed her purse from the file cabinet behind her desk and slung it across her body. She opted on leaving her black SHIELD brief case under her desk because she didn't want to bring work home and leave important documents in the car as they went on their date.

Peggy happily joined Steve's side and instantly interlaced her fingers with his and gripped his bicep with her free hand. Steve smiled then quietly guided her out of her office with Peggy happily leaning against his strong frame. The couple strolled down the long hallway in comfortable silence, arm in arm, and eager to finally spend their second anniversary together.

City Skyline Club, New York City

The Rogers found themselves in a favorite city club overlooking the bay called the "City Skyline Club." Though this club itself is smaller than the other ones that both Peggy and Steve frequent for a good dance, food, and music, this particular club has more of a romantic ambiance than the others. The City Skyline Club is located on the top floor of a skyscraper and has large windows and a balcony which gave an excellent view of the bay in all parts of the day. On top of the excellent view, there's delicious food, drinks, and live music with dance floors in the inside of the club and on the balcony. The smaller dance club was also quieter in terms of the number of guests which made the club able to tailor for more of a personal and romantic atmosphere.

Steve and Peggy sat at a small table enjoying their wine and dinner by a row of tall ceiling sized windows that overlooked the bay. They were enjoying the sweet swing music and the stunning view of the bay below them. With the sun setting toward the horizon and the small candle on their table, the atmosphere was one of sweet romance which is just what they wanted. Steve chose this place, not because of the beautiful view, but because it gave a striking resemblance to the place he and Peggy got married. It's a rather great place to spend a romantic evening…

Steve put his fork down on his dish and smiled at Peggy who was staring out into the view of the bay. Though Peggy is still wearing business attire she still looks more drop dead gorgeous than most if not all women in the club. She no doubt can turn heads no matter what she wore. The atmosphere, the swinging music, and how the evening sun framed her face made Steve fall in love with all her features all over again. Peggy spoke up as she stared out to the bay, "It's a beautiful view."

"Yeah, it is," Steve replied, looking pointedly at the amazing woman in front of him. Peggy turned to find him looking at her causing her cheeks to flush into a bright shade of red when she realized that Steve was referring to her and not the view.

Peggy smiled, "This place is really nice, darling." She looked down at her dish which was a delicious steak, "and the food is magnificent."
Steve smiled back at her, "Glad you like it, love." He raised his glass of wine, "Happy anniversary."

Peggy picked up her wine glass and toasted with Steve's, "Happy anniversary, darling." They both then took a small sip of their wine then lulled back into silence. The pleasant music filled their ears as they sat in comfortable silence. After a while Peggy spoke up with a warm smile, "You got real quiet again."

Steve chuckled, "Sorry." He smiled, "I couldn't help but be distracted by you again. It's like a mystical power you have over me. We could be sitting by the Alps, and I'd still end up staring at you."

Peggy blushed again, "And you're the only one who can make me blush." She chuckled, "especially in this amount." Steve laughed in reply. Peggy took another sip from her wine, "Glad we have this evening. Not going to talk about work or any topic of espionage, let's just focus on us."

Steve smiled, "Love it."

Peggy chuckled, "You know, darling… I know it's supposed to be our evening, but I can't help but think about Sarah and Michael." She smiled, "I miss you during the day, but I miss our babies twenty times more."

Steve laughed, "IT's the mother in you. Trust me, I understand and I miss them too... and that's the father in me."

Peggy giggled, "But, as I said…let's just focus on us." Steve smiled happily in response.

Suddenly the band started to play a slow song prompting Steve to smile widely at his wife. He stood up and offered a hand to Peggy. "Care to dance?"

Peggy gently took his hand and stood up, "You never have to ask, my love."

With that, the Rogers made their way to the center of the room to the dance floor and joined the small crowd slowly dancing to the beat of the song. Once they got to the dance floor, Peggy automatically placed her hand on Steve's broad shoulder while her other was gripped by her husband's loving grasp. Simultaneously, Steve wrapped one arm around Peggy and brought her close to his body and began to lead to the beat of the song. Of course, Peggy didn't fight it, and couldn't help but stare happily at her husband as they danced all over the dance floor. The married couple haven't gone dancing a lot since the twins were born, but neither of them have lost the edge. The two continued to dance like they've never stopped.

At the end of the song, Steve leaned down and captured Peggy's lips. Peggy happily reciprocated the kiss and pulled her husband in tighter almost like she was afraid that he would disappear. The couple broke the kiss as the need for air overtook them just as the band played the next song. Peggy smiled, "I love you."

Steve smiled back, "I love you too." As the next song began to pick up, the couple continued to dance. "Do you want to go back and finish your dinner or…" he said as they danced.

Peggy took a quick glance at the table then looked back up at Steve, "It'll be there when we're done. Let's just keep dancing and never stop," she said seductively.

Steve chuckled, "Yes, Ma'am."

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Steve & Margaret Rogers Residence, Scarsdale, NY
After hours of dancing and a romantic evening out in the town, Steve and Peggy finally arrived home just before midnight. It has been a wonderful evening for their anniversary, but now they happily return to their two-small baby girl and boy. Peggy was the first to walk through the door and happily called out to greet Kathryn, "Kathryn, we're home!"

As she put her purse down on the console table by the front door she heard Kathryn call from the living room, "We're in here!" Peggy smiled and walked in the direction of the living room as Steve walked in behind her with his shield in hand. If Steve brought anything home from work, it would be his shield since it was of great personal value to him. He leaned his shield against the wall by the console table then closed the door behind him. Steve paused and smiled as he heard his wife talking with their babysitter in the living room. He started to unbutton his suit jacket and walked toward the living room.

Steve walked into the living room and saw Peggy holding Michael James in her arms next to the wood playpen while enthusiastically talking with Kathryn who was relaxing on the couch. It's clear that the both of them got along very well, which is essential since Kathryn takes care of their baby twins when they're at work. Sarah was still in the playpen watching her mother and babysitter interacting with curious eyes. Steve smiled, "These two are up late," he said mentioning Sarah and Michael who looked wide awake.

Peggy chuckled, "Apparently, they couldn't sleep and kept crying until they got attention." She focused on her son and kissed his cheek happily, "They just missed mamma and daddy."

Kathryn turned on the couch to greet Steve, "They definitely did. Goodness, they wouldn't stop crying and being fussy until I gave them some attention."

Steve chuckled and took off his suit jacket and draped it over the side of the couch opposite of Kathryn. "That's not like them. They're usually good babies and rarely cry," he said with a smile as he made his way to the playpen to pick up his daughter. He picked her up and smiled at her, "How are you sweetie!" he exclaimed kissing her cheek. Sarah giggled happily in her dad's arms earning large happy grins from her parents and her babysitter.

Kathryn stood up and smiled, "How was your anniversary date?"

Peggy looked over at Steve and bounced Michael in her arms, "Amazing, you wouldn't believe it, but did you know Captain Rogers has a romantic side?" she said with a blush. Steve rolled his eyes and focused on his daughter.

Kathryn chuckled, "Yeah, I can see it."

Steve smiled, "thank you ladies."

Kathryn got her things together, "Well, it's getting late, and I'm sure you two want to finally put these two angels to bed. They've been fed, changed, the whole works," she said with a smile.

Peggy smiled, "Oh, your pay…" She quickly realized her purse was on the console table by the front door so she turned to Steve, "Darling, my purse is by the front door, do you think you can pay her?"

Steve chuckled, "Of course," he said as he easily held Sarah in one arm and used his free hand to get his wallet in his back pocket. He grabbed the cash from his wallet while simultaneously holding his 8-month old daughter in his arm which took minimal effort. The hardest part was making sure he was gentle in his actions so he doesn't drop, hurt, or making his daughter too uncomfortable. Steve then handed Kathryn the cash, "Thank you for staying later than usual. There's extra in there…"
Kathryn graciously took the money from Steve, "Thank you, but you don't have to pay me extra. It was my pleasure." She started to separate the extra money from her usual pay.

Peggy stopped her instantly, "No, don't you dare think about it Kathryn. We really appreciate you staying this late for us, it's the least we can do."

Kathryn smiled, "Oh…thank you then, Mrs. Rogers." With that she smiled at the two of them, "Happy anniversary, and I'll see you next time. Have a good night."

Peggy smiled at her, "And you as well." Kathryn took her leave and left the room.

As soon as Steve and Peggy heard the front door open and close they turned and looked each other with adoring eyes. Peggy raised a brow, "Well… where do we go from here?" she said seductively.

Steve was about to respond when a high pitch, squeaky voice stopped him. "Dada!"

Steve slowly turned his head to face his daughter with an amazed expression on his face, "Sarah… did you just speak?"

Peggy, with an equally amazed and happy expression across her face, spoke happily, "She did! I can't believe it!" she said happily while bouncing her son in her arms.

"Dada!" Sarah exclaimed happily as she clapped happily.

Steve gasped, "You spoke! You spoke!" He happily kissed his daughter on the cheek multiple times. He looked at Peggy, who had the happiest look on her face, then back at his daughter, "Can you say, mama?"

Peggy waited with anticipation but Sarah simply clapped her hands and exclaimed, "Dada!" once again.

Both Peggy and Steve chuckled. Steve smiled, "We'll work on it."

Peggy looked at Michael with a grin, "Now it's your turn, Michael." Michael only giggled happily at his mother and placed a hand on her lips. Peggy kissed his hand and chuckled, "Mama?" she said trying to encourage him. Michael only giggled again and kicked his feet happily. Peggy shrugged then looked at Steve, "If Sarah spoke then Michael won't be far behind."

Steve laughed, "It's only a matter of time," he said as he started to bounce Sarah. He then held her up happily, "You spoke!" he exclaimed with pure fatherly joy. Sarah giggled happily in the air in response.

Peggy smiled with pure love and adoration at her husband and daughter. She turned to her son and kissed his head, "We love you, sweetie. We can't wait for your first words either." She chuckled, "And we'll document this occasion and everything. Which reminds me…" Peggy turned her attention to her husband who was happily tossing their daughter up and down, which sometimes scared her because she was afraid of the off chance he would drop her, "Darling."

Steve caught Sarah in his arms, "Yes, my love?" he said over the loud giggles from his daughter.

"Can you wait here a second while I get the camera? Have to document this."

"Of course, but we really should be getting these two to bed," Steve said looking at the twins who don't seem to be sleepy at all.
Peggy chuckled, "Just one photo and then we'll bring them upstairs," she said as she walked toward the kitchen.

It's late at night and in the master bedroom Peggy sat up against the headboard of the bed in her usual rose pink short nightgown as she read a book while Steve finished putting Sarah and Michael to bed. He has been gone longer than she expected since she got cleaned up and dressed for bed before he was finished. The bedroom was dimly lit with the lamps on their night stands being the only source of light. Peggy heard the bedroom door open prompting her to look up from her book to see Steve walk in, "You took your time, darling."

Steve shrugged, "They really didn't want to sleep yet, but I managed." He started to unbutton his shirt as he walked over to his side of the bed. He sat down on the bed and instantly felt a pair of arms slid around him and grip him affectionately. He smiled as he felt Peggy's chin rest on his shoulder and her hair tickle his cheek and deck.

Peggy smiled, "Are you happy?"

Steve chuckled, "What kind of question is that? Of course I am," he said without hesitation.

Peggy giggled and kissed his cheek, "It's just something I like to ask."

"Are you," Steve asked inversely.

"Can't you tell?" She replied happily as she planted kisses on his cheek and neck. "Happy anniversary."

Steve smiled, "Happy anniversary." He paused, "This…"

"Hm?" Peggy hummed in content.

"Is perfect. Sarah and Michael are growing up so fast. Sarah already said her first word, and Michael is probably not far behind…I'm trying to hold on to every second of it."

Peggy smiled, "me too."

Steve looked at Peggy, "I do say Sarah and Michael are perfect…" He chuckled, "Not to rush anything, but… would you want to have more kids some day?" He waved his hand, "Not now of course, but later down the road? If you want, I mean there's no pressure or anything but…" As he started to rapidly explain, Peggy silenced him with a passionate kiss.

"Definitely," she pulled back with a grin. She giggled, "I love how you still get flustered around me."

Steve shrugged, "You're intimidating."

Peggy raised a brow, "Am I?" She pushed him down on the bed and straddled him, "How about now?" she asked as she felt Steve automatically place his hands on her hips.

Steve smiled, "I'm starting to feel something different."

Peggy bent down and captured his lips. They kissed on the bed for what seemed like an eternity before she pulled back out of breath and returned to sitting on his hips. She started to slowly strip out of her nightgown, "How about now?" She looked at him seductively.

Steve smiled and ran his hands along her body. "Now…I want you," he said softly.
Peggy fiddled with one of her straps of her night gown, "So, are you going to help or does a girl have to do this all by herself?" Steve quickly took the initiative and flipped her onto the bed earning a loud uncharacteristic yelp from Peggy followed by a laugh.

Good thing they have the next day off because they will be up for a while…

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Added the questioning of General Werner Reinhardt from Agents of Shield

Sarah said her first words!

Lots of fluff but some stuff furthering the events of what is to come

Be on the lookout for Bucky in the coming chapters!
October 1948

The Soviet Union blockade of the Western Sector of Berlin was in full affect which restricted the Western Allies access and use of railways, roads, and canals to the sectors of Berlin under Western control. Berlin, the capital of Germany during the war, lay within Russian-occupied East Germany. The Soviet blockade essentially began to starve the people of the Western Sector and prevent the United States, Britain, and France from being able to provide the basic supplies of living to the people. Coming just three years after the end of World War II, the blockade was the first major event of the Cold War and foreshadowed a future conflict over the city of Berlin and the inevitable power struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union.

The Berlin Airlift was the Western Allied response, spearheaded by the United States, to carry supplies to the people of West Berlin. The Western Allies brought 4,000 to 5,000 tons of food, water, fuel, and other supplies a day to the West Germans. But as the airlift dragged into the autumn months, the Western Allies were preparing to commit aid for a much more extended period even though the operation was intended for only a few weeks. SHIELD, however, was protecting the operation from behind the scenes from Soviet and Hydra from stopping the flow of resources. In the five months of the airlift, SHIELD prevented numerous assassinations, car bombs, and surface-to-air threats to the aircraft landing in West Berlin. Though SHIELD established assets and began operations all over the world, much of its focus was the situation in Berlin and the bloody civil war in Greece…

Skies over Berlin

An all-black SHIELD Lockheed Constellation flew high above in the cloudy night skies over Berlin carrying a cargo of only twelve men. The SHIELD aircraft, which came from the Stuttgart airport through the Southern air corridor to Berlin, flew alongside dozens of other planes on route to deliver supplies to West Berlin. But unlike the planes participating in the Berlin Airlift, the SHIELD plane is on a covert mission to fly over East Berlin and parachute twelve operatives into the city. As the plane flew over West Berlin, it started to rapidly descend to 1,000 feet, low enough for the safe deployment of parachute canopies. The Western city below was illuminated with the usual lights of a city, but East Berlin was an eruption of spotlights to spot all approaching aircraft that may have wandered over into the Soviet Block.

As the SHIELD plane approached East Berlin city limits, the black paint made it increasingly hard for ground observers to see the plane against the pitch-black night sky. Even the spotters and the civilians on the Western half of the city couldn't see the plane without the aid of a spot light. The SHIELD pilot spoke into the microphone, "Captain, we're ten minutes to drop."

In the cabin of the plane, all twelve members of the Howling Commandos (SPU Strike Team) sat on benches along the length of the plane with Steve sitting closest to the open aft door with his shield strapped to his chest. Steve leaned forward and yelled over the roar of the engines to his team, "Remember, we need to find Doctor Roland Wolf, the German rocket scientist kidnapped by the Soviets two weeks ago!"

Dugan, who sat next to Steve, looked over at him, "Why are we recruiting a Nazi, again? Didn't
Peggy have a thing against this?" he asked in confusion. "Still can't wrap my head that we're back in Germany, again."

Steve smiled, "Peggy gave us this mission... if you forgotten." He nodded and returned to a serious tone, "And if you bothered to read the mission dossier, Doctor Wolf was never a Nazi. He was forced to work for them. He wanted to work for the United States after the war but obviously, the Soviet's had other ideas." He paused, "Remember we need to get in and out without alerting the whole Soviet Union of our presence." Everyone in the cabin nodded in acknowledgement.

Sawyer sighed, "Dugan never reads the dossiers..."

Dugan shook his head, "Sam, you're killing me with the negativity today..."

Steve nodded, "Everyone good, plan and all?" He received a mixture of verbal acknowledgements and thumbs up from his team.

Suddenly a red light by the open door came on signaling Steve to stand up. "Five minutes to drop," said the pilot over the intercom.

Steve stood up and hooked his silver static line hook, which is attached to his main parachute, onto the wire above him. He then turned to face his team and made a hook sign with his finger, "Make ready!" Everyone took out their respective silver static line hooks. He signaled everyone to stand up with his arms, "Stand up!" The team all stood up on command and without hesitation and formed into a single line. "HOOK UP!" Yelled Steve above the roar of the four loud engines of the Constellation. Everyone did as they were told and locked the line hook onto the wire above them. Steve patted his shoulders as a visual signal for everyone, "Equipment check!" On cue, everyone began checking each other's equipment to make sure everything was secured and tight for the jump and the follow-on operation. After a minute, Steve shouted once again, "Sound off for equipment check!"

James Wheatley called out from toward front of the plane, "Twelve, okay!"

"Eleven, okay!" Gabe yelled instantly after Wheatley.

"Ten, Okay!" Yelled Jacques.

Steve waited as he heard down the line of everyone sounding off their respective number that their gear was good and ready for the jump. Once it was his turn to sound off, he turned and faced the door, "One okay!" he yelled.

After what seemed like an eternity the light by the door finally turned green. "Let's go!" Steve yelled as he jumped out of the plane into East Berlin. His strike team of highly trained commandos followed him without hesitation and without pause. For most of them, back into Soviet territory. From high above the sky under black parachute canopies, the team can see a clear division on the two halves of the city just based on the city lights. East Berlin is much less illuminated than the West. But, as the team floated down into East Berlin, they lost most of the cover of darkness from the spotlights illuminating the night sky which put them in great danger since they're the most vulnerable in the air.

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**Time Square, New York City, SHIELD: AEGIS HEADQUARTERS**

**Peggy's Office**

**1000 (10AM)**
"You want to know what?" Peggy yelled angrily at Stark. She leaned forward with her knuckles resting on her desk as she stared at Stark with cold eyes. She frankly didn't care if anyone on the floor heard her from her office.

Stark, who was sitting in one of the chairs in front of Peggy's desk, "I'm not curious of what you two do in your alone time, I assure you this is for a good cause. It's for science," he responded in his usual calm and confident self, but deep down he was nervous. Peggy is one of the few people who can actually make him feel nervous and scared.

Peggy was about ready to draw her pistol from under her desk at what Stark just said. She shot icicles from her eyes at Stark, "How does knowing how many times Steve and I had sex have to do with science?" Peggy is a very private person when it comes to certain subjects, especially her sex life and the intimate moments with her husband.

Stark shook his head, "Peggy…"

"There better be a really good God damn reason for asking such a question to me," Peggy said sternly.

"It's about the serum!" Stark finally blurted out in frustration.

Peggy relaxed a little then shook her head, "what about it?" she said in a calmer tone.

Stark sighed, "I think you may have… obtained some of its properties."

Peggy finally sat down at her desk, settling down from her increased anger directed at Stark. She leaned back in her chair and ran a hand through her long brown hair, "and you think I obtained some of the serum by having sex with Steve?" She shook her head again, "I'm sorry, that doesn't make sense." She raised her hand, "Wait, why are you telling me you think I obtained some of the properties of the serum?"

Stark sighed again, "because you're different all of a sudden…" he said vaguely trying not to mention the conversation he had with Steve a few months ago.

Peggy looked at him with a confused look, "What do you mean?"

"Haven't you noticed that you got rapidly stronger since you gave birth to the twins? That you got into shape two times faster than the average human?" Stark leaned forward, "right after pregnancy and suddenly you can sprint almost as fast as an Olympic athlete and hit as hard as professional heavyweight boxer. Did you even notice these changes?" He chuckled, "The punching has to give you a clue, Peg."

Peggy shook her head, "I punched a lot of men since I gave birth to Sarah and Michael, I don't recall how hard, Howard." She waved her hand, "I feel like I'm in the best shape I ever been, but I mostly credit that to training with Steve."

"I don't think it's training, Peg. I think you may have received part of the serum into your body." Stark sighed, "I'm still working on the "how" but I'm not ruling anything out. Including the sex topic," he said calmly. If Stark were honest with himself, Peggy probably wouldn't have thought about killing him on the spot if he mentioned the serum subject first before asking the "sex question."

Peggy sighed, "Okay…say I believe that I have some part of the serum in me…what do you need from me?"

"Your blood, tissue samples, and… well you aren't going to like what I'm going to ask next
though…” Stark said cautiously.

Peggy sighed, "What is it, Howard?"

"blood and tissue samples from both Sarah and Michael... and maybe run a few tests on them. To not only see if they may have inherited the serum from you and Steve, but to also analyze your children's fetal hemoglobin for…” He paused, "anything outside the realm of normal."

Peggy shook her head instantly, "No."

"Peg, that's ridiculous. I'm not treating them like a lab rat this might be important later! What happens if there are some adverse effects when they hit puberty? Like much more severe growing pains and major muscular pain from the serum affecting the body's natural course into adulthood. I'm talking strictly with the muscles, bones, and blood. Remember when Steve got the serum, he was in intense pain.” He leaned forward in his seat, "My hypothesis is, if your children do have the serum, is that the pain your children will feel will be a fraction of what Steve felt but over a longer course of time. Especially, in their teens." He waved his hand, "Look, Peg, if I can start researching now we can figure out how to overcome the pain of the serum when they hit puberty."

Peggy sighed and shook her head, "Howard…”

"I love Sarah and Michael too, okay? I won't ever do anything to harm them I swear," Stark said defensively. He sighed, "I know you think of me as a liar and sometimes even a cheat, but I do take care of my friends."

Peggy sighed once again, "Look, Howard… I don't know. Maybe… I have to discuss this with Steve when he gets back from his mission." She rested her head against her hand, "I'll think about it, Howard."

Howard stood up from his seat, "Alright, I'll get out of your hair. I know you got a lot of work to do."

Peggy nodded as she grabbed the report off her desk that she was reading before Stark walked into her office. "I'll talk to you later, Howard," she said as she watched him leave her office. After her office door closed behind her, she instantly focused her attention at one of the picture frames on her desk rather than the report on her lap.

The picture in question is a family photo of her, Steve, Michael, and Sarah all nestled happily on the couch. Her heart instantly warmed when she looked at that picture. It is surprising how fast her babies have grown so far. Sarah and Michael are now a shocking ten months, and they both said their first words a few months back. Peggy, of course, documented it with a camera and wrote down their first words. Sarah said, "Dada" back in July and Michael inversely said, "Mama," only a few weeks later. Though they said their first words, the two babies don't know how to talk quite yet other than one or two words. Most importantly, at ten months, her babies seem to be developing their personalities. It's quite funny, and her son seems to be more like her while her daughter is more like Steve. Her son already seems to be very adventurous, crawling everywhere and anywhere he can
and getting into places he shouldn't. It's quite frightening sometimes but also very adorable. Her daughter looks to be very nurturing and gentle just by how she plays with her toys and how she treats her twin brother when they're together. Sarah is very much like Steve. At one point, Michael was crying about something, and before either Steve and Peggy reacted to it, Sarah instinctually crawled to his side and placed a small hand on his shoulder and hugged him without making any noise. Peggy admitted, between her and Steve, Steve was the gentlest and the kindest.

Peggy was lost in thought with fond memories of her growing babies and the prospect of the future for her children and even the prospect of another child. She honestly wouldn't mind having more kids later but not now, of course, since there's a lot of essential tasks in SHIELD and because Sarah and Michael have just been born. Being part of a family is something she very much cherished, but she wants a healthy balance of family and her SHIELD work which is more difficult than it seems. The thought of another child had her mind instantly shift to Steve who has been in Germany for over two weeks. The last she heard from him was a week ago during his final call home at the same time his final mission update before departing Stuttgart, Germany to East Berlin. The mission she sent him is to rescue Doctor Roland Wolf, a German rocket scientist, captured by the Soviet Union, a much-needed asset for SHIELD and especially the United States in the development of weaponized long-range missiles. Peggy knew the mission came first, but she couldn't wait to see her husband again. She wasn't expecting to hear or see him for another week.

A knock on her office door brought her back to reality, "Come in!" Peggy called from her desk.

The door opened revealing Rose, "Peggy, the CIA director and the FBI Director are in the conference room for the 'State of Security' brief."

Peggy nodded and smiled, "Oh, yes. Thank you, Rose." She put the file back on her desk and stood up. She fixed her blouse and hair before grabbing a different file from her desk and leaving the room.

One-Week Later

Steve & Margaret Rogers Residence, Scarsdale, NY

A single golden leaf pirouetted down an invisible spiral breeze, spinning through the air as it let itself be carried down. It shook slightly, as if it could have been whisked away any second by the grip of a cool wind, but it kept floating down the twirling course. It blew past the living room window past Peggy's view and landed lightly in the yard in front of the patio on top of other leaves. The shiny, vibrant color standing out against the ambers and bronzes beneath it. It was so delicate, Peggy could compare it to her quiet babies playing happily in the living room floor behind her. It was so delicate, but the golden leaf was a symbol of the coming of the winter. Many people in the country didn't look forward to winter, but Peggy wasn't bothered by it all that much, she instead enjoyed the "livelier" things in the midst of the cold and dead trees. Spending warm evenings with her family, drinking hot cocoa with her husband, holiday meals, and even the Christmas carols that will eventually come. There was a light whimper from one of her little ones behind her which drew Peggy back to reality. A whimper she knew that would lead to a loud cry in a matter of moments.

It's another cool early October morning in the Rogers house, and Steve has been gone a little over three weeks now. Peggy is well accustomed that her husband will be gone on missions that she and SHIELD send him on, but she couldn't help but miss him. Plus, taking care of the two babies by herself when he's away while working full time is an entirely a whole other job in itself. But, she knew when her husband returns home things will return to normal and they can return to sharing the duties of parenting. Peggy is dressed in her pink, black robe over her usual short rose pink
nightgown with a hot cup of tea in her hand was briefly enjoying the view of her front yard before she heard one of her babies' whimper. She made a small smile before turning around and focusing her attention on her children once more. She placed her hot cup of tea on a coaster on the coffee table as she knelt down and saw that Michael was beginning to cry loudly. Sarah instinctively crawled over with her stuffed leopard toy and gave her twin brother a big hug. Peggy smiled at her daughter as she picked up her son while simultaneously sitting down on the couch. She kissed her crying son tenderly on the head, "shoosh, shoosh," she said gently. Peggy bounced her ten-month old son on her lap, "What's wrong, honey. Why are you crying? Mama's here with you," she said softly comforting her crying son. Her son continued to cry loudly prompting Peggy to bring him close to her chest and rock him gently from side-to-side. She then kissed him once again, "What's wrong, sweetie?" she asked.

"Missing, daddy?" Peggy said softly as she continued to rock him. Michael continued to cry, but Peggy remained calm and continued to give a comforting smile to her son. She leaned forward and grabbed the bottle of milk off the coffee table with one hand and began to give her son some milk. "Don't worry, darling, Daddy will be home soon, I promise," she said as she began to hum a soft toon to her son to calm him down. Michael began to relax as he drank milk from his bottle and listened to his mother's soft humming. Though Sarah was busy in her own little world, it did look like she was enjoying her mother's humming tune too.

Suddenly the phone rang but it miraculously didn't disturb Michael from enjoying his milk. Peggy managed to get her ten-month old son to grab the bottle so she can get the phone on the side table next to the couch with her other hand. She smoothly reached over and got the phone, "Rogers Residence, Margaret speaking."

"Director," said Thompson on the other end of the line.

"what do you need, Jack?" Peggy asked in a friendly tone.

"Captain Rogers just called in, he has the professor and his family. His team is landing at LaGuardia Airport, hangar 3 around noon," Thompson said.

Peggy couldn't help but smile at the news of her husband coming home in addition of mission accomplishment. "Thank you, Jack. I'll inform Director Phillips and we'll meet him there. Get your team to the airport and establish a security perimeter."

"Done, Director, see you there," Thompson said as he hung up the phone.

Peggy hung up the phone and looked down at her two babies and smiled happily, "Guess what, darlings?" Both Sarah and Michael looked up at her with curious eyes. "Daddy's coming home!" she beamed happily. Her infectious energy caused her two babies to smile and giggle happily. Michael giggled so loud that no one could've guessed he was crying mere moments early.

LaGuardia Airport, New York City, New York

Hangar 3

Multiple black SHIELD cars and Peggy's dark blue Chevy are parked inside the farthest aircraft hangar of the main airport terminal waiting for the SHIELD SPU flight to arrive. Surrounding the immediate area of the hangar were multiple SHIELD agents and snipers providing security for the Directors of SHIELD, and Professor Wolf and his family. Peggy stood in the hangar with Sarah in her arms and Michael in the blue baby pram next to her. She's dressed in a long sleeve pink button-up blouse, belly high blue swing trousers, and black heels. Sarah is dressed in a soft blue dress and
wrapped in a blue blanket while her twin brother wore a white and teal green onesie with a blue blanket covering him to keep him warm in the pram. Next to the family stood Director Phillips, Agent Jack Thompson, and Agents Ramirez and Li all dressed in black suits, waiting patiently for the SHIELD flight to arrive.

Phillips nodded at an all-black SHIELD Lockheed Constellation landing on the runway in the distance, "They're here," he said with a warm smile.

Peggy smiled as she rocked her daughter in her arms, "Daddy's here," she said just loud enough to her babies as she watched the plane started to slow on the runway so it can taxi to the hangar. She looked at Director Phillips, "Hope you don't mind that they're here with us. Katherine, our babysitter, was busy today," she said referring to Michael and Sarah.

Phillips chuckled warmly, "It's quite alright. They're only babies, hardly a security risk." Peggy smiled in response as she saw the plane started to make its way down the curves and paths of the tarmac to their hangar. Phillips spoke up in a calm voice, "Yet another successful mission you sent them on. Expected nothing less."

"Mhmm," Peggy hummed with much anticipation to see Steve again.

"You miss it? Going on missions and being in the field," Phillips asked even though he knew the answer.

Peggy looked up at the Director, "Always do. But, as much good I can do in the field, I know I can do more as Deputy Director of SHIELD. Plus..." She looked down at her daughter, "I have them with me, now," she said referring to her babies. Peggy chuckled and looked back up at the Director, "Though being Deputy Director isn't the safest job in the world, this job does make it easier to raise a family rather than being a field agent."

Phillips smiled warmly, "You have done excellent work as Deputy Director. I am very impressed."

He said as he saw the plane taxi closer to the hangar. He noticed Peggy staring intently at the plane like she was holding her breath for a long time. "Miss him that much, huh?" Phillips asked with a cheeky smile.

Peggy smiled, "Mhmm." She looked down at her daughter, "They have the most," she said as the plane slowed down just outside of the hangar.

"Oh, I'm sure."

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**SHIELD Lockheed Constellation**

Professor Wolf stood up from his seat next to his ten-year old daughter and very pregnant wife at the front of the plane, "Thank you for getting my family and me out of there... into the United States.

Steve, with his shield slung on his back, was the only one standing with his team of commandos sitting by him near the closed door. "It's our pleasure, Professor," he said confidently.

The Professor approached Steve leaving his black leather case with his wife and daughter, "We've been trying to get to the United States since before the war. But, when Hitler came to power he forced me to work for him... then the war ended and one thing lead to another and the Reds kidnapped me and my family to work for them." The middle-aged professor shook his head, "What I'm getting at is that we're happy to finally be in America and it's all thanks to you and your team, Captain."
Steve smiled, "Welcome to your new home, Professor," he said warmly.

The Professor's wife smiled, "Thank you, Captain for saving us," she said graciously in a thick German accent to tack on her voice of gratitude. "Thank you for letting us have a new beginning," she said while rubbing her pregnant belly.

"Thank you, Captain!" the daughter said in her high-pitched voice.

Suddenly they felt a slight jolt and the planes four propeller engines turn off which signaled that they come to a stop. After a moment, the door at the back of the plane opened revealing Airstairs already pushed up to the side of the aircraft to allow everyone to debark the plane. Everyone quickly stood up and began to file out onto the Airstairs. Much of the commandos left the plane first with the Professor's young daughter trailing close behind. The little girl just wanted to exit the aircraft after over eleven hours of flying and days without proper sleep. Sawyer, Dugan, and the professor's pregnant wife were slowly trailing behind as the two commandos gently guided the pregnant woman down the steep steps to make sure she didn't miss a step or fall. Steve and the Professor were left as the last ones on the plane. Before they left, the Professor placed a hand on Steve's shoulder, "You have a family, Captain?"

"Yeah," Steve nodded with a smile. "My wife is probably here to take me back."

"Kids too?" The Professor asked.

"Boy and a girl," Steve replied.

"They're lucky to have you, Captain." the Professor said with a smile as he left the plane. Steve produced a half smile and a nod as he followed the professor out of the plane.

As Steve walked next by the Professor to the hangar, he instantly spotted his wife holding Sarah in her arms and Michael resting comfortably in the pram. He couldn't help but smile with complete joy at seeing his family for the first time after almost a month on a mission in Europe. Steve could see Peggy smiling at him with equal joy on her face at him. With each step, he took toward the hangar, the urge to rush and kiss his wife and kids increased. He could also see Director Phillips, Peggy's former team, and a handful of other SHIELD agents in the hangar waiting for their return. But, right now, Steve can only focus on his family as he neared the hangar with the Professor.

As soon as the group entered the hangar and Steve was in reach of Peggy, he made a straight line to his wife and greeted her with a passionate kiss before addressing Phillips. Peggy reciprocated the kiss with equal fervor as she held on to her daughter with her arms. They broke the kiss after Steve felt a small hand on his cheek, prompting him to greet his daughter with a kiss, "Hey there, Sarah. Miss me?" he asked happily. "Because, Daddy, missed you!"

Sarah squealed happily in Peggy's arms, "Dada!"

Steve gasped and kissed her daughter on the head, "I missed all of you so much," he said as he gave Peggy another peck on the lips.

Peggy giggled, "Both of them missed you so much, darling." Steve responded with a happy chuckle as he bent down to the pram.

Steve picked up his son from the pram then stood up, "Daddy's here, Michael," he said greeting his son with a gentle kiss on the forehead. He chuckled, "You two weren't giving mommy a problem, were you?"
Peggy chuckled, "They did seem to cry a little more when you were gone. They just missed you."
Steve chuckled in response.

While the Rogers were having their moment, Phillips addressed the Professor first with a warm
smile, "Professor Wolf, welcome to New York. I'm Director Phillips, the Director of Shield, I
apologize it took this mission to finally get you into the United States."

The Professor stood by his family as he talked to the Director while the commandos stood off to the
side with the rest of the SHIELD agents in the hangar. "You mean… you knew we were trying to
immigrate to the United States."

"We did, but by the time we found that you were clear from any war crimes and doubled checked
your background you were taken by the Soviets," Phillips said evenly. He nodded and turned to
Thompson, "If you and your family come with us we will take you to our headquarters to get some
documentation for you then show you to your new house." With that Thompson stepped back to the
cars behind the group of people and opened a back-passenger door of one of the black cars.

The Professor's wife gasped, "You mean… you already have a house for us?"

Phillips nodded, "Of course we do, we wouldn't just rescue you and leave you stranded in the
states." He chuckled, "We got you a fully furnished house in the suburbs of New York City."

The Professor smiled, "…Thank you, for everything, Director," he said with a hint of shock in his
voice.

Phillips turned to his right to the Rogers family, "Thank Captain America and his wife." He nodded
in their direction, "That's Deputy Director of SHIELD, Margaret Rogers. She was the one who
planned the mission," she said toward the direction of Peggy.

The Professors Wife raised her eyebrows in direction of Peggy, "She works for SHIELD?" She
asked in surprise that a woman and a mother is working for a U.S. government intelligence agency.

"Yes, indeed. She's actually the second highest authority of the agency. If you want something done
done efficiently, contact her," Phillips said with confidence. The Professor and even his wife
were completely surprised that a woman was anything more than what society intended.

The Professor chuckled, "When the Captain said his wife was here, I didn't imagine she was the
architect for our rescue," he said with surprise.

Phillips turned severe, "I known Margaret for a very long time, she's very much a no-nonsense
individual and one of the architects of the creation of this agency. Don't let her fool you. In the face
of discrimination as a woman from society, and even from myself at one point, she thrived as a field
agent and now as a very capable director of SHIELD," he said in praise. Phillips smiled, "She
doesn't need my help to support her abilities, she knows her own value. You'll meet her in a
moment."

Peggy was still enjoying seeing her husband and his joyful interactions with their kids that she found
herself in her own little world with just them as its occupants. Suddenly, Phillips' voice brought her
back to her reality, "Director Rogers, can you come here please," he said evenly.

Peggy smiled at Steve, "Be right back, darling. Almost forgot I have a job to do still," she said as she
gently laid her daughter back down in the pram and tucked her in with the blanket.

Steve smiled, "Go on, honey, I'm happy right here," he said humorously.
Peggy smiled at her husband then walked away from her family for a moment to greet the Professor and his family. Right when she stopped in front of the group, Phillips introduced her, "Professor, this is Deputy Director Rogers."

Peggy held out her hand to the professor, "Mr. and Mrs. Wolf, pleasure to finally meet you."

Wolf smiled and shook her hand, and noticed she had a pretty strong handshake which took him by surprise. He let go of her hand and smiled, "Pleasure. Director Phillips talked very highly of you. But, no offense, I am quite surprised a woman such as yourself is in such a position in an intelligence agency. Again, I mean no offense."

Peggy was used to hearing comments such as the one the Professor just said, so she didn't pay much mind to it. She gave a disarming smile, "It feels very good to do something people claim you can't do." She chuckled, "My husband can't attest to that too."

Mrs. Wolf smiled, "That's very true. Well said."

Peggy nodded and turned serious, "We'll get you and your family to headquarters and get some documentation started. After that we'll take you to your new home. We'll go over it more when we get to headquarters." She nodded toward Thompson, Ramirez, and Li standing by the cars, "SHIELD Agents Jack Thompson, Rick Ramirez, and Mike Li will be with you throughout the day."

Mrs. Wolf spoke up, "Will we be seeing you later," she said as she held onto her daughter to prevent her from wandering off.

Peggy shook her head, "Not much today, unfortunately. Your husband will probably be interacting with me and the agency for a while until all proper documentation has gone through."

Wolf raised an eyebrow, "What documentation?"

Peggy shrugged, "Immigration papers to prove you arrived in this country legally, security clearances because you'll be working for the U.S. government, and change of identity to avoid foreign spies from hunting you. Not to frighten you and your family, Professor, but I guarantee we weren't the only country looking for you."

Wolf nodded in understanding, "I pray as I work for your government that they are more just than the previous ones I worked for. But at least this time... I'm willingly working for the government of the country I'm in."

Peggy gave a small smile, "I pray too..." she said softly to him. "That's all we have for now Professor," she said in a louder voice. She nodded to the cars, "If you don't have any questions, join my agents in the car and they'll get you to our headquarters to get the process started."

Wolf nodded, "Thank you, Director Rogers," he said as he shook her hand once again, this time not surprised by her strong grasp. He let go of her hand then wrapped his arm around his wife, "Ready, dear?"

Mrs. Wolf leaned into her husband smiled at Peggy, "Mrs. Rogers, please thank your husband for getting us out of Berlin. He and his team saved us in so many ways during our escape."

Peggy smiled, "I will." With that the Wolf family turned and walked over to the awaiting car that Thompson, Ramirez, and Li stood by. The Wolf family will have a full SHIELD escort to protect them as they make their next leg of their journey.
Sawyer looked at Dugan and gave an uncharacteristic smile, "at least this girl didn't stab Dugan." All the commandos laughed in response but Dugan.

Dugan shot Sawyer a confused look, "I can't believe you remember that."

Jim chuckled, "How could he not. We all remember that."

Sawyer smiled, "I have my ways."

Junior laughed, "Sawyer doesn't smile often but when he does, it's because of other people's pain."

Pinkerton nodded in agreement, "Seems to always be that way."

As Peggy rejoined her family, Phillips walked up and spoke to the two of them, "Sorry, you two, but Peggy do you mind debriefing Steve and his team on the mission back at headquarters before going home. Just to get it out of the way. You can give me you're after action report next week."

Peggy nodded, "Not a problem."

Phillips smiled, "Outstanding." He looked at Steve, "Welcome home and well done, Captain," he said as he turned around and headed back to the other waiting cars.

Steve looked at Peggy while he rocked his son back and forth, "Guess it's bring your kids to work day," he said with a chuckle.

Peggy kissed his cheek, "Welcome home, darling."

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**Steve & Margaret Rogers Residence, Scarsdale, NY**

Steve's been home all evening and enjoyed the rest of his day immensely with his family. He was quick to get comfortable and return to his role of being a loving father and husband. As soon as he came back home, he got out of his combat uniform, showered, got dressed in his usual day clothes, and put his combat uniform in the laundry. Once he finished his domestic duties, he played with his infant son and daughter throughout the evening, cooked dinner, and spent much-needed downtime with his family for the rest of the evening. But while Steve played with his son and daughter on the living room floor, he was watched by loving eyes from Peggy while she caught up on her recreational reading on the couch. It was a nice and relaxing evening. Steve missed his family immensely, and Peggy and the twins equally missed him too during his nearly month-long mission in Berlin. But now that he's home, he can, in a sense, resume where he left off with his family. Hopefully, he won't be needed overseas for a while.

It's now late in the evening, and Steve stood in the nursery looking over his babies sleeping peacefully in their crib. He had a warm smile on his face as he happily looked at his sleeping infants tucked together in their crib. Sarah and Michael slept so peacefully that it seemed nothing could wake them. Not to mention how adorable they look together under their white blanket. Steve's mind started to wander as he imagined what life has in store for both Sarah and Michael. They could be anything they wanted to be, though society will have to step aside for his daughter because there's no way he and Peggy will let anything stop their daughter from reaching her aspirations. Peggy especially won't let Sarah get anything but the best. Sarah and Michael could be writers, artists, doctors, engineers, or even the next most celebrated musician. The world is theirs to play.

Steve was so enthralled in his imagination of the future that he didn't hear Peggy lean against the doorframe of the nursery. She's dressed in her pink, black robe over her night gown, ready for the end of the day. Peggy watched her husband next to their infant's crib from a comfortable distance as
she finished rubbing lotion on her hands. After a moment, she couldn't help but to interrupt her husband who she knew was lost in thought. Peggy wrapped her arms around his torso and rested her chin on his shoulder and smiled, "They're so happy your home. They missed you so much." She kissed his shoulder gently then chuckled lightly, "They couldn't keep up with you. They're tired now."

Steve chuckled as he placed a hand over Peggy's, "Yeah, I did ware them out earlier, didn't I?"

"Yes, so now let them sleep, hon. It's us time now," Peggy said with a smile.

Steve smiled, "We made beautiful babies, don't you think?"

Peggy chuckled, "Yes we did. We definitely did, darling," she said sincerely as she kissed his cheek tenderly. She let go of his torso then took one of his hands in hers and pulled gently, "Now, come to bed with me." Steve smiled and let her pull him out of the nursery, turning the light off and leaving the door open as they left.

Once they entered their master bedroom, Peggy stripped off her robe revealing her short pink nightgown then draped the discarded garment over one of the armchairs by the window as Steve sat down on his side of the bed to remove his shoes. As Steve removed his shoes, Peggy crawled on top of the sheets and waited for her husband to get ready for bed. Steve placed his shoes down by the bed then started to unbutton his shirt while he fell into a state of relaxation on their soft bed. Peggy rolled to her side and hummed softly to her husband, "My darling…" she paused.

"Hm?" Steve hummed in response as he continued to unbutton his dress shirt. He paused then looked up from what he was doing, "Wait, you usually say that when there's something you want to talk about." He turned around slightly to look at his wife, "What's up? Everything okay?"

Peggy propped herself up on her elbow, "Everything's perfect, Steve, there's nothing to worry about. But…" Steve raised an eyebrow as he waited patiently for her to continue her statement. "Howard approached me with something important a few weeks ago," Peggy said in a slight cautious tone.

"What did he say?" Steve responded curiously.

Peggy scooted closer to Steve to the point her chest was pressed against the small of his back, "He thinks I may have received some effects of your serum. Claims I might've received it from sex or carrying your children," she said emphasizing the "or" in her sentence. "I mean, now that I think of it, I've been getting stronger and more capable of recovering faster. But I thought it was because of our training together." She sighed, "He wants to run a few tests on me to find out. Blood and tissue tests to look into my genetic code."

Steve smirked and looked over his shoulder to look at Peggy, "Honey… please don't be mad."

"At what?" Peggy asked curiously.

"I actually approached Stark about the topic of you receiving the serum." Steve shrugged, "I started to become suspicious that you might've received it when you suddenly gotten faster, stronger, and physically recovered way faster than most athletes." He looked back at his wife, "Then you did some incredible things in that house we raided a few months back. So, I asked Stark if it was possible to pass the serum and see if you received it somehow."

Peggy raised an eye brow, "That actually makes more sense why he suddenly approached me about it." She smiled and rubbed Steve's back tenderly, "I understand why you told him, darling, you were looking after me which is sweet. I'd do the same thing if I was in your position."
Steve turned back to look at Peggy again, "So what did you say?"

Peggy smiled, "I agreed to the test. Figured what was the harm in checking. As long as he doesn't ask me…or us… intimate questions of our private lives."

Steve chuckled, "I hope he doesn't either. Fondue is a very private thing. Hate it when people want to talk to me about it."

Peggy grinned, "is that what we're calling it now? Fondue?" Steve couldn't help but laugh loudly. Peggy shook her head, "Oh God…not that again…" They both started to laugh uncontrollably at the reference of Steve's confusion of the word "fondue" during the war. Peggy sat up and hugged Steve's frame from behind as she laughed along with her husband. She kissed his cheek as she started to calm down. Once she was calm enough she spoke up again, "There's a slight catch," she said in a more serious tone.

"On fondue?" Steve replied with a smirk,

Peggy slapped his back playfully, "Not that you ass," she said with a chuckle.

Steve chuckled, "Okay, I'm sorry. What is it?"

Peggy rolled her eyes, "well, Stark wants to check Michael and Sarah to see if they have the serum too."

Steve calmed down and turned serious too, "Oh? What did you say?"

"I said I'd talk about it with you. This is a decision we both have to make," Peggy responded calmly.

"Okay, well, what do you think?" He asked in response.

Peggy shrugged a shoulder, "I don't know, darling. Sarah and Michael are only infants, and they aren't even one yet."

Steve nodded, "That's my concern too."

"I guess I don't want our kids to be lab rats is my concern," Peggy said in a serious tone.

Steve nodded again, "That's my concern too, but at least we will be able to know if our children will have the abilities from the serum." He shrugged, "or at least changed by it."

Peggy began to rub Steve's side again, "This is true. Howard argued the serum will likely affect their growth and body development, especially during puberty. He says that when the twins hit puberty, and their bodies start changing he predicts that the serum will affect them the most at that point." Steve hummed in response as he thought about what she just said. Peggy continued, "he also said that since they're still growing they'll feel the serum change their bodies as they grow. He's afraid it might be painful hence why he wants to check if Sarah and Michael have the serum."

Steve looked confused, "But you gotten stronger and didn't seem as painful as the procedure I had to go through."

Peggy chuckled playfully, "I wouldn't say it wasn't painful, darling."

"What? Didn't seem like…" Steve paused, "Oh…wow, Peg," he said with a smirk.

Peggy laughed and hugged his frame again, "I'm sorry, I couldn't resist. That was too easy to pass up, Steve."
Steve chuckled and shook his head, "I noticed, hon. Your fail to surprise," he said with a warm smile.

Peggy chuckled then turned back to her serious tone to continue the conversation, "Anyway, in all seriousness. If I do have the serum, not a lot of it was transferred to me. And it was 'absorbed,' for lack of a better word, slower into my body. I did, however, feel severe soreness and pain for a while after giving birth but I thought that was normal for after childbirth." She paused and thought for a while.

"What is it?" Steve asked curiously as he turned and noticed Peggy deep in thought.

Peggy spoke up and leaned into her husband, "Nothing, I was just thinking that the serum might have added to the pain and soreness that I got throughout my body after childbirth. But, receiving the serum explains why the pain I was feeling for weeks was worse than I imagined postpartum pain to be."

Steve nodded, "I remember you were complaining about it for a while. I didn't know how to help at that time," he said with a light chuckle. He remembered the weeks following childbirth that Peggy was going through intense pain, but she explained it to be a postpartum pain, which might not have been entirely the case. The pain was awful after a month, but by six weeks the extreme pain subsided to soreness and sporadic sharp after pains especially in her lower body. But, nearly a year after childbirth, Peggy hasn't experienced severe pain other than very brief muscle soreness which could mean the serum is starting to benefit her more and more. The rapid muscle recovery and primarily a lack of other post-pregnancy pains after a few months together should've been a significant clue of the serum in Peggy.

Peggy smiled, "Darling, you are so good to me, I know you did what you could when I was in labor and after when I was recovering," she said as she kissed his shoulder tenderly. She shrugged, "Anyway, I don't actually know how the serum affects me if I do have it, so it's probably good that Howard wants to do tests."

Steve looked back at his wife, "so you think it'll be alright for Stark to do the tests on Sarah and Michael?"

Peggy nodded, "I mean... it's probably a good idea to be sure. As long as it doesn't put our kids into unnecessary amount of pain."

"So just blood tests," Steve replied evenly.

Peggy nodded, "Exactly."

Steve smirked, "We'll make sure Howard doesn't use our kids as tests subjects. No way will I let that happen."

Peggy smiled, "of course not. Well, I'll give him a call to let him know in the morning."

"Sounds good, hon," Steve said with a smile.

Peggy kissed his cheek, "So," she said as she pulled back with a seductive look.

"Hm?" Steve hummed in response.

Peggy grinned, "been gone for a month and I missed you madly."

Steve smiled back at his lovely wife, "I missed you too."
"Fondue?" Peggy replied seductively.

Steve laughed, "You don't have to ask."

Peggy leaned into him and kissed him on the lips tenderly, "One should always have the ability to choose," she said as she kissed him again and began to deepen the kiss. Steve hummed in response as he reciprocated her passionate kiss. Peggy smiled against her husband's lips as she effortlessly pushed Steve down onto the bed, breaking the kiss only to straddle his hips. She kissed Steve's lips once again then instantly broke the kiss again to slowly remove a strap from her nightgown off her shoulder. Steve smiled and sat up to kiss her chest as Peggy seductively continued to strip off her nightgown. Peggy was half way done with removing the other shoulder strap when they heard the phone ring by the bed. Both of them sighed as Steve laid back down on the bed, dragging Peggy down with him.

"Let it ring," Steve said as he kissed Peggy's neck tenderly.

Peggy kissed Steve on the lips briefly, "It's just going to keep ringing, and it's going to wake the kids." Steve rolled his eyes as Peggy chuckled and kissed his lips again. Peggy broke the kiss and leaned over Steve to get the phone on his side of the bed, "Steve and Margaret Rogers residence, Margaret speaking," she said into the phone. As she waited for the response she leaned down and kissed Steve quietly again as he rested his hands on her hips. Suddenly the phone erupted with noise as Angie called out Peggy's name ecstatically, "PEGGY!"

Peggy rolled her eyes, "Goodness, Angie, you have the worst timing," she said still leaning over her husband on the bed. "Why is it you always seem to call late at night," Peggy said in humorous frustration. Steve chuckled and Peggy kissed him again quietly.

"Don't be such an old maid, English. I got great news!" Angie said energetically.

"I'm listening," Peggy said in a calm tone.

"Daniel and I are getting married! He proposed to me earlier this evening by the pier. It was so romantic!" Angie couldn't help but yell with excited on the phone, "Isn't that great!" She was so loud that Steve could practically hear the whole conversation.

Peggy smiled genuinely, "That's great, Angie! Congratulations! I'm so happy for the both of you," she said happily. Peggy beamed happily, "Goodness, that's great news, Angie. Truly happy for you. You two deserve the world and happiness and I'm so glad you're getting married."

Angie giggled happily on the phone, "So we talked about it and want to get married soon. We only want to invite close friends and family for this. We don't know where yet, but I wanted to ask if you'd like to be my maid of honor."

Peggy smiled happily, "Of course! I'll be honored, Angie!" Steve raised his eyebrows in curiosity while continuing to caress Peggy's hips.

"Thank you so much! I just wanted to call you and tell you as soon as I could. You're the first one to know!" Angie replied gladly. "Anyways, English, just wanted to tell you. I'll let you get back to sleep."

"Thanks, Angie, congratulations again," Peggy replied in a cheerful tone. Once she heard Angie hang up the phone, Peggy reached over Steve once again and hung up the phone.

Steve ran his hands up and down Peggy's thighs, gently caressing her skin, "Angie?" he asked.
knowing the answer.

Peggy smiled, "Looks like we're going to a wedding."

Steve grinned happily, "Sousa and Angie are getting married?" Peggy nods in response, "That's awesome! Congrats to the both of them." He chuckled, "Guess a nice suit and dress are required."

Peggy beamed happily, "She wants me to be her maid of honor."

"Expected nothing less," Steve replied humorously.

Peggy smiled as she ran a hand down her husband's chest, "We can talk about it later." She smiled seductively down at Steve, "Now, where was I," she said as she fiddled with her nightgown.

Steve smiled and tugged her nightgown down off her shoulders, "This," he said as he dragged her down and kissed her lips passionately. Peggy giggled and happily reciprocated with equal fervor.

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Stark Industries New York Facility

New York City, New York

0900 (9AM)

A few days later, the Rogers family arrived at the Stark Industries New York Facility building outside the main industrial sector of the city to meet with Howard Stark. The Rogers were dressed casually with Steve sporting a dark blue suit and tie while Peggy wore a dark blue overcoat over a white long sleeve button blouse and dark blue skirt. The purpose of this visit to Stark Industries is to get Peggy, Sarah, and Michael tested for possession of the serum in their bodies with genetic tests administered by Howard personally. Howard, of course, is happy to help the Rogers family, especially on this particular subject. Though modern genetic testing and research are still relatively new, Howard still managed to decipher what changed in the cells of Steve so he can detect whether Peggy and the twins have anything extraordinary in their cells. Though Howard can identify the serum in the body, he's still years from recreating the serum.

Steve pushed the blue baby pram with Sarah and Michael tucked in cozily through the tall open doors of the Stark industries building with Peggy by his side with her arm linked around his. As soon as they stepped into the busy lobby of the building they were immediately greeted by Stark who is dressed in a nice well pressed silver suit. He was never the one to be lazy on the way he looked. "Good to see you two and the family, always a pleasure," Stark said cheerfully.

Peggy smiled warmly, "Hello, Howard, thanks for doing this."

Stark smiled, "Of course." He squatted down in front of the pram to greet the Roger twins, "How you are doing, kiddos?" he said happily at the twins. Sarah babbled happily as Michael simply stared at him with inquisitive eyes. He chuckled as he tickled the two of them earning giggles from the both of them. "I love them," Stark said cheerfully. He chuckled, "I was never one for babies, but I don't mind Sarah and Michael at all."

Peggy smiled warmly, "Hello, Howard, thanks for doing this."

Stark smiled, "Of course." He squatted down in front of the pram to greet the Roger twins, "How you are doing, kiddos?" he said happily at the twins. Sarah babbled happily as Michael simply stared at him with inquisitive eyes. He chuckled as he tickled the two of them earning giggles from the both of them. "I love them," Stark said cheerfully. He chuckled, "I was never one for babies, but I don't mind Sarah and Michael at all."
Steve nodded, "Only blood tests, okay?"

Stark nodded, "Only blood tests, nothing more. That's actually all I need. I made some breakthroughs in your blood, in essence, a breakthrough in genetic research."

Peggy smiled, "That's something." Michael finally babbled happily. Peggy let go of Steve and squatted down by the pram to tickle her son, "How's my big guy?" she said in a cheerful tone.

Michael smiled, "Mama!" he called out.

Peggy smiled and kissed her son, "That's my boy. Be good for mama, okay?"

Michael smiled, "mama!" he replied.

Howard smiled, "Ready?"

Suddenly Sarah yelled out, "Dada?"

Steve chuckled, "lead the way, Howard." He leaned over the pram, "Daddy's here, sweetie. Just hang on and I'll carry you," he said to his daughter.

Peggy chuckled, "You're going to spoil them, Steve."

Howard turned around and started to lead them deeper into the facility, "If not him, then Uncle Howard will," he said over his shoulder to the Rogers pushing the pram behind him.

Peggy laughed, "oh, no, no, not going to spoil them that much."

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Lab

The group entered an empty research genetics lab that Stark cleared out to use specifically for the Rogers family, so they have privacy to do the tests. Steve pushed the pram slowly through the door following Stark into the lab, careful not to bump into the tables and counters that had a variety of vials, test tubes, scientific machines, and other lab equipment on them while Peggy held the door open for him and the pram. He saw Stark stop by a small wheeled metal table at the front of the room that had three different vacutainer blood transfer devices, needles, medical tape, and an orange latex tube on a clean white cloth and silver pan next to a rack of empty clear glass vacutainer blood collection tubes. Steve figured this is where the blood tests are going to be, so he pushed the baby pram to Stark and waited for his wife to join them. Peggy closed the door and walked over and joined her husband's side. She smiled as she rested her hands on her hips and waited patiently to get started.

Stark sat down and put on latex gloves to start getting the vacutainer blood transfer devices ready, "We'll do you first, Peg before Sarah and Michael. Just take a seat and roll up your sleeve for me," he said to Peggy.

Peggy nodded, "Sounds good," she removed her coat and placed it gently on a lab table, careful not to interfere with any of the lab equipment then began to roll her sleeve. While she got ready, Steve grabbed a nearby chair and placed it next to Stark. "Thank you, Steve," Peggy said as she finished rolling up her sleeve to above her elbow. She took a seat on the chair and laid her arm on the table to give Howard an easy access to her vein.

Stark picked up the latex tube and began to wrap it around Peggy's arm as a tourniquet, "I'm not going to draw as much blood as they did to Steve, I only need two tubes from you," he said as he
tied the tourniquet on Peggy's arm.

Peggy chuckled, "Well, that's good news." Stark nodded as he picked up a vacutainer blood transfer device paired with one tube and needle. He tapped Peggy's arm carefully to locate the vein then slowly inserted the needle into her arm to begin drawing blood. As Stark drew blood, Steve entertained the twins by playing silly games with his hands, making funny noises with his voice, and occasionally tickling them playfully earning happy chuckles from both infants.

Once Stark was done, he labeled the two tubes full of blood systematically and placed them on the tube rack. He then removed the tourniquet from Peggy's arm and taped a cotton ball on the needle hole to help stop the bleeding. Stark sat back as Peggy lowered her arm and began unrolling her sleeve, "You're done," he said evenly. He nodded to Peggy, "I'll do Michael first then Sarah next, if you don't mind."

Peggy nodded, "Of course, I'll get him." She stood up and immediately smiled over at her husband, "You know you're cute when you're with them right?" she said referring to Steve entertaining their two little kids.

Steve smiled, "I don't know about cute, goofy, yes." He looked down at Michael in the pram, "So, Michael's next?" he said nervously.

"Mhmm," Peggy hummed as she stepped in front of Steve and scooped up her son gently from the pram. While Peggy picked up her infant son, Stark was grabbing another vacutainer blood transfer device paired with one tube and a smaller needle specifically for an infant. Peggy looked up at Steve, "What's wrong, dear?"

Steve picked up Sarah gently, "remember the last time Sarah and Michael had their blood drawn?"

Peggy smiled and rocked her son gently, "How could I forget? I'm hoping Howard can get the vein from the heel on the first try." She kissed Michael's head softly, "They'll be okay, darling," she said to Steve but it turned out she was saying it more for her benefit.

Steve nodded, "I know," he replied nervously as he pressed Sarah close to his chest. On the outside, Peggy seemed very calm and comfortable about the blood draw, but inside she was probably, if not, more nervous than Steve. Drawing blood from babies can be a harrowing experience because the babies have to undergo a significant amount of pain for a prolonged period of time. But this particular blood draw is for the greater good and hopefully worth the cries.

Howard nodded at the Rogers, "There's a reason why I'm doing this myself and not some lab technician you don't know."

Peggy turned to her friend, "And we thank you for this, Howard."

Steve looked over at Howard, "When do we get the results back from these tests by the way?"

Howard shrugged, "As soon as two weeks and as late as a month. I'll do my best to expedite the tests but I want to be thorough, so I can guarantee when."

"Just wondering," Steve replied.

"No problem." Howard looked at Peggy, "I'm ready if you are," he said as he leaned back in his seat.

Peggy smiled at Steve, "They'll be okay, Steve. They're our kids and it's only a blood draw," she said in a confident tone to reassure Steve and herself.
Steve nodded, "I know, I just hate it when they cry, especially when they cry out of pain."

Howard smiled, "Steve, I'll do my best to do this as quick and painless as possible."

Peggy returned to her chair and sat down with Michael in her arms, "Okay, we're ready." She looked at her son, "Sweetie, you're going to feel a little prick. It's going to hurt, but it'll go away, okay?" Michael frowned at Peggy in response. She kissed Michael on the forehead, "Mama is here and she won't let go." She saw Howard pick up the needle and gently took Michael's foot to draw blood from his heel. Peggy blocked Michael's eyes with her hand as Howard slowly began to angle the needle to Michael's heel. Just as Stark stuck the needle into the heel, Michael burst out in a loud cry...

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1-Month Later

Tuesday November 16, 1948

Steve & Margaret Rogers Residence, Scarsdale, NY

It's another autumn evening in Scarsdale, NY with the sun fast approaching the horizon providing a brilliant display of orange in the once clear blue sky. In the Rogers house, Steve stood in the kitchen cooking dinner at the stove with Michael and Sarah sitting in their high chairs at the dinner table. The twin's high chairs were situated so both Peggy and Steve can focus on one of the infants during dinner time. While Steve cooked, Michael and Sarah entertained themselves by playing with their small sippy cups full of juice. Steve often played with the two infants in between cooking and setting up dinner so he can give them the love and attention they deserve. It's getting time for dinner and Peggy to return home. Additionally, it's been about a month, and the Rogers haven't gotten the results of the genetic tests yet. Needless to say, both Steve and Peggy wait with the growing impatience as each day passes.

Steve closed one of the pots on the hot stove and turned and walked to the table to play with his kids. He got to the table and kissed both Sarah and Michael on the head before sitting down, "Dinner is almost ready, and mommy should be home soon," he said cheerfully.

"Mama!" Sarah and Michael both called out happily.

Steve smiled, "Miss her, huh? I know She's been busy lately, but she always finds her way home."

Almost on cue, Steve heard the front door open and close followed by Peggy's voice, "Darling, I'm home!"

Steve smiled happily, "What did I tell you? Mama made it home."

Again, Sarah and Michael called out at the same time, "Mama, Mama!" they repeated excitedly.

Peggy walked into the kitchen wearing a light green long sleeve blouse, black swing trousers, and black heels, "How's my angels, darling?"

Steve looked up at the sound of his wife's voice, "great as ever," he said as tickled Sarah's cheek earning a distinct giggle from the little girl.

Peggy fixed her blouse and leaned against the wall, "So...Howard finally got back to me about the tests..."

Steve's head bolted up at Peggy, "Yeah?"
Peggy pushed herself off the wall and took a seat next to Steve, "So…" she paused figuring out how to explain what Howard said to her. Steve stared at his wife with great anticipation. Peggy smiled, "So you know how Howard could differentiate between normal genes and cells and the enhanced cells from the serum from your samples?"

"Yes?" Steve responded calmly. Sarah and Michael were surprisingly quiet as if they too were listening to whether or not they received the serum.

"Well… we do have the serum…” Peggy said with a wide smile.

Steve beamed happily, "Seriously? Really?" Peggy nodded with a smile. Steve chuckled, "I don't know why I'm so happy about this but I am."

"Crazy, isn't it?" Peggy replied with a smile.

Steve smiled with disbelief, "How?"

Peggy took Steve's hand on the table and gripped it lovingly, "well the kids are easier to explain and leads to why I have it too. The kids have it because they're your genetic children, obviously, and the serum is linked to your genetic code and therefore they received it from you when you fertilized my eggs. Secondly, the serum, in a sense, mutated your genes and cells. This gene mutation in your DNA were inherited into Sarah and Michael. In basic talk."

Steve nodded, "And you?"

Peggy smiled, "for me…it had to do with carrying your children and your genetic material. The fetal blood cells which was coupled with the serum entered the maternal circulatory system causing the mother to receive the serum. It essentially slowly took effect on me while I was pregnant and it's continuing to change my genes. Probably why I felt like exercise wasn't as much of a burden when I was pregnant than what my mother described," she said with a light chuckle.

Peggy let go of Steve's hand and ran her hand over her arm, "Surprised?"

Steve chuckled, "Yes and no. Just wow…"

Peggy nodded in the direction of the living room, "Howard's results and research are on the coffee table in the living room."

Steve smiled over at the twins, "Wow, they have it too." He looked back at Peggy, "Wait, I was saturated with Vita radiation…"

Peggy nodded, "Howard mentioned that. Since we haven't been saturated by Vita radiation, cellular change will be significantly slower. So, we will change over time, though the serum will have more a drastic impact on the kids than me since they will continue growing. And you know the serum is already taking effect on me."

Steve nodded, "I still can't believe that the serum was transferred to all of you. It's amazing…"

Peggy smiled, "Isn't it?"

Steve quickly looked up at the stove realizing he still needed to finish making dinner, "Shoot, I forgot I need to stir." He smiled at Peggy, "Dinner's almost ready."

Peggy chuckled, "It does smell good, don't let me distract you, darling."
Steve stood up and kissed Peggy on the lips, "I'll finish it up," he said as he headed for the stove.

Peggy chuckled, "I'll crack open a bottle of wine and entertain Sarah and Michael."

"Why open a bottle of wine?" Steve said as he tended the food on the stove.

Peggy stood up and walked over to the stove and hugged Steve from behind. She kissed his shoulder, "Because, can't a husband and wife celebrate the little things in life such as a happy marriage and a happy family?"

Steve chuckled, "Fair enough."

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I'm sure I got the science all wrong, but I researched as much as I could and did my best XD

So Sarah, Michael, and Peggy have received some part of the serum. Without Vita Radiation I figured that the change from the serum won't be fast but slow.

Bucky Barnes will be coming back soon!

Enjoy! and thanks for reading!
Chapter 28 Yesterday's Hero

December 1945

Siberia, Top Secret Soviet Facility

In a Soviet bunker hidden deep under the frozen surface of Siberia, a Soviet Captain walked briskly
down the dark halls wearing typical Soviet winter gear and carried a red leather-bound book in hand.
The Captain is a pale bald man with a large red scar going across his face from the top of his left eye
down to the right side of his lips. The clothing he wore consisted of a brown Telogreika, a cotton
wool-padded jacket, and a grey Ushanka fur hat with the ear flaps tied up to the crown of the cap.
The book the Captain carried had a black star in the middle with the Hydra red skull symbol subdued
in the middle of the star. As the Captain turned the corner in the hall, he headed toward an armored
blast door guarded by two soldiers carrying PPSH-41 submachine guns. He silently walked up to the
doorway and entered the four-digit password into the keypad to open the blast door. The blast door
clanged and creaked as it slowly swung open revealing a large dim circular room.

At the center of the room is an examination table with a man with a silver cybernetic arm strapped
down to the table with metal clamps immobilizing his arms and ankles. The man had medium length
dark brown hair and wore a dark blue shirt sleeve shirt with the number "000" printed on the chest,
and wore matching blue pants. Surrounding the table are a handful of medical personnel, a variety of
medical equipment, and a large rectangular machine with a metal Halo shaped ring at the end of a
metal arm linked to the device. At the edge of the room is an observation room and more guards
standing post at the perimeter of the room.

The Soviet captain approached the table and spoke to the lead Doctor, "Doctor, how is the soldier?"
The doctor put lowered his clipboard, "He's stable now."

"How was the last conditioning session," the Captain said calmly.

The doctor walked over to the man on the table who looked to be unconscious, "His mind is highly
sensitive, and did not cope well to the conditioning nor to the commands we implanted. That, and the
subject is still recovering from his tremendous fall from Zola's train in the mountains earlier in the
year." He looked back up at the Captain, "Zola's experiments and his variation of the Super Soldier
Formula kept him alive even with significant brain trauma, severe blood loss from the loss of his arm,
and broken bones." The doctor skirted around the table to point out the cybernetic arm on the
unconscious man, "If it wasn't for our informants and operatives in the United States, we could not
have continued Hydra's work on him." The doctor shook his head, "In terms of the conditioning,
Captain, his mind is still conflicting with his old identity of U.S. Sergeant James Buchanan Barnes."

The Captain nodded, "That is to be expected Doctor."

The doctor's assistant spoke up, "He's holding on, sir, but if we go any further it might melt his mind
entirely and essentially turn him into a vegetable."

"That is a risk we need to be willing to take. We must continue with the conditioning and
indoctrination process. He may be physically superior, but that amounts to nothing if he isn't loyal to
us." He looked at the soldier on the table, "Up the voltage, increase the pain, he must not be able to remember who he was before he came here. He shall no longer be Sergeant Barnes... he will be our soldier now." Since Bucky was captured by the Soviets in the early months of 1945 by advancing Soviet forces into Germany, he has gone through lengthy torture, surgical procedures for his highly-advanced prosthetic, and an extensive behavior-modification program to breakdown Bucky's old personality and morality to make him an effective and nearly unstoppable living weapon.

The Doctor shook his head, "even if we increased the pain and if his mind didn't fracture, we still need more time to erase his old identity."

"Time is something we don't have, Doctor. Captain America didn't die on the Valkyrie as we once thought. He was found by Howard Stark... The Captain will be a major threat once he recovers, and when he does, he will continue his crusade once he realizes Hydra reorganized," the Soviet Captain said. He shook his head, "The Party leaders will tip our hand before we're fully ready to make full infiltration incursions into the United States. We need to be ready to counter Captain Rogers... it's only a matter of time."

The Doctor nodded, "Our solider... he's still fighting with his old identity, sir. Conditioning is very slow." He sighed, "It's obvious you want our soldier to be able to defeat Captain Rogers, but I don't think that's possible yet."

"Why not?" the Captain asked sternly.

"The reports of Captain Rogers states he and Sergeant Barnes were best friends throughout their lives. It's clear that Captain Rogers holds a significant place in his memories. So, engaging with the Captain might reawaken memories even under intense programming of his mind." The Doctor walked over to the Soviet Captain, "the human mind is more complicated than just simply switching memories off. If we send Sergeant Barnes before he's ready, his old identity will surface and conflict with his 'programming.'" He shrugged, "He might even freeze or make his mind crack."

The Captain nodded, "This is exactly why I said to increase the pain and the conditioning. Take the risk for the reward, Doctor." He looked at Bucky, "Now, Continue the conditioning."

The Doctor nodded, "Yes, Captain." He then signaled his medical team to get ready as he walked over to the rectangular machine to turn it on. Once the doctor powered the device, he grabbed the ring and extended the arm it's attached to so he could place the ring on Bucky's heads. The Doctor carefully opened the collar and aligned it to Bucky's temple then locked it in place, uncomfortably squeezing his head. He then walked back to the main machine, flipped four switches, and turned many dials and paused at the switch to activate the device.

The Soviet Captain nodded at the doctor, " Proceed, Doctor." The Doctor slowly flipped the switch which instantaneously made the machine zap Bucky with a tremendous amount of pain. The device in question is the Hydra Memory Suppressing Machine. Developed by Hydra and used predominately by both Hydra and the Soviet Union, the machine uses electrical signals sent to the brain to suppresses memories and make the subject's mind more malleable to receive information and to be programmed to respond a certain way. But the electrical output from the machine into the brain causes severe pain to the subject. The main essence of the machine is to suppress memories through pain. Under the conditions of suppressed memory from the device, the human mind retains any information in the "suppressed" state.

Bucky yelled in agony as he was jolted awake by the tremendous pain sent into his brain. "AH!" He screamed in spine tingling suffering. He gritted his teeth through the pain, but the pain was too much to bear. The pain felt unending and made his heart pump at an incredible rate like it was about to burst. Finally, for what seemed like hours, the pain finally stopped. The Doctor powered off the
electric current then removed the Halo from his head as Bucky finally was able to catch his breath.

The Doctor looked at Bucky and checked to see if the machine did it's required effect. He stepped closer to the table and looked into Bucky's eyes with a flashlight, and noticed a blank stare with seemingly lifeless eyes but knew the Sergeant was completely conscious and alive. He turned off his small flashlight and looked at the Captain, "Do you have those trigger words, Captain?"

The Captain held up the book, "I do."

The Doctor looked down at Bucky, "The America is ready to comply with any order, but those 'trigger' words said in the specific order I mentioned are meant to prime him to accept any command he's issued without question, hesitation, and without the limits of human factors. Unfortunately, these trigger words and commands are not solidified in his mind yet, but this is why we do the conditioning, Captain, and why we need more time." He nodded at the Captain's red book, "you may proceed."

The Captain opened the red book and slowly started to list off through the trigger words, "longing… rusted… seventeen… daybreak." Bucky twitched and tilted his head as the Soviet Captain read the list of words. "Furnace… nine… benign… homecoming… one… Freight car…" The Captain closed the book and stood over the solider, "do you hear me, soldier?"

Bucky slowly turned his head and looked at the Captain, "Ready to comply…"

The Captain smiled, "Are you willing to give yourself to Hydra?"

There was a long pause before Bucky responded. "Yes," he replied in a deep and dry voice.

The Captain patted Bucky on the shoulder and smiled, "You will be the first of many Winter Soldiers." He looked back up at the doctor, "Again, doctor."

"Sir…" the Doctor protested.

The Soviet Captain nodded again, "Now…again, Doctor." The Doctor nodded as turned back to the memory suppressing machine to reactivate it for a second round of conditioning. The Captain smiled and walked away….

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**August 1946**

**New Buckingham Island**

At this point, Bucky has been the Winter Soldier for almost a year and has made a name for himself as the Soviet and Hydra's most deadly assassin. Though he is far from the perfect soldier the Soviet Union and Hydra need him to be, he has successfully conducted multiple assassinations, instilled chaos, and executed acts of sabotage in many countries all over the world. One of the major operations he has done thus far was numerous assassinations of Greek Army officers and politicians at the start of the Greek Civil War. These assassinations prompted a far more brutal war that may be prolonged for many years with the hopes of Communist rule over Greece and establish not only Soviet Hegemony but Hydra as well.

But even with major successes in the field, the Winter Soldier has failed to win in an engagement with his American counterpart, Captain America. Earlier in the year, a small American incursion lead by then Agent Carter infiltrated a Soviet facility in Belarus with a team of U.S. Army Commandos and Captain Rogers. Before extracting from the Soviet facility with Doctor Johann Fennhoff (also known as Doctor Viktor Ivchenko), a Soviet/Hydra psychiatrist, the Americans came in contact with
the Winter Soldier and Soviet response forces. The fight that ensued was the first-time Captain America, and the Winter Soldier fought each other. Captain Rogers was able to hold off the Winter Soldier which allowed the American Commando team to escape into the forest. Even at a superior tactical advantage, the Winter Soldier failed to exploit success which allowed Captain Rogers to escape. Though the brief fight seemed like a win for the Soviet Winter Soldier, the Hydra and the Soviets considered it a stalemate and a defeat. This failure lead to Bucky requiring more and more painful conditioning sessions with the Memory Suppression Machine. Additionally, at this time, Hydra scientists came to believe that memory suppression wasn't permanent which contributed to the Winter Soldier undergoing regular memory wipes to keep him memory-free and emotionless toward those he killed. But unfortunately for Hydra, there was no machine to suppress fate.

Its late at night and Bucky sat in a dark garage of an auto shop, hiding from the local Police after his fight with Captain America in the streets of the main town. This was his second fight with the Captain with either of them seemingly able to gain the upper hand over the other. Their fight in the street ended abruptly after Agent Margaret Carter Rogers shot him through the shoulder and British Police Officers appeared at the scene. He now sat in silence on a chair with the deceased tenants of the building sealed in body bags on the cold garage floor. He sat in a sense of individual isolation wearing his dark tactical mask and gear under a single light bulb hanging from the ceiling.

The side door of the garage slowly opened and the Soviet Captain and three other men wearing black suits walked entered calmly. All the men looked identical, they were all pale and all wore matching black suits, black ties, and white dress shirts. The Captain stepped into the light behind the Winter Soldier, "You let him get away." Bucky said nothing. The man walked around him and stood in front of him, "You let Captain America get the better of you," he said in a stern and slow tone. Bucky remained silent. The Captain bent down in front of him, "Kill him…or he kills you." He looked coldly at the assassin, "He knows now that you are tracking him. He knows what you can do." He shook his head slowly, "He won't make the same mistake twice." He stood up, "Or you can always go after his wife. Margaret Carter Rogers." He chuckled, "She has become quite the star in the SSR. She has proven to be a headache for the Soviet Union…make the decision, and finish the job." He shook his head, "but this…is the second time you fought the Captain, and again it ended in a stalemate. That will not happen a third time." He sighed, "Now…give me a mission report." Bucky remained silent and emotionless to the Captain's commands. The Captain repeated with a harsher tone, "Mission report now." Bucky remained silent and unresponsive. The Captain stepped forward and slapped him across the face.

After a long tense pause, Bucky responded, "The target…” He remembered Captain Rogers' face from their fight mere moments ago. "Who is he?" Bucky asked quietly.

The Captain responded evenly, "He's the same person you fought against earlier this year on another assignment."

"I knew him…” Bucky responded quietly as his mind slowly started to analyze the face of the man he fought. The face of Captain America was the only thing that stood out in his mind and occupied his every thought. He didn't even recognize Margaret Rogers outside of being a target, but Captain America seemed to be very important in his subconscious which influenced his questions.

The Captain sighed, "You work and what you're doing will change the world forever…and it a positive way. Do you see what you're doing? You're simply shaping tomorrow." He nodded, "Western society after the war is at a tipping point between order and chaos. Hydra with the power of the Soviet Union is the means to peace. If we don't do our part today, humanity might never have a tomorrow."

Bucky responded quietly, "But I knew him…"
The Captain sighed again, "Prep him…"

One of the other men in the room spoke up, "Yes, sir," he said as he and another man went to grab Bucky by the arms.

"Get the machine out of the truck, we'll wipe him here," the Captain responded.

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**Spring 1947**

**Warehouse District, New York City, New York**

Its late in the evening and Bucky sat in a leather chair at the center of a warehouse floor with a doctor in a white lab coat repairing his metal prosthetic that was damaged from the fight with Captain America earlier in the day. Ten pale men in black suits and ties surrounded Bucky in a wide circle in the shadows, keeping a watchful eye over the generally unstable Winter Soldier. Bucky suddenly started to get flashbacks from earlier.

Captain America stood up and looked at him with a confused look, "Bucky?" At that scene, Bucky's mind started to jump from memory to memory. He saw a German with glasses leaning over him on an operating table, "Sergeant Barnes…" the man said quietly. Bucky's mind was regaining fragments of memories but it was all fuzzy and hazy to be clear.

Bucky's mind jumped again to a random high speed German train rocketing down the tracks on the side of a snowy German mountain. He clung desperately to a railing outside of a blown-out section of the train, and saw Captain America frantically trying to reach him, "Bucky!" the American called out to him. But right before he could reach the Captain, the railing snapped and he fell hundreds of feet into the mountain valley. He could hear the American Captain call out, "No!" as he replayed the memory in his mind.

His mind jumped to another memory of him being discovered by Soviet soldiers and being dragged through the snow. He looked down and saw his left arm was missing, leaving behind a dark red trail of blood from his shredded upper arm in the snow. He blinked in his mind and heard the German's voice in the back of his mind again, "The procedure already started…" Bucky opened his eyes and saw doctors operating on him with drills and screws. He blinked again and woke up with an advanced metal prosthetic with five working fingers replacing his lost left arm. In a flash, he strangled the attending doctor coming to check up on him. The German voice returned quietly, "You'll be the new fist of Hydra…" The memory ended with a doctor stabbing him in the chest with a syringe which sparked him to see Captain America and another man who looked less imposing. The other individual wore a messy suit and is vastly shorter and skinnier than the mountainous form of Captain America. The image of the smaller man troubled him. Where does he remember him?

Bucky returned to reality and suddenly elbowed the doctor working on his arm in the ribs with such force; it sent him falling to the ground ten feet away. The ring of shadowy men instantly turned and pointed their side arms at him in a defensive posture. Bucky stared at the floor while he breathed heavily as he returned back to the present. The same Soviet Captain stepped out from the shadows and silently approached Bucky. He spoke softly, "I thought I told you to kill Captain America…" he said angrily because this marked the third time the Winter Soldier failed to deliver Captain Rogers' body. The Captain spoke sternly, "Instead we lost five assets and you let Captain America and Agent Rogers escape." He walked around Bucky slowly while staring at him coldly.

Bucky continued to stare at the floor, "I couldn't…" He looked up, "I knew him…"
"You don't know him!" the Captain expressed in rage. He stopped in front of Bucky, "You. Do not. Know Him," he repeated slowly. "Again, he's the target and the enemy…"

Bucky cringed, "I've met him before." He looked up at his handler, "From the car… I recognize him." He breathed heavily.

The Captain stared angrily, "You have never met him," he said for what to be the millionth time. He saw Bucky hesitate. He leaned down and whispered, "Do you want to go back on the chair?"

Bucky cringed angrily, "No…I don't."

"Do you want to go back into indoctrination?" the Captain pressed even more.

"No…” Bucky said angrily.

"Then finish the job. We have a feeling where he's going to be tomorrow so you'll have another shot… but this is your last chance." The Captain spoke deeply, "Finish the job or else you'll be back into indoctrination." Bucky stared at him with a cold stare. The Soviet Captain spoke coldly, "You are a weapon. Nothing more. Remember that."

Bucky stood up then quickly left without a second glance. A tall blonde female agent walked up to the handler in a black women's business suit and spoke in a perfect American accent, "His memory is coming back to him. I see it in his eyes. He does recognize, Captain Rogers."

The Captain watched Bucky's silhouette disappear in the shadows, "I know. We cannot let his memory surface again. Can't let his past history with Captain Rogers affect his mission." He nodded, "Once he eliminates Captain America, we will put him back in indoctrination and start from scratch. We'll send him back to Siberia." He squinted, "Follow him with snipers. If he doesn't kill Captain America, then the snipers will kill them both."

"What about Peggy?" The woman asked.

"If the snipers have a window…eliminate her." The Captain spoke coldly.

Bucky heard every word. He clenched his fists defensively as he walked away. Bucky started to struggle with his memories and the indoctrination the Soviets put him through. He struggled to remember who he was, but he refused to go back to indoctrination…

The handler turned to the woman, "You will continue to pose as an American citizen until I call for your activation."

The woman nodded, "I can no longer be Dottie. I need new papers…"

"You'll get them," the Captain said. Suddenly he heard the distinct sound of something metal rolling on the warehouse floor. The two paused and turned around and saw a metal circular object roll in between two other agents. The agents looked down with a confused expression. "Grenade!" the Captain yelled. As soon as he yelled, the grenade exploded instantly killing the two agents immediately adjacent to it and sending a wall of molten hot shrapnel in every direction. Shrapnel pierced the Captain in the shoulder and base of the neck and graze "Dottie” in the side of her head sending the two of them to the ground. Blood quickly pooled from the Captain's neck onto the now warm warehouse floor. The grenade managed to wound four other Soviet agents near them, the remaining agent's dove to the ground and protected their face with their hands.

Bucky slowly walked out from the shadows with a pistol in hand. A wounded Soviet agent attempted to sit up, "Traitor…” he said in agony. Bucky immediately shot him in the head with lethal
precision. He then quickly turned and shot the remaining agents with deadly accuracy before they could respond. Bucky heard a groan followed by choking of blood at the center of the circle of death he made. He slowly walked over to his former Captain and stared at him silently.

The Captain gurgled as the blood filled his mouth, "Traitor…" He coughed up blood, "Your memory is dangerous… do you really think the Americans will simply take you back… You're a weapon…"

Bucky pointed his pistol at him, "Not anymore," he said as shot him in the head. Bucky lowered his pistol and took a moment to look at the carnage he made. The lifeless bodies of Soviet agents lay on the ground with blood pooling underneath them creating a sea of blood on the warehouse floor. Bucky took a deep breath; he may not remember everything from his personal history let alone who he truly is, but Bucky does know that he can't serve the Soviet Union and Hydra no longer. His memory may be fragmented, but he does have frequent and painful recalls of the atrocities he did for them even after he went through the memory suppressing machine. After everything he has been through in the past two years, with what he can remember, he had enough of the pain and death. He just wanted to disappear. But, before he did, he wanted to know who he is, and the one person who seemed to know him is his adversary, Captain Rogers. Based on his limited memories, the American holds the key to finding out who he is.

Bucky couldn't trust anyone, not even the American government and he's not sure if he can trust Captain Rogers fully. But finding Captain Rogers and confronting him is the best course of action. With his next step planned, Bucky quietly left the carnage in the warehouse to find Captain America.

Once Bucky left the warehouse, Dottie opened her eyes and sat up from the blood pool created by the Soviet Captain next to her. She ran her hand over the side of her head, checking the graze that the shrapnel from the grenade made, and realized she was bleeding severely but not enough to be considered life threatening. She slowly stood up and looked around at the amount of dead left behind by the Winter Soldier with cold emotionless eyes. Her mission just changed…

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**Two Years Later**

**April 1949**

By April 1949, after many years of misery, through the depression and World War II, postwar prosperity is in widespread. With companies supplying newer models of cars, televisions are becoming more widespread, and other domestic goods in high demand in American consumer society, postwar America looks to be the example of peace and prosperity. The cars got bigger with some 6.2 million new cars sold in the United States alone. Television became more popular with nearly 10 million television sets in American homes with a growing number of TV programs broadcasted across the country. The postwar United States was full of national pride and longing for a new sense of life without war. The American dream in the postwar America became an enduring image of 2.5 kids, pet dog, and a house with a white picket fence. A house in the growing suburbs, good job in the city, and a family to come home to was the picture-perfect vision of peace. Though the country continues to enjoy prosperity, the continued developments in the escalating Cold War overshadowed the optimistic vision of peace.

By April of 1949, the Cold War continued to escalate, the Soviet blockade of Berlin continued with the Berlin Airlift running continuously to help the starving people of Berlin. The Soviet Union continued to close its grip on the Eastern Bloc of several socialist states of Central and Eastern Europe using these smaller countries as a buffer between the West and itself. While the tension between the Soviets and the West increased, the bloody Greek Civil War dragged on for its third
year. In the Pacific in September 1948, the Soviet Union declared the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to be the legitimate government of Korea, Kim Il-Sung as Prime Minister. The United States and the West, however, recognize South Korea as the legitimate government. With tensions rising between the West and the East and fear of Communist expansion a very real fear, the United States, Canada, and Western European countries including Belgium, Denmark, Iceland, Italy, Norway, Portugal, and United Kingdom formed a unified military alliance to resist Communist expansion. The military alliance established on April 4, 1949, became known as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization or NATO, which constitutes a system of collective defense whereby its members agree to mutual defense in response to an attack by any external party, specifically the Soviets. Three of the NATO members, the United States, France, and United Kingdom, are permanent members of the UN Security Council with the power to veto UN proposals. The global events that are occurring are setting the stage for a greater conflict. Peace is quickly hanging by a thread.

With the Cold War escalating and the threat of espionage and subversion from the Soviet Union a genuine fear in the United States, SHIELD continued to conduct a multitude of domestic and overseas operations to protect national security and American allies. The CIA predominately focused on espionage and counter-espionage of the Soviet Union while SHIELD concentrates on protecting the homeland from all possible threats. The most significant threat that SHIELD is focused on is Hydra and the Soviet Leviathan: Deep Science and Espionage Agency which are concurrently one entity. The danger of mass destruction that threatens national security and peace from any outside entity is the primary reason of SHIELD’s existence. Hydra and Leviathan together have proved to be capable of mass destruction which SHIELD intends to counter in any capacity both foreign and domestic. But soon, SHIELD will come in contact with a threat that only a handful of SHIELD operatives including Steve and Peggy have ever faced…

**Steve & Margaret Rogers Residence, Scarsdale NY**

Peggy dressed in her light blue lace dress with a Bardot neck, ¾ sleeve, and swing skirt and heels, leaned over the toilet in the master bathroom and vomited. She gripped her stomach in discomfort and held her hair in place behind her ear with her other hand as she continued to throw up into the toilet. She just finished doing her hair when the wave of sickness washed over her forcing her to vomit into the toilet. She groaned and flushed the toilet then stood up to catch her breath. Peggy sighed as she wiped her lips with the back of her hand, uncomfortable from the horrible feeling and taste that accompanies vomiting. She walked over to the sink and filled a glass of water to rinse out her mouth from the bitter taste. As she rinsed out her mouth for the third or fourth time, she looked up at her reflection in the mirror and recalled the doctor's appointment she had earlier in the week. Peggy has been feeling frequently nauseous the past month with the need to use the bathroom increasing the last few weeks. These things occurring to her health including missing her period gave her the thought that she might be pregnant again which prompted her to visit her doctor just to make sure. The signs are there, but Peggy needed medical confirmation. She got confirmation soon enough at her doctor's office; she's, in fact, pregnant again just a year after giving birth to Sarah and Michael. Though she had a feeling she was pregnant, the official news caught her by surprise. To be honest, she does want more children with Steve, but she didn't think she would get pregnant this quickly after Sarah and Michael. It didn't bother Peggy at the slightest, it was more surprise than anything else, not to say she isn't happy about having a growing family. She's been pregnant for a little over a month, and since finding out earlier in the week, she hasn't told Steve. Peggy didn't want to tell her husband immediately since she wanted a creative way of giving him the news because last time they were in a high-stress situation when she "told" him. She's definitely happy and looks forward to raising their growing family with Steve. Though Peggy couldn't help but feel concerned about her work at SHIELD since tensions between the West and the East are getting worse with each passing month, and Hydra is still dangerously lurking in the shadows.
Peggy walked out of the bathroom and sat down at her vanity table to fix her red lipstick that was accidentally wiped off from rinsing her mouth. Once she finished up with her lipstick, Peggy looked over her shoulder and checked the time on the clock on her nightstand to make sure she had enough time to fix her make-up and hair before joining her husband downstairs. Satisfied she still had the whole morning, she made her final adjustments to make sure nothing was ruined when she vomited earlier. Peggy couldn't help but smile at her own reflection, not because she's vain but because she knows Steve will be speechless when he sees her. Every time she dresses up for a formal occasion, Steve without fail, becomes speechless as he admires every inch and curve of her. Peggy knew she's a beautiful woman, and has no troubles admitting it or accepting it. But, Steve is the only person in the world she allows to stare and admire her looks and body in a lustful way. She couldn't lie, she always adored and looked forward to those looks on his face. Though making Steve speechless is always good, there's a special occasion she's dressed up today, and that's because she's the maid of honor for Angie and Daniel's wedding. She quickly fixed her makeup so wouldn't be late to her best friend's wedding.

Downstairs in the living room, Steve sat on the couch dressed in a well-pressed black suit and silver tie with Sarah and Michael sitting down on either side of him while he read them a children's book. Sarah wore a light blue toddler dress with a blue bow on the hip while her twin brother, Michael, wore a black suit and clip-on tie. The whole family is dressed nicely, and all are going to Angie's wedding. The twins are a shocking one-year-old, one-year and seven months to be exact. The twins had grown a lot since their first birthday last year, not just in size but in language, and physical development. The twins took their first steps in early December and are excitedly still learning to walk, or toddling to be exact. Though the twins aren't exactly proficient in walking yet, they efficiently use furniture as support as they cruise around the house on their daily adventures. Michael is more of the adventurer than his twin which is cause for Peggy and Steve to keep an eye on him the most when he moves and plays around the house. But both Peggy and Steve encourage their young toddlers to explore and move freely throughout the house and often have to refrain from picking them up and carrying them too often. To facilitate their want to play and walk around, Steve and Peggy made sure they childproofed everything to assure a safe environment for their kids to play.

In addition to walking more, the twins are talking a lot more as well. Though their vocabulary ranges from "mama" and "dada," and mostly consisting of babbling than speaking, the important this is that the twins are merely vocalizing more and more. An essential aspect of both Michael's and Sarah's growth is that they both recognize their mom's and dad's voices as well respond to their names. They also respond to simple directions like "up" and "where's your nose?" Steve and Peggy know that the twins will learn more words by imitating them and merely reading to them. One of Steve's favorite things to do with the kids is read and tell them creative stories. Peggy enjoys telling stories too, but she admits that Steve's creativity is more adorable and enjoyable than hers. Overall, Steve and Peggy work together to develop their children, and their two twins are growing and learning quickly. It won't be long until they speak full sentences and read books by themselves. Time will go by like a flash and before Steve and Peggy know it, Sarah and Michael will be in high school, and to Steve's fear… Sarah dating…

Michael and Sarah were leaning on Steve' side and gripping his leg as he continued reading the book Horton Hatches the Egg, a favorite of Sarah's based on her cheers when he mentions reading it to her. Both the twins are unsurprisingly quiet as they listen with great interest in the story Steve is reading. He couldn't help but smile at his kids as he turned the page of the thin children's book. It's moments like these that he feels blessed and lucky to have such a wonderful family consisting of two beautiful children and a caring, loving, and beautiful wife. He grinned as he read in a goofy voice, "I meant what I said and I said what I meant. An elephant's faithful one-hundred percent!" Both Michael and Sarah giggled happily at their dad's goofiness in his words. Steve couldn't help but laugh with them as he continued, "So poor Horton sat there. The whole winter through… and then
came the springtime with…” He paused for dramatic effect, "with trouble anew! His friends gathered round and they shouted with glee." He looked down at Sarah and Michael with a smile, "shout with glee," he told them in a cheerful tone. Sarah and Michael yelled happily on command. Steve laughed, "Look! Horton the Elephant is up in a tree!" Sarah and Michael cheered once again in unison earning a proud smile from their dad.

Suddenly Steve heard Peggy's heels click on the hardwood stairs as she walked down the steps. He closed the book and smiled to his kids, "Looks like mommy's done."

Sarah smiled, "Yay!" she cheered happily.

Michael gripped Steve's leg and pushed himself up to stand on the couch cushion, Steve wrapping his arm around his son to balance him in case he fell. "Mama!" Michael cheered happily.

Peggy walked down the steps and smiled at her family, "I can hear you three laughing and yelling from upstairs," she said cheerfully.

Steve twisted on the couch while maintaining positive control on his kids to make sure they don't fall, to look at his wife. Steve was about to speak but lost his words when he saw his wife standing before him in her figuring accentuating dress. With her long brown hair, down in elegant waves framing her gorgeous face and lively dress complimenting her figure, Steve was a loss for words. Speechless. Peggy giggled at Steve's loss for words, an exact reaction she wanted from him. Sarah peered over the couch and called out, "Mama!" she yelled happily dragging Steve back to reality.

Steve chuckled, "Peggy, you look…amazing. Drop dead beautiful," he said as he stood up making sure he kept his hands-on Sarah and Michael to keep them safe on the couch.

Peggy grinned as she walked around the couch, "You don't look so bad yourself, darling." She walked up to her husband and rested her hands on his chest, "You look rather dashing." She leaned forward and kissed his lips briefly. She gripped his collar, "Ready?"

Steve nodded, "Ready as I'm ever going to be." He looked down at the twins, "Sure it's wise to bring Sarah and Michael to Angie's wedding? It's not too late to call Katherine."

Peggy nodded, "It's Saturday and Katherine deserves the day off, plus the weekends are our family days," she said with a tender smile. "And you know how much Sarah and Michael misses us during the days in the week." She chuckled and looked down at the twins who are now playing on the couch, "They go through withdrawal, so it's best that we spend time with our kids on the weekends."

Steve chuckled, "I think I go through withdrawal when I leave for work," he said wrapping an arm around Peggy's waist.

Peggy giggled, "Me too. I miss them madly when I'm at work." She looked up at her husband, "It's a family day."

Steve wrapped her in his arms and pressed her back against his chest. He planted a kiss on her head, "All for family days. Looking forward to bringing our little toddlers to a wedding."

Peggy laughed, "Angie did invite them. You know how much she loves our kids."

"That she does." He looked down at her, "Well, the baby bags are packed with everything from snacks, towels, and diapers."

Peggy turned in his arms and looked up at Steve, "Don't forget the change of clothes."
Steve chuckled, "Already packed." He looked to the door, "Ready to go, Mrs. Rogers? I'll grab Sarah and the bags, you grab Michael?"

Peggy smiled widely, "Sounds like a plan. But let me use the loo really quick and we'll go."

Steve let go of his wife, "Again? You were in the bathroom all morning." He turned and picked up his daughter off the couch and kissed her cheek.

Peggy shrugged, "A lady's got to do what a lady's got to do, darling." she said with a wink before turning and heading to the downstairs bathroom.

Steve chuckled and smiled at Sarah, "Mama has been acting pretty weird the past few weeks." He quickly looked down and checked Michael on the couch to see him entertaining himself with his clip-on tie.

Sarah cocked her head to the side, "Mama?"

Steve laughed, "Mama will always keep Daddy on his toes."

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St. Patrick's Old Cathedral

New York City

Angie Martinelli stood at the end of the aisle in a beautiful long floor length white dress with lace short sleeve and V-neck. The dress is appliqué with elegant white designs sewn into the dress. She looked like a goddess dressed in pure white with her single tier veil up no longer obstructing her beautiful face. Opposite of her, holding both of her hands, is her soon to be husband, Daniel Sousa. He stood with a confident smile in a black suit and silver tie and stared lovingly into his soon to be wife's eyes. The church is beautiful with old stone and brick and stained glass that produced a pure angelic ambiance throughout the church. The Victorian architecture of the church wrought with iron grille, arches, spires, bell tower, heavy iron-bound door, and candles gave way to the feeling of old. The spring sun streamed through the stained glass produced a bright and tranquil atmosphere that no one can ignore regardless of belief and creed.

The sizeable crowd in the pews consisting of close friends and family of the bride and groom sat happily in support of the wedding. Angie's family consisting of her grandmother, mother, father, brother, and a handful of her close cousins are all present to watch her get married. She also had all of her closest friends from her old job at the L&L Automat, friends from the theatrical company she currently acts in, and some of her former neighbors from the Griffith Hotel she considered friends. For Daniel, mixed into the crowd are his close family composing of his father, mother, and two sisters. He also has close friends, and colleagues attend his wedding including Jack Thompson, Rick Ramirez, and Mike Li. The crowd wasn't large nor was it small, but it was sizeable enough to fill the front half of the church and intimate enough for the happy couple. Steve, in support of both the bride and groom, sat toward the front of the crowd flanked by his two young toddlers who are surprisingly well behaved for the ceremony. He sat close enough to the alter, and on Angie's side, so Sarah and Michael had a better of view of their mother standing by Angie as her maid of Peggy stood beside Angie with a warm smile on her lips, and next to her stood the flower girl and four bridesmaids consisting of Angie's cousins and friends from the theater wearing dresses of similar light blue to Peggy's. Sousa stood with his best man and groomsmen comprised of his brother and cousins wearing matching suits and ties. Together, Angie and Sousa stood at the alter hand in hand waiting for the rest of their life together.

Though the day is about Angie and Sousa, Steve couldn't help but look at Peggy from his seat. He
would argue that she's the most beautiful one in the church, but that's his biased opinion. Of course, Angie looked drop dead gorgeous in her dress but Peggy is his wife so it's right for him to say Peggy is more beautiful. Standing by Angie, Peggy would often share a look with her husband and her kids, always with a consistent, smile of true love and happiness that continues to bloom in the family. The priest at the alter spoke up with a warm smile, "before you say your vows, I ask you to remember that love…which is rooted in faith, trust, and acceptance… will be the foundation of an abiding and deepening relationship.” Angie and Sousa smiled happily at each other as the priest continued, "No other ties are more tender, no other vows more sacred than those you now assume. If you are able to keep the vows you take here today, not because of any religious or civic law, but out a desire to love and be loved by another person fully, without limitation…then your life will have joy and the home you establish will be a place in which you both will find the direction of your growth, your freedom, and your responsibility…” Angie couldn't help but beam happily with complete love and joy for Daniel. Sousa, too, has a wide smile but his eyes betrayed the joy that's radiating through his heart. The couple are at that pivotal point where no other feeling can match the one they have now. The Priest smiled at Angie, "you may say your vows."

Angie gripped Sousa's hands and spoke with tears of joy filling her eyes, "Daniel, when I first met you, there was something in you I couldn't quite explain that I loved. After spending my days with you I come to see your unbreakable spirit, unshakable resolve, and the loving and kind attitude you have every day. You make every day an adventure. You bring joy to my life. You taught me to pursue every goal and every dream, and to not accept any limitations." She beamed happily, "I, Angie, take you, Daniel Sousa to be my husband, my constant friend and partner, and my love…” Angie gripped Sousa's hand affectionately, "I will work to create a bond of honesty, respect, and trust; one that withstands the tides of time and change, and grows along with us. I vow to honor and respect you for all that you are and will become, taking pride in who we are, both separately and together. I will join with you in an ongoing struggle to create a world we all want to live in. Our home will be a sanctuary and a respite for us and for those whom we cherish. Above all, I will give you my love freely and unconditionally. I pledge this to you from the bottom of my heart, for all the days of our lives." Peggy smiled happily behind Angie at her two friends. Steve and the rest of the crowd smiled in silence and happiness at the soon to be married couple at the altar.

The priest nodded at Sousa. Daniel smiled and spoke anxiously at first before regaining his calm, "Angela… when I first met you… you were larger than life. Being introduced to you has been by far the best thing that has ever happened to me." He gave a brief smile to Peggy then continued to look back affectionately at his wife-to-be, "You taught me that I'm not less of a man because I have one leg, but instead taught me to be proud of the things I can do that I'm not barred by limitation." He gripped her hands, "I, Daniel, take you, Angela Martinelli to be my wife, my constant friend and partner, and my love. I will work to create a bond of honesty, respect, and trust; one that withstands the tides of time and change, and grows along with us…” He continued to repeat the vows he and Angie made together while everyone watched happily. Peggy couldn't help but grin happily at her two friends while the ceremony continued. She's extremely happy for the two of them. Both Angie and Daniel have struggled in life and deserve the happiness they both vow to share. Though Peggy knows that the road won't always be smooth, frankly it wasn't always smooth sailing with Steve either (they had their fair share of bickers and fights), she knows that the two of them will overcome any challenges in their relationship.

The priest smiled at Angie, "Now, do you Angela Martinelli, take Daniel Sousa to be your husband, to support and respect him in the good times and bad, to nurture him, to love him, and to grow with him throughout the seasons of your life?"

Angie smiled happily, "I do,” she said without pause or hesitation.

The priest looked at Sousa, "Do you, Daniel Sousa, take Angela Martinelli to be your wife, to
support and respect her in the good times and bad, to nurture her, to love her, and to grow with her throughout the seasons of your life?"

Sousa smiled confidently, "I do," he said like it was always meant for him to say to her.

The priest smiled happily, "by the power invested in me, under God, and the state of New York, I now pronounce you husband and wife." Angie and Daniel shared ecstatic smiles and loving eyes while the crowd all beamed with joy and happiness for the couple. The priest nodded, "You may kiss the bride," he said to Daniel.

Daniel stepped forward and slowly captured Angie's lips in a tender kiss. The moment the couple kissed, the crowd cheered happily with enormous applause and hollers of joy. Steve grinned and did his best to clap his hands, but found it difficult while balancing Sarah on his lap. Peggy clapped happily behind Angie with the rest of the bridesmaids and groomsmen. Angie wrapped her arms around her new husband as Daniel refused to break the kiss like he was afraid he would lose her any second. Angie didn't seem to complain. After a while, the couple split the kiss finally allowing the guests to cheer louder with joy.

Over the mass of applause, the priest smiled, "I present to you, Mr. and Mrs. Sousa!" The crowd's loud claps and cheers were the response.

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**Woolworth Building, 15th Floor**

**New York City**

A lifeless woman slumped against the wall in her office with a broken neck and a fractured skull with severe bruising around the neck and face and blood oozing out of the front of her head. It seemed that someone with unusual strength was the one responsible for this poor woman's demise. A shadowy figure walked over the corpse and opened the window to get a high angle view of the City Hall over three hundred yards away. The figure breathed calmly and brought up a scoped bolt action Soviet M1891 Mosin Sniper rifle and aimed out the window, staying two or three steps away from the window itself to prevent exposing the muzzle and remain concealed. The shadowy figure sighted in through the scope and watched the dozens of innocent people moving in and out of the building. The shooter had a good view of the city hall even above the trees surrounding the building and adjacent park. From the angle in the Woolworth building, the individual could see people crossing the street and stopping by to pick up their daily magazines and newspapers from a newsstand on the sidewalk. Ordinary citizens living their everyday lives without a care of the world had no idea what was about to happen.

The individual breathed steadily and fired a shot at an old man sitting stationary on a bench. The loud thud from the rifle could be heard throughout the building and echoed outside in the sprawling city claiming its victim from over three hundred yards away. The old man slumped forward and fell onto the ground face first. The shooter cycled the bolt and chambered another round from the magazine and sighted in once again with lethal efficiency. The shooter paused for a few long seconds, carefully sighting in onto the next victim. The citizens below barely had time to react to the first shot before the assailant shot another round with another thunderous bang that echoed out through the city block. The shot hit a man on his way into the capital building causing him to fall limp just short of the door. The assailant shot four more times in rapid succession claiming four more with deadly accuracy. Even though the shooter missed once, whoever the shooter is, is exceptionally skilled.

The killer dropped the rifle on the office desk, stepped over the deceased woman, and walked out of the room calmly…
"Uncle Johnny's"

Wedding Reception

After the wedding, all the guests were invited to the wedding reception at a city favorite Italian restaurant called "Uncle Johnny's" that was about a twenty-minute drive from the church. The restaurant is located nearby Central Park but with city traffic, the time to the restaurant from the church was closer to thirty minutes. "Uncle Johnny's" is relatively large for a restaurant in the city with two floors. The restaurant split into two parts divided by stories, the first floor of the restaurant is the regular dining area, and the top level is the spacious dining hall capable of seating all the guests comfortably. On the top floor, the banquet room had large windows on one side to see the busy street below, and the other side of the room is a bar with a wine rack spanning much of the wall. Adjacent to the bar is the second staircase explicitly used for the waiters to bus the food up and down from the kitchen. The circular tables in the banquet hall adorned with a white tablecloth, candles, flower décor, and name placards for the assigned tables of the guests provided a joyful atmosphere. While most of the tables in the hall are large and circular fitting about six-to-eight guests, the smaller table that could only fit two is specifically for the married couple. In a cutaway in the sea of white tablecloth, in the middle of the room, is where small swing band played and a place for the medium-sized dance floor with people dancing happily.

The guests happily conversed amongst themselves, danced, and listened to the lively music from the band as everyone enjoyed the afternoon wedding reception. The reception just started, and everyone is having a good time with the band played an upbeat, energetic tune. The newly married Sousas sat at their table happily cuddling close with each other as they whispered sweet nothings amongst themselves with the look of love, joy, happiness, and anticipation for the future. Its no denying that Angie Martinelli Sousa and Daniel Sousa are perfect for each other just by looking at them interact. Even with all the guests in the reception, the Sousas seemed to exist in their own world. Though they're enjoying the festivities and fun, the newlyweds enjoyed their closeness while still surrounded by their friends and family. They even danced a quite a few times already.

Steve, Peggy, and their two twins toddlers sat together at their table closest to the dance floor and the Sousas table. Both Sarah and Michael sat between their mother and father respectively in booster seats, so the two parents can tend to their needs and not let the twins feel uncomfortable sitting next to a stranger. At the Rogers table also sat Mike Li and Priscilla, his Japanese-American Fiancé, who's quite a joy to be around. Michael screwed his face up at his father like he was struggling to say something, "B-b-b…"

Steve chuckled and smiled at his son, "what is it, kiddo?" he said leaning down to listen. Peggy produced a small smile while cleaning Sarah's cheek after the little girl accidentally dripped milk out of her mouth after drinking from the baby bottle.

Michael smiled, "Bottle?" he asked in a cute tone.

Steve chuckled, "I'll get it, don't worry." He looked up at his wife, "Hey hon, may I have Michael's bottle please?"

Peggy nodded and stopped cleaning Sarah's cheek for a moment to reach below her chair to get Michael's baby bottle out of the baby bag. The Rogers made sure to have two of every essential item for the twins, two bottles, two times the number of diapers, and two times the number of snacks. Peggy then sat up and handed her husband Michael's color coded bottle, "Here," she said kindly.

"Thanks, hon," he said gratefully as he gave his son the bottle. Michael took the bottle from his father with his surprising firm grasp and began drinking it slowly.
Peggy placed the napkin back on the table and smiled at her daughter, "Goodness, darling, you sure can make a mess out of everything can't you," she said in a playful tone. She kissed her daughter on the head, "Want more food?" Sarah shook her head in response with a big grin on her lips. Peggy smiled and started to finish her own food on her plate.

Priscilla smiled at Peggy, "Goodness, Peggy. When Mike told me about you, I didn't imagine you would act and look like that," she chuckled. She waved her hand, "I hope that wasn't rude."

Peggy laughed, "No, it's quite alright. I heard far worse things from work and even from Mike. Even people thinking I would look more masculine," she said half-jokingly since perception of her like that still exists.

Priscilla gave her fiancé a dirty look, Mike shrugged, "What? I apologized." Priscilla rolled her eyes with a cheeky grin.

Sarah reached up onto the table and grabbed the spoon and started to whack the table with it. Peggy quickly reacted in a motherly fashion and gently removed the spoon from her daughter's hand, "Sweetie, stop that. That's rude." She placed the spoon next to the other utensils she previously placed out of Sarah's reach, "you want your picture book, honey?" The little girl nodded. Peggy chuckled, "Excuse me," she said to Priscilla and Mike as she reached down to the baby bag to get Sarah's picture book. Though Sarah can't read, she always got a kick out of the pictures.

Priscilla smiled, "That's okay, I understand." She looked over at Mike, "She's incredible."

Mike shrugged, "She can also be scary when she wants to," he said dancing around the compliment his fiancé just made to his boss.

"I bet. I'm so glad we sat with them," Priscilla said in awe.

Peggy sat up and opened up the picture book onto the table which instantly drew Sarah's attention, "Here you go, darling," she said wrapping an arm around her daughter.

Priscilla grinned, "A mother, have a husband, and work a fulltime job in the government? You can do it all. Much more than the average woman can do in society." Mike Li told his fiancé the minimum amount of information about his line of work, just enough information not to break the strict operational security regulations imposed by SHIELD and the government. Mostly, he only told her that he's a federal agent for SHIELD and his boss is Peggy. Like many agents like him, Mike gave little to no details of what his work truly entails, and much of the information he said to Priscilla was a lie to protect the agency. Though many people know SHIELD as an agency, fewer people know Peggy as one of the architects and ranking leaders of the new government agency. Though most of the agency remains a secret to the public, the existence of it is enough to make people come up with theories of its true intentions and purpose. SHIELD is highly secretive with each personnel sworn to secrecy on the majority of its daily operations and interworking's.

Steve jumped into the conversation, "She definitely can," he said with a smile. Peggy giggled softly and smiled at her husband.

Peggy rolled her eyes, "this life isn't as easy as you think, Priscilla. Believe me." No doubt Priscilla doesn't realize the dangerous things Peggy had done in the past nor know her true line of work. The people she killed, the situations she almost died from, and the questionable things she done for the greater good that the average person like Priscilla will never know. Being a mother and wife is by far the most normal thing she's has done, though being married to Steve and mothering their children is already far from normal.
Priscilla giggled, "I have to ask, how did you two meet?"

Mike laughed, "Now that's a good story." He smiled at his fiancé, "But, to be honest, I feel less manly every time I hear the story." He waved his hand, "Scratch that I feel less manly every time I'm next to the guy."

Priscilla laughed and leaned into Mike, "Don't feel that way. I'm out of his league and he's already taken," she said jokingly causing Peggy to chuckle. Mike chuckled and kissed her on the head in response.

Steve smiled, "Well if you want the story, it's a long story, but I think Peggy can tell it better than me," he said as he took the baby bottle from Michael once he realized he was done with it.

Peggy chuckled, "I don't know if I can give the story justice."

Suddenly Angie and Daniel appeared behind the Rogers with happy grins on their faces. Angie looked down at Peggy, "English! Why are you and your husband still sitting here!" she said with a grin. "You think I'm going to let you leave here without dancing with your husband?" Peggy smiled and shook her head.

Steve looked up at Daniel with a questioning look. Daniel shrugged, "Hey, sir, she's right. I got one leg and I already danced a few numbers." He patted his shoulder, "what's the worst that can happen. Enjoy the reception."

Steve laughed and looked at his wife who still had her arm around their daughter, "They got a point, sweetie."

Peggy looked up at Angie, "Steve and I have two kids to take care of and make sure they don't cause too much trouble."

Angie laughed, "Then let me take care of my niece and nephew while you two go dance." She rested her hands-on Peggy's shoulders and leaned down with a grin, "And I know how much you two love dancing, and you know how much I love Sarah and Michael. Toss me a bone?" She asked with a begging look.

Peggy rolled her eyes and looked over at her husband who had a big smile on his face. "Fine, you caught me," she conceded with a smile.

Angie jumped with joy, "Yay! It's a win-win. You two get to dance and we get two take care of your two joys."

Daniel smiled at Peggy, "Peggy, your kids will be in good hands."

Peggy rolled her eyes as she stood up from her seat, "They better be." She looked over at Steve, "Husband," she said in a humorous tone as she held out her hand.

Steve chuckled to himself and stood up, "Wife," he said as he took her hand. Angie and Daniel took a step back to let the lovely Rogers couple through to get to the dance floor.

Daniel pulled out the seat next to Sarah for Angie before taking his seat by Michael. "How's it going, Li?"

Li nodded at his friend, "Loving this party. Everything is great." He chuckled as he watched Daniel's wife engrossed in the picture book with Sarah. Both Sarah and Michael are extremely comfortable around Daniel and Angie since they see them on numerous occasions that they hardly make a fuss
around them. Li smiled at Daniel, "Congrats, Daniel and Angie."

Daniel smiled at his friend, "Thanks, Mike," he chuckled at that fact that Angie didn't respond because she's too immersed in the book with Peggy's daughter.

Priscilla leaned into Mike, "Ah, the Rogers seem like they haven't left the honeymoon phase yet," she said as she watched Steve and Peggy dance happily together. The Rogers now looked like they existed in their own little world away from everyone else on the dancefloor. Not once ever taking each other's eyes off one another, maybe for the occasional glance to check on Sarah and Michael, but for the most part, their eyes remained glued to each other. The music directed their movements around the dancefloor as they continued to dance happily with one another without a care in the world almost like nothing will separate them.

Daniel laughed, "Trust me. Their honeymoon phase ended, but they manage to keep the magic alive. Call me cheesy."

Angie quickly looked up at her husband, "You're cheesy, baby."

Daniel chuckled, "Thanks, hon. Anyway, they been through a lot together, not many people gone through what they did, so it makes sense why they're so tight." He shrugged, "I can let them explain. It's not my place to tell their story." He turned to Michael who gripped the sleeve of his suit causing him to shift his attention to the little boy. He smiled, "Hey buddy," he said in a cheerful tone, now focusing his attention on the Rogers son.

Angie looked up from the book she was flipping through with Sarah, "believe me the Rogers have their fair share of fights." Priscilla and Mike nodded with smiles as the group went into comfortable silence as the music from the band filled their ears.

Suddenly Director Chester Phillips accompanied by four men, two of which are SHIELD security, appeared in the banquet hall of the restaurant. Phillips quickly identifies the Rogers table by the two Rogers children sitting between Daniel and Angie, and immediately makes his way through the maze of tables and people to their table. While Steve and Peggy danced their second number, Peggy caught Phillips heading toward their table in the corner of her eye. She stopped dancing and gripped her husband's lapel and looked to confirm that it was really Director Phillips she saw heading to their table. Peggy quickly looked up at Steve and noticed he was watching Phillips too as he rested his hand on the small of her back. "Darling," she began.

Steve nodded, "I see him. Let's see what's going on." With that the couple walked arm in arm briskly to meet Phillips at their table.

Once the couple reached their table, Peggy spoke up to greet the Director who just reached their table, "Director." Daniel immediately realized who Peggy was talking too and stopped playing with Michael to stand up and greet the Director of SHIELD.

Phillips stopped in front of the table and frowned apologetically, "Sorry I have to come by on your day off and especially interrupt the reception, but I need you two back at the office. I'll tell you more when we get there," he said to Peggy and Steve.

A man in a black suit in tie next to Phillips spoke up, "It's urgent, Madam Director." Angie looked with concern as she watched and listened to the group while she kept Sarah Rogers close to her. She also kept a watchful eye on Michael since her husband stood up to greet the older gentleman who recently appeared.

Phillips turned and introduced the man who just spoke, "Rogers," he said mentioning Steve and
Peggy as a couple. "This is FBI Agent Witwer. The FBI will be working by us for this, so hope this gives you some sort of idea of how important this is." Phillips nodded, "Also... The Director of the FBI and the Secretary of State will be meeting with us back at headquarters."

Peggy instantly realized that once Phillips said he needed her and Steve back, and especially the fact that the FBI and Secretary of State are involved gave her an idea of how important the situation. She looked down at her two kids with Angie then looked back at Phillips, "We're going to have to bring our kids with us. At least for now."

The FBI agent shook his head, "I don't think..."

Phillips interrupted, "That's fine." He looked down at Sarah and Michael and gave them a gentle smile and a small wave, breaking the serious character he brought into the room just for the Rogers children. Sarah and Michael waved back energetically after Angie directed the two toddlers at him.

Steve nodded as he positioned himself behind his daughter, "We'll meet you at Aegis, sir." With that he grabbed the picture book and Sarah's bottle off the table then squatted down to hastily pack up the baby bag under the Sarah's chair. Once he had the bag all packed, he grabbed it from under the chair and slung the bag over his shoulder. He then gently picked up his daughter from her booster seat next to Angie, "Excuse me, Angie."

Angie smiled at Steve, "It's okay," she said as she stood up next to Steve.

"Sorry, looks like duty calls," He said to her as he rocked his daughter gently. He looked over at Peggy, "Hey, honey, I'll get the pram ready downstairs."

Peggy handed him Michael's baby bottle he left on the table, "Thanks, darling. Don't forget Michael's bottle."

Steve nodded and took the bottle from his wife with his free hand and quickly dropped it into the baby bag hanging off his shoulder. He smiled at Angie and Daniel, "Congratulations to both of you. See you two soon," he said before walking off. Angie and Daniel responded with a smile at Steve as they watched their friend walk away with Sarah in his arms.

Peggy turned her attention to her son, "Okay, sweetie. Upsy Daisy," she said as she picked her son up from his booster seat. Michael quickly hugged her and rested his cheek on her shoulder earning a tender smile from his mother. While all this was going on, many guests at the reception were staring at their group due to all the commotion going on. The band continued to play their set of music not being bothered by the commotion at the Rogers table.

Daniel took a step back to be by his wife, "Director, do you need..."

Phillips shook his head, "I'm sorry to interrupt the festivities, Sousa, but I don't think we need to take you away from your own reception and honeymoon. We'll call you if we really need you. Don't want to ruin your special day if we can help it."

Angie smiled at Phillips, "Thank you."

Phillips nodded, "Congratulations, Mr. & Mrs. Sousa." He turned to Peggy, "See you there," with that he turned and left with the FBI agent in tow.

Peggy turned to Mike, "I'm sorry, Mike, but I might need you and the rest of the team at the office."

Mike nodded and stood up, "You got it, boss, I'll grab them." He kissed his fiancé on the head before turning to grab Thomson and Ramirez.
Peggy repositioned her grip on her son before she turned to Daniel and smiled at him, "Congratulations again, Daniel. Enjoy the rest of your day and honeymoon, okay? Promise you won't let this situation worry you. If we really need you at the office, I'll call you, okay?" Peggy said as she gave him a hug with her free arm.

Daniel nodded, "Thanks, Peggy." He smiled as he turned to Angie, "Thanks for coming and for your support in us... and well everything. I wouldn't have met Angie without you and be where I am with her right now without you." Angie blushed in response to the praise. Daniel simply smiled lovingly at his wife then turned back to Peggy, "Just let me know if you need me."

Peggy nodded, "I will. I'll try not to so you can enjoy your honeymoon," she said with a smile. She took a step passed Daniel to speak to Angie, "Angie, congratulations to you too. I'm so happy for you. You two deserve happiness together," she said giving her a tight hug with her free arm while still holding her son in her arm.

Angie returned the tight hug, "Thank you so much for everything, English. I'm so glad I have you in my life," she said genuinely.

Peggy let go of her friend and still maintained a warm smile at her, "Enjoy every second of it, Angie," she said referring to marriage. "It's clear you two love each other and trust each other, but when it gets difficult remember why you're together in the first place," she said with a kind tone. Peggy chuckled, "And trust me, it'll get hard sometimes but it wouldn't be marriage if it was always easy. Believe me. But I know you two can overcome anything. Always remember you love each other and why you two got married in the first place," she said as her last few words of wisdom to her friend. She and Steve rarely fight but when they do it can get pretty vocal and usually doesn't last long. Steve makes it hard for her to stay mad at him because he always tries to find solutions to their problem and make it up to her in any way shape or form.

Angie smiled, "Thank you, Peggy. And I will always remember from this day on."

Peggy smiled, "anyway, Angie, thanks for letting me be your maid of honor." With that Peggy turned and began to excuse herself, "You two have a wonderful honeymoon, Mr. & Mrs. Sousa," she said to the newlyweds as she made her exit.

Daniel wrapped his arm around his wife as the two watched their friend make her way out of the reception.

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**Time Square, New York City, SHIELD: AEGIS HEADQUARTERS**

**Conference Room**

Steve sat at the head of the conference table with Peggy to his immediate left, who now wore a Navy-blue business suit and skit she stored in her office in the event she needed it, and to Steve's right is the FBI director, Agent Witwer, and Dean Acheson, the current Secretary of State. To Peggy's left is Howard Stark who was called in by Phillips, and two SHIELD analysts who were called in by her and Phillips to give additional analytical feedback on the situation that is about to be briefed. Though Peggy and Steve had to bring their two young toddlers to the office, they couldn't exactly bring them to the meeting, so they left the two of them in Peggy's office with Rose watching them for the duration of the meeting. Phillips stood at the other end of the conference table with his back to the chalkboard behind him. He spoke in an unusual tense manner, "Deputy Director Rogers and Captain," he said addressing Peggy first. He waved his hand over to the Secretary of State and the FBI Director, "As you know, this is Dean Acheson, the Secretary of State, and the FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover." Peggy could tell something was bothering Phillips by how he was speaking and
Hoover and Acheson nodded at both Steve and Peggy with a neutral expression which honestly made Peggy uncomfortable. Peggy had meetings with the FBI Director on a few occasions with the interactions with him being cold while still maintaining some resemblance of professionalism. Needless to say, Peggy's first impression of Hoover during her first few months as Deputy Director of SHIELD are extremely poor. It hasn't changed in the slightest since Hoover struck Peggy as an insufferable sexist individual. While SHIELD has a small handful of female field agents, FBI remains to have none. Under the direction of Director Hoover, the FBI utilized no female agents since the late twenties when he said that he "had no particular work for a woman agent." The sexist hiring practice continued through the forties thus far which only allowed women to be secretaries and phone operators for the Bureau, a typical job for women in that day. SHIELD on the other hand, under the leadership of Peggy and Phillips, know the utilization of female agents in espionage which prompted hiring more female agents for SHIELD although the vast majority remain to be men. Aside from Peggy's negative personal feelings toward him, Hoover is an excellent Director for the FBI, and she will give him that much.

Her impression of Dean Acheson was more favorable though she had little to no interaction with the Secretary of State. Of her limited exposure around him, she knew he's a tough anti-Communist, has a tough stance on the spread of Communism, and is in a central role in the nation's foreign policy. Other than being tough and assertive, she doesn't have much of an impression of him. Peggy, however, is curious as to why the Secretary of State is in the SHIELD headquarters right now. Must be a really big deal if the SHIELD Director(s), FBI Director, and the Secretary of State are all in the same place.

Phillips spoke up again, "Earlier today while you two were at the wedding," he said toward the Rogers. "An unknown shooter shot and killed four people by City Hall. The initial FBI investigation found that the shooter shot from the 15th floor of the Woolworth Building from a range of 300-500 yards out." He nodded at the analysts, "Take a look in these files and you'll see photographs taken from the preliminary FBI investigation." One of the analysts passed Howard a stack of three thick files to pass two for Peggy and Steve. Howard placed one file in front of him and handed Peggy the other two.

Peggy opened the file and flipped a couple pages until she reached the photos of the crime scene. She analyzed the photos for a moment then leaned back in her chair and fiddled with her pen, "Sounds like an experienced shooter."

Phillips nodded, "Agents found a Soviet made sniper rifle along with another body in the office room the shooter shot from, leaving a total of five dead." He leaned on the table, "The victim in the room was named Gloria Fischer, a secretary for Gene Hill a CEO of an Accounting business." He raised a hand, "Before you ask, Mr. Hill's alibi checks out because he was in a middle of a conference involving much of the management in the office with multiple witnesses in and out of the meeting." He stood up and paced around his side of the table, "Ms. Fischer died from extreme blunt force trauma with a broken zygomatic bone, severely broken neck with over four broken vertebrae in the neck, and a fractured skull."

Agent Witwer leaned forward and looked at Steve and Peggy, "Initial findings from our coroner suggest that her wounds were caused by hand and not by an object or weapon. We'll know more once the coroner finishes his autopsy, but his initial findings find that the assailant had to be unusually strong and trained to cause such damage to the woman's neck and head."

Phillips nodded, "The four victims in the street are…"
Peggy suddenly felt uncomfortable with a wave of nausea sweeping over her. She placed a hand over her stomach and quickly excused herself. "Pardon me, Director," she said as she stood up from her seat, dropping her pen on the file.

Steve looked up at his wife, "Everything okay, Director?" he said maintaining the professional standard in front of the FBI. He still betrayed the hint of concern in his voice toward Peggy.

Peggy nodded, "Everything is fine, gentlemen. Just have to take care of a few lady things…"

Phillips paused, "Understood, hurry back. Time isn't on our side on this."

"I will," she said as she excused herself again and left the conference room in a hurry to the nearby bathroom.

Once Peggy left the room, Agent Witwer shook his head and grunted. Steve turned to the FBI agent, "Watch your tone." Acheson remained silent but made a light chuckle at the sudden exchange between Captain Rogers and the FBI.

"Excuse me, Captain?" Agent Witwer asked in an authoritative tone like it would phase the Captain. "I understand your married to her but it's just a surprise that an agency such as this has a…"

Phillips interrupted him, "I will be careful with the words you say next, Agent," he said reprimanding the FBI Agent. "As long as you're under our roof you will abide to the courtesy and respect that is due for her. She damn well earned it. You know her record and reputation, and that should speak for itself."

Howard chuckled, "I don't know if you had any face-to-face with her before, and the fact that you made that noise behind her back when she left means you don't have the personal integrity or character to tell her to her face." He spoke in a serious tone, "She earned her place here…"

Phillips nodded, "That's enough. Feelings of respect for Director Rogers aside, let's get back to the brief shall we. This is time sensitive…" Everyone nodded. Hoover remained silent and shook his head at the exchange. Steve gave a cold look at the FBI agent and Director before returning his focus to Phillips. Though, Steve couldn't help but feel concerned about Peggy. She's been acting strange and feeling sick for a while now, but he can't figure out what's the matter. She claims to be fine, but he isn't so sure.

Acheson leaned over to Hoover and whispered, "You know what's going to happen next. Try and not anger the man who can fight a bear and win." Hoover nodded in silence and Phillips continued the brief.

**Ladies Room**

Peggy walked up to the counter and turned on the sink to wash out her mouth after she spent a few minutes vomiting into the toilet. She sighed as she rinsed out her mouth to rid the bile taste of vomit from her mouth. She spat out the water she just swirled then looked at her reflection in the mirror and sighed again. Being pregnant does have its disadvantages and morning sickness, though not in the morning, is a significant disadvantage for her. Morning sickness usually mellows out for her around noon, but there are some days, like today, that she feels sick later in the day. When Peggy was first pregnant with Sarah and Michael, the term morning sickness was very misleading since she had morning sickness in different hours of the day on some occasions. Peggy shook her head as she rinsed her mouth out again, cringing at the lingering taste of vomit still present.
An older woman in a coat grey business suit and skirt walked up to the sink next to her and started to wash her hands. The woman's color-coded name tag around her neck showed that she's in SHIELDs Research and Development (R/D) department. The woman looked old and couldn't be any more than sixty years old, thirty-two years older than Peggy. The woman is likely a secretary based on Peggy's the observation of her worn down fingers from constant typing on the typewriter and filing papers. The hands on this older woman look frail with blue corded veins, and years of constant typing showed on her fingers from joint pain. These hands looked like it belonged to someone who has worked tirelessly and diligently. Peggy didn't feel young next to her but felt a sense of respect for someone who looked like she dedicated her life to working hard. No matter what job she has possessed, she looked like a hardworking woman which Peggy can respect. Peggy returned to reality and spat out the lingering water in her mouth then looked back in the mirror. The woman gave a warm smile, "Good afternoon, Director."

Peggy gave a small but friendly smile, "Good afternoon."

The woman sensed Peggy's discomfort, "Feeling alright?" Peggy simply nodded in response hoping not to betray her irritating nausea. "Sick?"

Peggy shook her head, "No, just uncomfortable."

The woman chuckled lightly, "Are you pregnant?" Peggy turned to her with a look of surprise. These days, it was uncommon and outside the norm of society for the topic of pregnancy to be discussed in public and discussed outside of immediate friends and family. Though people always found out eventually regardless if she talked about it or not. Besides, Peggy was never one to fall into the social box. The woman smiled at Peggy, "I know you were a highly skilled field agent and currently a director of an espionage agency, but there are somethings you can't just hide."

Peggy looked down at her stomach then back at the woman, "I'm starting to show?"

The woman laughed, "No, dear. I wasn't born yesterday, I know what it's like to be pregnant." She chuckled, "I can see it on your face. Congratulations."

Peggy smiled, "Thank you, Miss…"

The woman wiped her hands with a nearby towel and held out her hand to Peggy, "Call me, Martha."

Peggy shook her hand, "Thank you, Martha."

"Is this your first?" Martha asked kindly.

Peggy chuckled, "No, actually. Second pregnancy though I have twins, one boy, one girl." She shrugged, "My angels."

Martha smiled warmly, "That's wonderful. I still feel the same way for my two sons. Though they're grown, I still call them my babies." She laughed, "They don't like it when I call them that but I'm their mother they can't do anything about it." Peggy laughed in response alongside the woman. Martha smiled, "Does your husband know yet?"

Peggy shook her head, "Haven't told him yet. But I will soon, I hope."

Martha leaned forward and whispered, "Don't worry I won't say a thing, it will be our secret between us ladies."

Peggy chuckled, "Sounds perfect." She nodded to the door, "I'm sorry, Martha. I have to get back to
"work," she said not wanting to waste any more time from an important meeting concerning murder and potential Soviet infiltration. Though Martha seems to be a kind woman, Peggy can't afford to waste any more time.

**Conference Room**

Peggy reentered the conference room and took her seat, "Sorry for the interruption gentlemen. Did I miss anything?" Steve looked at her with a worried look as his wife took her seat. Peggy gave Steve a quick glance and a reassuring smile before turning her attention at the job at hand.

Phillips nodded, "We just finished talking about the other victims." Peggy took her file and flipped through the pages detailing the multiple victims from the sniper.

As she glided through the details of the first three victims, she noted that nothing stood out to her and so far, all the victims were normal innocent people spending their day in the city. The second victim was an old man named Anthony Greer, a retired college professor, who died reading a newspaper on the bench. The third victim was a woman named Julia Davis, a nurse for the local hospital and a mother of two, shot while running for her life down the sidewalk. The fourth victim another young woman named Ashley Louisa Coleman, a kindergarten teacher for a local primary school and a mother of one, was also caught in the open as she ran. Peggy frowned as she briefly skimmed each document and photos of the victims. Looking at the images of dead innocent people is never easy, but Peggy knows she has to be objective and do the job required of her. Though violent crimes such as mass murders and sniper murders fall under the jurisdiction of the FBI, Peggy couldn't help but wonder why SHIELD is involved in this case. She figured that SHIELD is in this violent crime case because it may include international espionage from potentially Hydra and Leviathan or both. The FBI, however, has also held the responsibility for identifying and neutralizing threats to national security from foreign intelligence services and foreign threats since 1917, years before SHIELD, and has aided in countering Hydra and Leviathan actions in the continental United States. So, Peggy couldn't quite figure as to why SHIELD is being drawn to this case since the FBI tends to take lead in violent crime and sniper murder cases such as this one. The FBI probably found something that requires SHIELD's vast recourses and expertise that the FBI can't handle themselves which calls for a joint agency effort. Peggy made an educated guess that it involves Leviathan's Red Room Assassins. An adversary that SHIELD rarely makes contact with, detects, and counters.

Red Room Assassins, is what SHIELD designated the female assassins that come from the Soviet Red Room brainwashing and training program. The program takes, by recruitment from poor families or kidnapping, young girls, and women and turns them into deadly spies and assassins. From the limited information gathered from this secret training program, the young girls and women are put through violent torture, strenuous daily training, combat training, acrobatics, weapon and tactical training skills, and extensive behavior modification. Only the strong graduate from the numerous Red Room Academies throughout the Soviet hegemony. The best source of information of the secret program was the 1946 raid into one of the academies in Poland lead by Peggy and Steve. That raid was the first time the U.S. learned of the existence of these female assassins. Since then, SHIELD managed to make brief contact with the assassins but unable to effectively kill or capture any assassin or Red Room cell. Dottie Underwood is the first and only Red Room Assassin that SHIELD was able to identify, but the name is no doubt a cover. The assassins are incredibly methodical and careful and manage to avoid detection and capture with extreme skill. They're chameleons. Only a handful of SHIELD operatives came face-to-face with a Red Room Assassin.

Peggy turned the last page of the victims and saw the picture of the old man who was killed just before the door to City Hall. Peggy took a moment and looked at the details of the last victim and realized there was nothing about him in the document other than a name, age, and date of birth. The
man was named Neil Berman, and that was all she got from the file. Peggy sighed and looked up, "who's this Neil Berman?"

Phillips looked over to the FBI Director for him to answer. Hoover stayed silent for a moment then shook his head, "We found no information on him in our preliminary inquiry of his background." He paused, "That's all we have on him so far. We just got to dig further because we know no one is that clean to avoid the FBI." Something didn't feel right to Peggy. She got the feeling that the FBI was hiding something from them but she couldn't tell what. Granted, this was just a hunch and she has no evidence to back it other than the fact she doesn't like nor trust the FBI Director.

Steve nodded, "Obviously, the FBI is here for more than just a public shooting. It's seems the FBI is here because they believe the murders were caused by the Soviets," he said almost like he was tracking on Peggy's chain of thought.

One of the analyst spoke up, "The Soviet rifle at the scene, Captain. It's…"

Steve nodded, "The rifle alone doesn't mean the Soviets were to blame. Soviet weapons have been found in the black-market after the war…"

Hoover stood up, "We here because we know the Soviets are to blame."

Peggy looked up at him with a questioning look, "Tell us then…"

Hoover grabbed a photo and a piece of paper from his file in front of him, and walked to the head of the table, Phillips stepped aside and took a seat closest to the head of the table, so Hoover had space to speak. Hoover leaned on the table, "Because the shooter has been identified as former U.S. Sergeant James Buchanan Barnes, the Winter Soldier." Steve immediately tensed upon hearing his friend's name. Peggy looked at her husband and noticed him tensing in his seat, but wore the façade of calm. If no one knew him, people would think he was calm, but Peggy knew he was troubled to see his old friend at the center of this violent crime. She reached over and placed a hand on his thigh and squeezed it affectionately. She gave him a reassuring smile and he responded with a troubled gaze.

Hoover clipped an old photograph of Bucky in his dress uniform to the top of the chalkboard, "multiple witnesses described him entering and leaving the Woolworth building." He then clipped a sketch of Bucky next to the photo, "This is a forensic sketch artist depiction of the assailant from multiple witnesses seeing him entering and leaving the Woolworth building. Former Sergeant Barnes is hereby identified as the shooter."

Steve spoke up in a calm but stern tone to counter the FBI director, "Are we sure…"

Hoover interrupted him, "We have probable cause that he's the shooter and we'll apprehend him as such. Regardless whether or not he's the shooter, he's still a danger to national security and wanted for acts of terrorism, subversion, espionage, assassinations, and murder. Either or, he's a wanted man guilty of a long list of crimes. He should be hunted down with extreme prejudice and put to death for treason. I can guarantee you he's the man we're after. The man responsible for the day's shootings and many other deaths."

Peggy knew how much Bucky means to Steve, and how much this case is already eating away at him. She recalled Steve mentioning Bucky deserting Leviathan a few years ago after the incident in the city that resulted in a firefight in the streets and costly property damage. She personally never spoke to Bucky since before he went missing in the war, and since then, the only contact she had with him was when he tried to kill her and Steve on numerous occasions. If it wasn't for Steve, she wouldn't believe that Bucky truly deserted Leviathan. She does have her doubts but she believes that
Steve believes, and maybe that's enough. Peggy looked at her husband and could tell Steve was getting defensive, but remained visibly calm. But she knew him better than anyone, and she knew he was getting more tense. She looked up at the FBI Director, "And you need SHIELD to do what? Help you catch him?" She kept a neutral tone, "We've been looking for him for over two years, and we haven't found him. He's a ghost, so what makes you think we can find him after this?" Peggy did her best not to reveal any information of Sergeant Barnes' whereabouts since they've began trying to find him for the past two years.

Hoover nodded at his agent, "We went public with his photograph and in about an hour so, he will be on the front page of every newspaper, and on every radio broadcast, but we won't need your agency to catch him if we can find him on our own."

Peggy spoke up in irritation, "Then why are you here if you don't need our help."

Agent Witwer nodded, "We understand your need for secrecy in locating him in the past, but now we can't afford it. We've got authorization to capture him then turn him over to you because you have the necessary facilities to hold such an individual as I understand it."

Steve finally spoke up, "If anyone should capture him, it should be us and my special purpose unit. We're trained in doing the difficult tasks, and capturing him will be difficult," he said in defense. Peggy placed a hand on his thigh and gave him a reassuring gaze, an unspoken language only he, and she can understand.

Hoover nodded, "We know your personal friendship with Sergeant Barnes during the war, Captain, and that's why we aren't asking you to apprehend him. We're afraid your personal feelings will get in the way." He shrugged, "besides...whatever accolade he had in the past is gone now. He's yesterday's hero. He should've remained a dead war hero." Steve remained stoic, betraying no emotion of his frustration at the FBI Director, especially after that last statement. Hoover sighed as he stood at the head of the table by Phillips, "Now for the other reason why I'm here." Peggy and Steve looked at each other briefly. He turned to Acheson, "Dean."

Acheson stood up from his seat and walked to the head of the table as Hoover returned to his seat. He nodded, "I'll try and keep this brief. Captain, Back during the depression, I was involved in a severe car accident outside of Chicago. That turned out to be the best experience in my entire life because and after six hours of surgery... I found something that years of politics never taught me."

He locked eyes with Steve, "True perspective." He took a step around the table, "The country and the world owes you, Captain, an unpayable debt. You have fought for this country, protected this country, and risked you and your team's lives for us. Though a great many people see you as heroes, there are some..." he paused. He locked eyes with Steve and Peggy, "who prefer the word, 'vigilante.'" Howard too had a chill down his spine as he listened to the Secretary of State. It didn't take a genius to know where this line of thought was going.

Steve remained silent as he took in Hoover's words. Howard looked up at the Secretary of State, "And what word would you call them?" he said in a judgmental tone.

Acheson stared at Howard, "How about dangerous? What would you call a U.S. based special operations military unit operating freely without restriction within the country? Who also routinely ignore laws and sovereign borders, and inflict their will and seem unconcerned on what they leave behind." He nodded at Agent Witwer, "New York," he said prompting the FBI Agent to toss the Rogers and Stark a packet of photos from the incident in the city with the last confrontation with the Winter Soldier. Peggy, Steve, and Howard just stared at the picture silently without picking them up. The pictures consisted of the carnage left behind during the fire fight with Bucky and his team of gunmen, wounded and dead innocent people, and a burning building. Steve shook his head slightly
at the reminder of the chaos of that day.

Acheson nodded again, "Paris…" The agent tossed another stack of photos consisting of a multi-car accident caused by Steve's pursuit of a Hydra operative with numerous people injured and a handful of people killed in the accident. Worse, the accident was caused when Steve was acting on his own accord outside of the SSR's authority. Peggy looked at Steve with concerned eyes as Steve looked at the pictures with intensity. Phillips shook his head in frustration with the topic.

"West Virginia," Acheson said as Agent Witwer dropped another stack of photos in front of the group. The images consisted of several angles of a collapsed mountain sitting inside a wide crater caused by a nuclear detonation under the mountain. The atomic explosion was caused by Steve and the commandos when they were taking down a Hydra facility while working outside of the law and the SSR. They were mostly operating rogue at that time.

Acheson continued, "And the numerous raids you, Captain Rogers, initiated against crime rings all over the East Coast to hunt Hydra cells."

Before Agent Witwer threw down another stack of photos to the cluttered conference table, Steve spoke up, "Okay, that's enough," he said in a calm tone. Peggy looked at him with worry in her eyes but maintained a calm expression on her face. She again utilized that unspoken language only Steve could see and understand when he looked at her. Peggy, too, felt frustrated at this change in topic; it almost seemed like the FBI and the Secretary of State were painting her husband as a criminal. Understandably, the situations documented in the photographs are terrible but were either necessary or unavoidable for the sake of national security or preservation, and Peggy has participated in all of them in some way shape or form.

Acheson took a step back, "For the past few years, Captain, your team has operated with nearly unlimited restrictions and authority." He nodded, "That's something this nation can no longer tolerate. But we have a solution."

Peggy spoke up, "Who's 'we' and why is this coming up now?"

Acheson nodded at Phillips, "An inquiry from Congress to the President. This isn't an investigation of SHIELD. There's no denying it's success and utility in the short time of its existence, but a step toward limiting its nearly extra-governmental power. SHIELD is supposed to be a clandestine agency, no? But all these 'missions' Captain Rogers conducted all seem very public and exposed SHIELD's ability in working outside the regulations of the government." He nodded at Agent Witwer again, "Which brings me to my next topic." Agent Witwer reached under the table and brought up a thick book that had "EXECUTIVE ORDER: 9940" printed on the cover. The FBI agent slid it over between Howard and Peggy. Howard picked up the thick document first and opened it to briefly skim the first few pages. Phillips crossed his arms and leaned back with a neutral expression at the continuation of the discussion. Internally, Phillips wasn't happy with what's going on especially after hearing about the new Executive Order just yesterday.

Acheson paced around the table, "Approved and spearheaded by the Attorney General and myself that states that SHIELD will no longer conduct major domestic and overseas operations freely without insight of the National Security Council and the President of the United States. Additionally, the Special Purpose Unit will operate with strict rules of engagement while overseas, and rules of force while operating domestically." He continued his slow pace around the table, "Oversight while maintaining decentralized control of SHIELD is the best option for the countries primary intelligence apparatus. While in the past the Director of SHIELD answered directly to the President, the lack of control President Truman feels lead to the executive order due to a number of incidents outside of presidential authority." Acheson paused back at the head of the table, "Believe me, this is the best
Peggy spoke up, "My question is, why did you focus specifically on Captain Rogers and his unit?"

Acheson nodded, "Because though SHIELD has many resources and assets, Captain Rogers remains as a physical face to SHIELDs power projection where ever he goes. What he does and what he fails to do, reflects greatly on your agency and the nation." He looked at Steve, "Captain Rogers has made a pattern of doing things outside the regulations, control, and rules of the U.S. government in a very public manner. He and his team specifically has come to the public attention as almost comparable to the Soviet KGB with their raids and missions within the continental United States." He focused directly at Steve, "Captain, you and your unit pose a direct threat to the fabric and fundamentals of the nation." He looked around the room, "The Executive Order, is made for him and operational teams like him to operate in a set of regulations and guidelines while being discreet. I can assure you, this order nor the National Security Council will dictate how a result is to be achieved but will indicate what measures may be unacceptable."

Steve spoke up, "SHIELD was given the task to protect national security, peace, and the country from any outside threat, and my unit and I were given the task to handle the complex missions that achieves that goal. We were tasked in making the country safer and I feel like we done that."

Acheson leaned forward on the table, "Captain, can you tell me with certainty that all your raids in the Eastern Seaboard lead to the capture of Soviet and Hydra agents and the destruction of spy rings? And were you legally justified?" Steve remained silent. Acheson nodded, "If the FBI raided the wrong building and the perp wasn't there, and there was collateral damage or worse civilians were killed, you bet there would be consequences." He looked at Phillips, "This executive order is the best option. It's for the greater good," he repeated. Peggy, Steve, and Howard remained silent as they took in what the Secretary of State said. Peggy looked at Steve again and noticed concern in his eyes like he was worried about something big that was about to happen. Hoover continued, "This order isn't limiting SHIELD's potential. It is oversight for security and protection."

Agent Witwer leaned over to Hoover, "Sir, I think it's time for us to go," he said as he gathered their files on the table.

Hoover stood up, "Pardon me, we need to return to the field office." He walked over to Phillips, "As soon as we get word of where he is we'll let you know, and we'll bring him to you." He looked at Steve, "Captain, let us handle this," he said sternly. He turned to Phillips, "When we capture him, you'll know."

Phillips stood up while he maintained an emotionless expression. He nodded to Peggy, "She's in charge of the operations here. Make sure you call her," he mentioned toward Peggy.

Hoover briefly looked at Peggy then looked back at Phillips, "You make sure Captain Rogers stays out of our way. War hero or not, he doesn't have jurisdiction for Barnes' capture," he said coldly. The mood in the room has already been dropping, but now, between the two agency directors, the atmosphere is cold.

"I don't think you know where our jurisdiction ends," Phillips responded.

Hoover stared at Phillips coldly for a tense second before leaving the room with Agent Witwer behind him. Howard nodded at Acheson and continued the meeting, "There are contingencies?"

Acheson looked at the remaining group, "Every executive order undergoes revisions to make it more...accommodating for lack of a better word." He nodded at the group, "Understand it and talk about it, because this is non-negotiable." He looked at Phillips and nodded, "Director," signaling to
Phillips that he was done speaking. Acheson then quietly exited the conference room with Phillips in tow, escorting him out of SHIELD to his awaiting motorcade. With the meeting officially over with the departure of all both head agency directors and the Secretary of State, the two SHIELD analyst packed their things and left the conference room quietly leaving Howard, Peggy, and Steve remaining at the table.

Howard sighed and leaned back in his seat, "Well this was bound to happen," he mentioned the Executive Order. He shrugged, "Honestly not the worst idea the U.S. government has considering all we've done."

Peggy looked over at Steve, "You okay, darling?"

Steve flipped through the Executive Order document, "This doesn't feel right."

"What do you mean," Peggy asked curiously.

"This whole situation. The situation with Bucky and this executive order. It seems wrongs," Steve responded calmly.

Howard spoke up, "Think about it, Steve. SHIELD needs to be oversighted much like the CIA. The CIA can't do overseas action without presidential authority. The National Security Council can provide oversight for us to keep us in check." He waved his hand, "There's nothing wrong with our leadership and we do the best we can, but yourself and SHIELD in general has already done a multitude of questionable things. If we can't accept some sort of limitation or restriction than we're no better than our enemies. We're no better than Hydra and the KGB."

Steve responded, "Howard, this executive order itself ties one hand behind our back and prevents us from acting when we need to. Our ability to choose and go where we need to go is the reason why SHIELD is effective enough to do the job necessary." He shook his head, "It's not like we're not taking responsibility of our actions. This executive order is directing us to be more reactive than proactive."

Howard shook his head, "Sorry…Steve, that's a dangerous thought. Absolute power corrupts absolutely. This is the National Security Council. It's not one man at the top using SHIELD as a personal hit squad, it's…"

Steve interrupted, "No, it's a council run by politicians with agendas, and agendas change."

Howard nodded, "That's good, that's why I'm running SHIELD with Peggy and Chester because when I found out what my weapons are capable of I had the government return them and destroy them…" Peggy watched quietly as the two men argued over the legitimacy of the new executive order while simultaneously forming her opinion of the document. She knew there were more pressing matters at the moment other than bickering over the executive order, but she could understand why both of them are talking about it. She understood both of their points as well, and to be honest she had her fair share of working outside the law during her time trying to clear Stark's name.

Steve shifted in his seat toward Stark, "Howard, you chose to do that. If we go with this, we lose the ability to choose. What happens if the council authorizes an operation where we don't think SHIELD should go, what if there is somewhere we need to get involved and they don't let us? What happens if we seize an opportunity against Hydra and the council orders us to stop? SHIELD may not be perfect, but the safest hands are still our own. I'm not saying we won't listen to the President, I'm saying that there needs to be more decentralized control if we're going to succeed in the future. This
document creates a rigid structure that leads to an inability to adapt."

Peggy leaned back in her seat, "Boys, I don't think we have much room to contest this nor do we have a choice. This is an executive order, it will require congressional power to overturn it, and we already know Congress won't veto it." She sighed and looked over at Howard, "Anyways, we have more pressing matters currently."

Howard looked at her with surprise, "Right…"

Peggy looked over at Steve, "My office?" she said in a soothing tone toward him. Steve nodded quietly in response as he stood up. Peggy stood up from her seat and followed him out of the conference to her office.

Howard chuckled, "I'll just be here if you need me."

Before Peggy walked through the door she turned and smiled at her friend, "When you're married you'd understand."

"That'll be the day," Howard replied humorously. He quite enjoyed the single playboy lifestyle as it is and marriage wasn't on his radar for the immediate future, but it probably won't be such a bad idea later down the line

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**Peggy's Office**

Peggy walked into her office with Steve trailing behind her and saw Rose sitting on the office couch while Sarah and Michael happily played with their toys on the floor. Rose had a book in her hand but maintained a watchful eye over the Rogers' kids. Peggy smiled at her friend, "Thank you for watching them while I was in the meeting, Rose. I really appreciate it."

Rose closed her book and smiled at Peggy, "Of course, Peggy. It's my pleasure, plus I never see these two sweethearts enough," she said happily.

Peggy sat down on the armrest of the couch next to Rose, "Hope my babies didn't bother you too much." Steve greeted Rose with a friendly smile as he closed the office door.

Rose chuckled, "You know they're always good. Though Michael was a little fussy initially." She smiled at the little boy playing with his toy on the floor, "Probably just missing mommy and daddy."

Peggy chuckled, "Oh, I'm sure. Seriously, thank you for watching them for us."

Rose stood up from the couch, "It's always a pleasure, Peg. You can add babysitter to my line of duties if you want."

Peggy laughed, "Hopefully I don't trouble you with babysitting duty again."

Rose chuckled and looked over at Peggy's dress hanging neatly on the hanger over the top of the door, "That's a beautiful dress, Peggy. Hope you had fun before being recalled back to work."

Peggy smiled at her friend, "Thank you, Rose. Steve and I made the most of it," she said as she glanced over at her husband with a loving smile. Steve returned her gesture with a small smile and a light chuckle.

Rose leaned closer to Peggy and whispered, "You're such a lucky woman, Peggy, with a loving family, supporting husband, and a career." She nodded, "I'll be at my desk if you need anything,
Director,” she said in a friendly manner as she excused herself.

Once Rose left the office and closed the door behind her, Peggy went to her two kids on the floor and scooped up Michael into her arms earning a loud laugh from her son. She kissed her son on the head as she walked over to her office chair, "talk to me, darling," she said to Steve who has been looking troubled for the past few hours. Although she already knew what was troubling him, she wanted him to tell her himself.

Steve chuckled lightly at Peggy's ability to read him without issue. There unspoken language they share is truly fine-tuned and unique. Sarah looked up at her daddy and raised her arms happily, "Daddy," she said in an innocent tone that melts both Steve and Peggy's heart.

Steve quickly scooped up his daughter from the floor and swung her playfully earning a loud yelp and giggle from his daughter. He kissed her cheek, "Hey there, sweetie." He smiled at his toddler daughter, "Are you going to let me talk to mommy for a moment?" Sarah didn't respond and simply rested her head on his shoulder. Steve's warm smile faded as he sat down on one of the chairs in front of Peggy's desk, "Bucky."

"mhmm," Peggy hummed in response and to allow him to keep going.

Steve rubbed Sarah's back gently, "I need to get him…"

Peggy sighed and bounced their son on her lap while simultaneously keeping his hands away from the things on her desk. She shook her head, "Darling… I know how much Barnes means to you, I really do. But… stay here with me; you'll only make things worse." She sighed, "Considering the business with the new executive order, you can't get him especially since we were told explicitly to allow the FBI to capture him." She shook her head again, "I don't like the executive order any more than you do, but…"

"If I go do this, are you saying you'll arrest me?" Steve replied with conviction.

Peggy looked taken back by the comment, "What? No, of course not," she said in surprise. She sighed, "But someone might. That's how it's going to work with this order in place."

Steve shook his head, "If they say he did what he said he did, and he's that far gone then I should be the one to bring him in," he said urging to be allowed to go capture Bucky.

Peggy sighed with worry, "tell me why." Steve didn't respond initially and remained silent for a moment. "Just tell me, darling," Peggy urged in a hushed yet supporting tone.

"Because…I'm the one least likely to die trying," Steve responded plainly.

Peggy took a deep breath and ran a hand through her long brown hair while she kept Michael close to her and on her lap. She gave him a reassuring smile, "Darling I…” she suddenly thought it's a good time to tell him that she's pregnant, but quickly decided not to because it would seem like she's trying to guilt him into staying back rather than giving a logical reason.

Steve frowned, "I'm sorry, Peggy." Peggy looked at him with a look of worry on her face. She knew he would probably go regardless if she ordered him to stay. Peggy wasn't worried about his physical safety, but more concerned about the repercussions of him acting on his own accord to apprehend Bucky. "This one's on me," Steve said as he stood up from his seat, still holding their daughter in his arms. He frowned, "I have to do this."

Peggy frowned, "I know you do, darling," she said softly. She shook her head, "I don't know if I'll be able to help you."
Steve walked around her desk and gave a small smile, "I have an idea…"

"What is it?" She responded quietly.

"Forgive me?"

Peggy gave a worried smile, "Can't forgive you if there's nothing to forgive."

Steve bent down and kissed her lips briefly. "Know that I love you… and I don't want to get you into trouble but this is something I have to do." He then turned around and went back to the kid's toys on the floor at the center of her office and gently placed Sarah down by her favorite toy. Sarah happily crawled over to her toy and started to happily play with it without any care of the world. Steve squatted down and smiled as he ran a hand through Sarah's long dark brown hair, "Daddy's going to go now. Just for a little while, okay?" Sarah giggled happily at him in response, not fully understanding what's happening. Steve smiled and leaned forward and kissed his daughter on the head before standing up.

Peggy watched with concerned eyes as her husband walked out of her office. She knew Steve could handle anything, but it wasn't his physical safety that worried her. Peggy is worried about the agency, the job, and her husband becoming branded as a rogue agent or worse a public enemy. She could take anything the men on the hill could throw at her except separating her and Steve and turning him into a villain. Peggy agreed with Steve on his stance on the executive order, but she's right that it'll be close to impossible to overturn it especially since Congress approved it long before the President issued it. As Deputy Director of SHIELD, Peggy is the second-highest officer in SHIELD, in addition to running SHIELD and being responsible for the management of day-to-day activities and all missions and operations, she's in charge of the agency adhering to all government policies. Government policies she may not agree with such as "Executive Order: 9940," is still her responsibility that the agency follows it to the T. Peggy is in an unfortunate position torn between the job, her husband, and what's right.

Truthfully, Steve's right that he should be the one to apprehend Bucky since he's more physically capable in case a fight breaks out. Plus, if Bucky said he deserted Leviathan and is innocent, then Steve taking him wouldn't be an issue. But if a team of FBI agents storms his location, then Bucky will most likely react violently and defend himself since it would look like the government is trying to eliminate him. But the agency and the government Peggy is sworn to serve is dictating her to keep Steve and his team away from Bucky, even though her trust in her husband to do the right thing is telling her otherwise. The situation she's in is extremely fragile, and she honestly didn't know what the right answer is, and there very well might not be a right answer. Peggy believed in morality and is willing to lie if the situation called for it, including the period when she was hiding her involvement with Howard from the SSR. Peggy's reliance on her morals and her principles guided her to her next decision. She just hoped Steve would understand…

South SoHo, Coco's Groceries

At a small family run grocery store, Bucky stood outside by the fruit and vegetable display stand looking through fresh produce. He did his best to blend in with the crowd, sporting a black newsboy cap, long sleeve black jacket, grey collared shirt without a tie, and a leather glove covering his metal prosthetic hand. He's clean shaven, and hair is neatly trimmed and combed back under his hat instead of his messy hair he didn't cut while he served as a brainwashed assassin. He looked like everyone else in the crowded sidewalk as he looked through the trays of fruits and vegetables. Bucky slowly looked over his shoulder to check what was behind him, a habit he picked up as an assassin. A habit that he religiously practiced since killing numerous Leviathan agents when he deserted.
He suddenly heard a police siren blare over the crowd causing him to tense a little. As the police siren got louder and louder, he dipped his head away from the street to hide from the police. Bucky may have deserted Leviathan, but he's positive that the U.S. government is still searching for him since he was a foreign assassin and spy credited with numerous killings. Once the police car siren was no longer to be heard, he took a deep breath and placed the fruits he chose into his basket. He then calmly walked back into the store to pay for his groceries. As he walked into the store he heard the radio playing a familiar tune from 1940. "Only Forever," by Bing Crosby filled his ears as he walked toward the cashier. He couldn't help but get a fragment of a memory play in his mind of his brother and his two sisters on Halloween before the war. The memory was brief but clear enough to recognize the faces of his brother and two sisters. Bucky has been isolated for the past two years and made no attempt to connect with anyone from his past.

As Bucky approached the cashier, the radio broadcast was interrupted by a news anchor, "We interrupt this program to give you a special news bulletin… the shooter at the Woolworth building has been identified as… James Buchanan Barnes. All citizens, be on the lookout… for a thirty-one-year-old male, six-foot-tall, with brown hair, blue eyes, and is likely wearing a dark colored glove over his left hand. Perpetrator is extremely muscular. Additional physical description includes cleft chin, crinkles around the eyes, cheeks filled out, and a consistent light crease between the eyebrows. He is known to be a Soviet agent known as the Winter Soldier. Be on the lookout. I repeat, be on the lookout for a…" Bucky stopped in his tracks and looked directly at the cashier who was staring at him with a concerned look. As the radio broadcaster repeated the description of his appearance, the cashier took a step back from his counter and rushed into the back room of the store. The patrons in the store who also heard the radio broadcast didn't connect the dots quite yet and were busy talking amongst themselves about where the killer is possibly located.

Bucky dropped his basket of fruit and quickly made his way to disappear into the crowd of people outside.

**The Old Haunt Pub**

Steve sat at the bar next to a vacant stool of a favorite local pub located near the Aegis Headquarters building. The pub was crowded with more and more people coming in preparation for happy hour that is fast approaching. With someone playing live music on the piano and patrons singing songs and talking happily, the atmosphere is vivacious. Steve frequented the pub after work on numerous occasions with members of his team and sometimes even Peggy when she feels like immersing herself in that type of atmosphere. Though, Steve hasn't frequented the pub as much recently since becoming a father of two. But his past trips to the bar made him a favorite customer of the owner, as well as Peggy.

Steve took a sip of his beer as he leaned forward on his seat. Suddenly out of the corner of his eye he saw Dugan take a seat on the vacant stool next to him. Steve turned to Dugan, "Thanks for coming."

Dugan smiled at him, "No problem. I don't do anything on Saturday's anyway. Is it just us?"

"Just us. Less involvement from the team the better for them," Steve replied calmly.

"Did Peggy tell you to stay out of it?" Steve's silence was the answer. Dugan shook his head, "She may have a point."

"He'd do it for me, Dugan."

Dugan shrugged, "Maybe back during the war." He sighed, "What we're doing might be riskier than taking down Zola and Hydra a few years ago. At least that time we had substantial backing on our
actions. Going after him might put us in conflict we don't intend to fight." He shook his head, "Because most people who shoot at you wind up shooting at me."

Steve nodded, "You don't have to do this if you don't want to."

Dugan smiled, "I never quit on you before, sir. Won't start now. Let's get our brother back," he said confidently.

The bartender came up to the bar and nodded at Steve, "Captain, phone for you."

"Do you know who it is?" Steve asked curiously.

"It's your wife," the bartender said courteously.

Steve produced a genuine smile of happiness at the news of his wife calling him. How she found out he was at the bar is beyond him. "Thanks, Pat," he said graciously.

Pat, the bartender, nodded over toward the semi-booth to the public phone off the hook, "Can take it over there, Captain," he said as he started to tend to another patron.

Steve excused himself from Dugan and weaved his way through the barstools, tables, and people to the public phone by the wall next to the door. He picked up the phone, "Peggy?"

Peggy responded in a light tone, "Didn't think I'd figure out you're at the pub, did you?"

Steve chuckled, "Well, hon, you are the director of an intelligence agency. I'm sure it didn't take you long to figure out." He smiled, "Actually surprised for you to call."

"You're my husband, Steve. I'm betting you're doing this for the right reason and I figured this is for the best. And don't worry, this call isn't traceable or tapped," Peggy responded. She paused, "FBI got multiple tips of Barnes' location. Most of it is turning out to be false except one report from a store owner and an apartment manager. Got a pen?"

Steve chuckled, "Don't need one."

"Barnes is located at Longview Apartments in the Lower Eastside. Apartment number 723. The FBI is moving to apprehend him now, you better get moving," Peggy said plainly.

Steve smiled, "Thank you, Peggy… really," he said graciously and affectionately. Peggy remained quiet on the other side of the line for a moment. "Hon?" He asked calmly.

"Just…be careful, darling. I need you and the kids need you to come home. I love you," Peggy said softly before hanging up the phone. Steve smiled and hung up the phone before returning to Dugan.

Steve leaned against the bar next to Dugan, "Peggy just called and gave us the address."

Dugan smiled, "God Bless that woman, I swear." He patted Steve on the shoulder, "You sure won the lottery with her, Captain." Both Steve and Dugan knew how hard, but can't truly understand, the gravity of Peggy's decision and the position she's in, between adhering to the executive order and trusting her morals and her husband. One could argue that Peggy is folding to her personal relationship with Steve, but both Dugan and Steve knew that wasn't the case. She's very analytical and doesn't base her decisions on emotions, but bases her decisions on facts, details, and morality. So, Steve knew deep down she made the hard decision to trust his judgment even though he's going against the government because she truly believed it's for the greater good. Dugan looked over at Steve, "When do we go?"
Steve turned around, "Now…"

Hope you enjoyed this chapter, trying to tie everything together from the previous chapters.

Prepare to see a lot of Bucky.

Also, as a fan of Castle, you’ll see occasional references.

Understandably technology and society were different back then in the 40s, but I’m making small tweaks to society and technology to further the story while maintaining as much realism as possible and historical accuracy. Also, this is an AU with super heroes and science fiction so we have the world to play with.

Hope you all enjoyed! Comment if you would like, I always appreciate the comments regardless if positive or negative.
April 1949

A woman with long raven black wavy hair and wearing a dark blue women's suit with red pumps sat alone at a small table in a fancy hotel room with a red leather-bound book in hand. She sat in silence and read the contents of the book to herself and committed everything she read to memory. The small box radio on the dresser, tuned to a news broadcast, crackled as the news program shifted, "stay tuned for a special news bulletin… the shooter at the Woolworth building today has been identified as… James Buchanan Barnes. All citizens, be on the lookout… for a thirty-one-year-old male, six-foot-tall, with brown hair, blue eyes, and is likely wearing a dark colored glove over his left hand. Perpetrator is extremely muscular and extremely dangerous. Additional physical description includes cleft chin, wrinkles around the eyes, cheeks filled out, and a consistent light crease between the eyebrows. He is known to be a Soviet agent known as the Winter Soldier. Be on the lookout. I repeat, be on the lookout for a…" The raven black haired woman slowly smiled at the radio broadcast as she continued to read the red book in her hand.

Longview Apartments in the Lower Eastside, New York City, New York

Steve, geared up with his combat "stars and stripes" uniform on with his shield in hand, stepped lightly inside a small dim messy apartment. As he slowly walked deeper into the tiny studio apartment, he noted that it's mostly empty with an unmade full-bed at the center of the single room, and had cluttered countertops in the kitchen. The little card table for a dining table in the kitchen seemed to be the only uncluttered surface in the mostly empty studio apartment. As he walked toward the kitchen counter, he heard Dugan call him on the radio, "Hey, Captain, FBI set up their perimeter. Building is surrounded"

Steve nodded and pressed the transmit button on his tactical throat microphone that was attached to his small radio on his belt, "Copy." He let go of the transmit button and noticed a dark green book on the counter with dozens of small papers tucked into the pages of the book. Steve slowly picked up the little book and slowly opened the front cover to see the messy writing on the front page. He flipped the page to the first batch of what looked like random newspaper clippings, maps, photographs, and notes tucked into the book. Steve quickly skimmed through the gaggle and saw that the newspaper clippings were of people who either were murdered or died from mysterious deaths. He noted that all the maps were from all over Western and Eastern Europe, and individual countries circled in black-marker such as East and West Germany, Austria, France, Yugoslavia, and England. Steve figured the maps were places that Bucky had missions in and the news articles were of people he believed he killed.

Dugan came back on the radio, "Heads up, FBI and Police are approaching the south entrance of the building."

Steve pressed the transmit button on his throat microphone, "Understood," he said as he jumped to the middle of the book and saw an old-World War II propaganda picture of himself in his stars and stripes combat uniform. He frowned as he looked at the opposite page and saw, written in large bold
black letters in the center of the page, "WHO WAS I?" Below the question were a series of bullet points:

-Steve Rogers
-Howling Commandos
-Hydra
-Margaret "Peggy" Carter

Suddenly Steve heard the floor creak behind him causing him to lower the book. He slowly turned around and saw Bucky staring at him with a distant stare by the bed at the center of the room. Bucky wore a black newsboy cap, long sleeve black jacket, grey collared shirt without a tie, and a leather glove covering his left metal prosthetic hand. He made himself to be very inconspicuous to blend in with the American crowds with his face clean-shaven, and his hair neatly trimmed and combed back under his hat.

Steve slowly put the book down on the counter, "Bucky… you remember me?" he asked cautiously.

Bucky nodded, "Steve… I remember you," he said hesitantly.

"You told me about Hydra's plan a year ago. If it weren't for you, I wouldn't have seen their secret they've been hiding under our noses," Steve said recalling the last time he spoke to Bucky to assure his old friend that he meant no harm.

Bucky remained emotionless, "I remember," he said carefully. "Are you here to kill me?" He asked with a slight defensive tone.

Dugan came on the radio once again, "They're stacked up on the south entrance, they're preparing to make entry."

Steve shook his head, "What?" he asked confused. "Of course not. I'm here to get you out of here," he said in a confident tone.

Bucky shook his head again, "I don't think so…"

Steve sighed, "I know you're nervous, and you have plenty of reason to be," he said as he took a small step forward. Bucky didn't flinch nor back away but continued to look at him with suspicion and caution.

Bucky shook his head slightly, "I wasn't at the city hall. I don't do that anymore…"

Dugan called on the radio to Steve once more, "FBI and law enforcement are entering the building."

Steve took another step toward Bucky, "Well the people who think you did are coming here now," he said visibly feeling the pressure of the FBI now entering the apartment complex. "The FBI are here and they surrounded the building. And I don't think they'll take you alive…"

Bucky nodded, "That's smart. Good strategy…eliminates the threat," he said as he took a step back from Steve and tensed as he became visibly more defensive.

Dugan returned on the radio, "FBI reaching fifth floor."

Steve tensed and gripped his shield, "This doesn't have to end in a fight, Buck."
Bucky walked over to the kitchen table near Steve and sighed, "It always ends in a fight…"

Outside of Bucky's apartment, a team of twelve FBI agents quietly ran up the stairs and approached his door with their pistols, and Thompson submachine guns in hand with one agent carrying a heavy sledge hammer to knock the door off its deadbolt to make entry. The agent with the heavy hammer stood by the door and waited patiently while the rest of his team got into position behind him. The FBI agents waited with anticipation for the command to breach the apartment and enter.

Dugan called on the radio, "Agents on your floor. They'll make entry in less than thirty seconds."

Steve watched Bucky remove the glove from his left hand to reveal his metal prosthetic hand. Bucky knew without a doubt that there will be a major fight in the next few seconds. Steve raised his voice, "Bucky, relax, stay behind me and let me handle this. We don't need to fight." Bucky just looked at Steve with an emotionless stare and twitched slightly…

Dugan abruptly called on the radio, "Breach, breach, breach!"

Suddenly, the door to the apartment flew open with a loud metal thud followed by a high pitch clang from the doorknob hitting the wall. Within a second of the door banging open, the FBI agents rushed into the apartment to apprehend Bucky. Bucky reacted quickly, and before the FBI could do anything else, he flung the table at them with lightning speed with his mechanical arm. The table hit the first four agents in the upper body with a tremendous thud sending the group tumbling onto the ground. The following FBI agents rushed in and clambered over their tumbled agents on the ground and the discarded table. One of the agents quickly raised his Thompson submachine gun at Bucky causing Steve to immediately step in front of his friend and deflect the spray of .45 caliber rounds that soon followed with his vibranium shield. The agent's rounds from his submachine gun pinged off Steve's shield and ricocheted all over the apartment.

The submachine gun clicked when the bolt locked to the rear signaling that the weapon was out of ammunition. Bucky seized the opportunity and vaulted over Steve to get up close and personal with the FBI agents at the door. He grabbed the frantic FBI agent's head, who was desperately trying to reload, and slammed him into the wall knocking him unconscious. Bucky then quickly turned to the other group of FBI agents at the door trying to get a beat on him. He swiftly punched an agent in the ribs with his mechanical arm causing the agent to grunt in pain. Bucky then immediately ducked, and hammer struck the agent's knee, breaking it completely, causing the agent to scream in agony. Then in a swift motion, Bucky grabbed the agent's collar with his other hand and pulled him down with such force sending the agent head first into the floor and knocking him out. Bucky quickly shifted to a different agent, punched the other agent in the gut then grabbed the man's belt buckle with one hand and his neck with the other and flung him up into the ceiling with tremendous force knocking him out. Bucky stepped aside as the FBI agent fell back onto the ground incapacitated. With Bucky's back toward the remaining three agents in the room, the agents quickly aimed their weapons with the intent to shoot him. Before the agents could fire, Steve made a split decision and rocketed his shield at the group hitting two agents in the chest before embedding itself into Bucky's doorframe. The last FBI agent hesitated when he saw Steve knock out his fellow agents which allowed Bucky to quickly turn around punch him in the face and slam his head into the wall, effectively knocking him out. The last FBI agent of the breach team ran into the apartment, ducking below Steve's shield that was protruding out of the doorframe, and quickly shot at Bucky with his pistol. Bucky was able to bring his mechanical arm up before the agent fired to protect himself from the bullets. The agent's rounds pinged and ricocheted off his arm as he closed the distance with the last FBI agent. The agent's pistol clicked signaling he was out of ammunition and quickly tried to reload. Bucky seized the opportunity and kicked the man in the gut sending him into Steve's shield protruding into the doorway. The agent banged his head against Steve's shield then fell onto the ground hitting his head against the discarded table that was on top of four unconscious agents. At this point, the doorway to Bucky's apartment
cluttered with unconscious and incapacitated agents on the floor, debris from the breach, bullet holes in the wall, and a table on top of four unconscious men.

Steve reacted to the carnage in front of him and grabbed Bucky's arm and turned him around, "Buck, stop! You're going to kill someone." Bucky stared at him with a cold look in response.

Bucky then grabbed Steve with his mechanical arm and forced him into a wall. Before Steve could react, Bucky punched through a section of the wall immediately next to Steve's head with his mechanical fist, "I'm not going to kill anyone," he responded coldly. Then in one swift motion he removed a backpack from the hole in the wall he just made. Steve didn't know what was going on with Bucky and looked at his friend with a confused look. He didn't know if he was dealing with Bucky or the Winter Soldier, it could indeed be a combination of both. Of course, Bucky needed to defend himself which explains his violent reaction, but he put Steve at arm's length the whole time and maintained a cold exterior.

Suddenly, another FBI agent appeared in the door with a Thompson submachine gun in hand. As the agent ducked below Steve's shield in the doorframe, Bucky grabbed the confused Steve and threw him toward the agent giving him time to put his backpack on. Steve reacted quickly and grabbed the man's collar then forced him back against the shield then threw him head first into the wall knocking him out of the fight. Steve then removed his shield from the door frame just as Bucky brushed passed him running out of the apartment and into the open stairwell. The open stairwell of the apartment complex gave a spacious feeling with the stairs constructed on a tall hollow vertical shaft so that one can see the ground floor from the top of the staircase.

In the stairwell, Bucky ran into more FBI agents and police officers rushing up the stairs to contain him in the apartment. The stairway looked crowded with multiple FBI and police, neither the FBI nor the local police were taking chances in letting the Winter Soldier escape. Bucky rushed down the first few steps just as the lead FBI agent rounded the corner of the staircase and came face-to-face with Bucky's metal fist. Bucky punched him hard in the face sending the agent tumbling back to the wall behind him, then he immediately struck him in the gut with his other arm earning a gasp of pain from the wounded man. He then tossed the crippled agent into the crowded stairs forcing the other police officers and agents to tumble down the stairs with the injured FBI agent. The standing police and FBI who had a clear shot at Bucky started to fire at him with their pistols but were aiming at his head which was covered by his mechanical arm. Bucky quickly closed the distance with the firing officers and agents while keeping his forearm up to protect his neck and face. When he got close enough, Bucky struck the lead police officer in the gut with his free arm which immediately stopped the lead officer from shooting. The other agents and officers ceased firing due to not having a clear shot on Bucky as he got tangled with one of their fellow officers. Bucky then punched the officer in the collarbone with his metal fist then proceeded to push the disoriented man into his fellow officers and agents immediately behind him. Bucky then grabbed the officer's face then tossed him into the wall head first, making a shallow hole in the wall. He then immediately engaged in deadly hand-to-hand with the other agents and police officers in his immediate front. Though the law enforcement outnumbered him, it was an unfair fight from the start with the advantage favoring Bucky.

Steve rushed out of the apartment seconds after Bucky and noticed that his friend had fought down at least two flight of stairs, and knocked out over five police officers and FBI agents by the time he came out into the stairwell. Steve gripped his shield as he watched the chaos unfold as Bucky continued to punch his way down the stairs through the desperate police and FBI agents. He quickly noticed a pair of police officers aiming their Thompson submachine guns at Bucky, and before they could take a shot, Steve threw his shield at rocket speed at the pair of officers and hit them simultaneously in the head. The two men tumbled down as the shield impaled the solid wall. Bucky saw Steve's shield hit the two men then turned around to see Steve looking down at him from the floor above with concerned eyes. Without a second glance or a gesture, Bucky continued to go down
the stairs and didn't seem to acknowledge Steve. One injured FBI agent stood up in front of Bucky and tried to grab him, but Bucky elbowed him in the jaw and smashed his head against the wall knocking him unconscious before continuing. He dipped below Steve's shield and continued his fight down the stairs against the oncoming law enforcement. The federal agents and city police seemed to be trying to throw bodies at the problem to try and contain Bucky which didn't seem to work. The opposing agents and law enforcement canalized in the tight stairway against a lone enhanced ex-Soviet agent with years of combat training proved more than they can handle.

Bucky punched another FBI agent in the throat then threw him down onto the stairs before fighting another agent. Steve needed to stop Bucky from continuing the brutal fight before it escalated even more. He took a few steps back then sprinted and jumped clear over the railing down a floor to his shield in the wall behind Bucky. As Steve removed his shield from the wall, Bucky turned around briefly and looked at him with a cold expression on his face before accidentally shoving an FBI agent over the railing. Steve quickly grabbed the police officer by his collar with one hand then looked at Bucky with irritation, "Come on, man."

Bucky didn't respond and proceeded to elbow a different agent in the face knocking him against the wall. Bucky took a split-second pause and saw more police officers rushing up the stairs to stop him. Not wanting to get bogged down in a fight in the canalizing stairs, Bucky proceeded to execute an alternate course of action. Like the trained ex-Soviet, he was, he had multiple planned escape routes. Bucky quickly kicked down a nearby apartment door and entered the family occupied apartment. The small family eating lunch in the kitchen screamed in shock as Bucky entered the apartment with a cold and emotionless expression on his face. The father of the family quickly stood up from his seat and put himself between his wife, young daughter, and son at the kitchen table in an attempt to shield them from the intruder. The chaos in the open stairwell could be heard in the kitchen as Steve held off the pursuing police and FBI. Bucky didn't acknowledge the family and couldn't be bothered by them as he started to sprint and jumped through the back window. Bucky sailed straight through the window with a loud crash of broken glass, losing his hat in the process, as he fell in an arc to an adjacent building that was nearly 75-meters away from the apartment complex. He grunted as he hit the roof of the building as he rolled upon landing to absorb the momentum of the fall while also using his mechanical arm to take most of the impact.

The family in the apartment looked confused as they stared out the broken window in shock at the sudden events that occurred mere moments ago. But just seconds after Bucky jumped through the window, Steve entered with his shield in hand which surprised the family again in the kitchen. The family looked at Steve with confused and concerned looks as he strolled over to the window and saw Bucky land on the roof of the adjacent building. Steve pressed transmit button on his throat microphone to radio Dugan, "Dugan, we're going to have to get mobile."

Dugan responded quickly, "I'm on it."

Steve holstered his shield on his back, took a few steps away from the window then got a running start and jumped through the broken window in pursuit. The family didn't know what was going on, only a few minutes earlier they were enjoying their Saturday before an unknown individual barged in followed by Captain America and interrupted their day.

Dugan stood at his vantage point on the roof of a tall building nearby the apartment complex, and saw Steve jump out the same window as Bucky did seconds earlier. He shook his head and sighed, "This has been the craziest day." He grabbed the long rope he brought up with him that he attached to the radio broadcasting tower on the roof and chucked the slack of the rope over the side of the building. Dugan then put on his thick rappelling gloves and started to repel off the side of the building to street level.
Steve landed on the roof with a roll to break the fall then got back up and chased after Bucky who was sprinting across the roof. Bucky didn't look back and vaulted over the side of the five-story building and fell the full fifty feet to the sidewalk below. Thanks to Zola's experiments and his variation of the Super Soldier Serum, Bucky can survive a fall of that height unscathed. Bucky landed with a tremendous thud, squatting down and planting his mechanical hand down on the concrete to dissipate the impact on his body even though he's enhanced. The people walking along the sidewalk and in-and-out of shops looked at him with confusion as he quickly stood up and hastily assessed his surroundings. The city streets crowded with cars and people cluttering the sidewalks in the midafternoon hours with the sound of more police sirens than usual. In less than a second, Bucky spotted a man near him who just mounted his motorcycle and was preparing to leave. He quickly dashed over to the man's bike and tossed him off forcefully onto the concrete, mounted the bike and drove off.

As Bucky drove off, the bike's owner called out, "hey, wait!" The people watching the scene unfold looked with surprise, concern, and confusion at what just occurred.

Just as Bucky drove off with a stolen bike, Steve vaulted over the side of the building and landed on his shield, using the vibranium shield to absorb the impact of his landing. Without pausing, Steve rapidly stood up and chased after Bucky who was weaving through traffic in the streets of New York on a stolen motorcycle. But not far behind Steve are the pursuing FBI agents and Police officers in their patrol and squad cars. As Steve sprinted, he saw more police and FBI cars quickly appear from the sides of intersections pursuing Bucky from every available street to try and catch him. It will only be a matter of time before they figure out a way to cut Bucky off entirely and trap him. Steve's plan shifted from peacefully taking Bucky to SHIELD to keeping Bucky alive and avoid further law enforcement casualties. But to do that, Steve needed to catch him first.

Steve sped up and ran faster, and caught up with the pursuing law enforcement cars. At maximum effort, he could run faster than most cars on the market with speed exceeding 80mph. At ease, he can sustain a run of 72mph. Catching Bucky and outrunning the pursuing law enforcement is doable for him on foot, but the dynamic city environment and its obstacles such as people and other vehicles will slow him down tremendously. The road didn't help Steve in any way as he sprinted in pursuit. Traffic seems to diminish as the people driving didn't have time to react and pull over to avoid the high-speed chase in the city which caused considerable high-speed congestion and some accidents on the streets with the pursuing vehicles and Steve dangerously weaving between cars on foot.

As Steve sprinted, an FBI car drove up next to him and matched his speed. The driver window rolled down, and an FBI agent called out to him, "Captain, stand down, now!" Steve ignored him as he continued sprinting down the street with the pursuing vehicles. The agent called out to him again, "Stand down, or else we will arrest you!" Steve couldn't risk getting run over or crushed by a car during the chase, so he opted to hitch a ride with a pursuing vehicle. While sprinting next, Steve jumped and landed on top of the FBI car next to him. He impaled his shield into the roof of the vehicle to anchor himself during the high-speed chase.

The driver of the car looked at his partner in the front passenger seat, "Got a hitch-hiker."

The partner raised his pistol to the roof of the car behind the hole Steve's shield made, "Should I shoot him?"

The driver shook his head, "No, we'll deal with him later. Our prime focus is the Winter Soldier. Besides, if we shoot him the agency will fry us." His partner lowered his weapon and nodded silently.

Steve gripped his shield as the FBI car he was on swerved left and right to dodge other vehicles on
the road. He could see Bucky's motorcycle about sixty feet in front of him weaving through the traffic on the road. Steve pressed the transmit button on his throat microphone, "Dugan, where are you?"

Dugan replied to his radio while driving a convertible with the top down he recently "borrowed," "ETA damn quick. Joining the chase now." He stepped on the gas as he caught up to the numerous FBI and police cars pursuing Bucky, "I see you're on top of things."

Steve turned around briefly and saw Dugan driving a sporty red Cadillac convertible, "I see you chose the red one."

"I'll try and get to Barnes," Dugan said as he stepped on the gas and swerved left and threaded the needle between two cop cars.

At the very tip of the high-speed chase, Bucky briefly turned around and saw the mass of pursuing cars behind him and Steve riding on the top of one of the cars. He looked forward with an emotionless expression and accelerated...

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Time Square, New York City, SHIELD: AEGIS HEADQUARTERS

Director Rogers Office

Rose walked into her boss's office and smiled at what she saw. Peggy sat on the couch playing with her daughter on her lap while her son played with a few toys on the floor. Rose couldn't help but smile at the warm sight. Many people see the professional, all business, and sometimes strict side of her boss, but many people rarely see the mother side of Peggy. It is truly a sight to see. Rose knocked on the door frame then stepped toward the couch, "You wanted to see me, Peggy?"

Peggy looked up from playing with her daughter, "Oh yes, can you do me a big favor? It's not right for me to ask you this but I have no other alternative." Even though Peggy is a high-ranking official at an intelligence agency, she couldn't find anything to do but wait for word on Steve and the capture of the Winter Soldier. She didn't plan on aimlessly working on reports and managing field operations when her head is anywhere but work. Her mind is more occupied on the current situation with Steve and the case with the Winter Soldier than anything else.

Rose smiled, "Of course, Peg, whatever you need."

Peggy smiled, "Well, I think I'm going to be needed here all day and I can't keep my kids here. Do you think you can drive my kids home? The sitter should meet you there so you don't have to wait. You can take the day off after. I don't even know why you're here on a Saturday in the first place."

Rose chuckled, "I needed to file a few things before the start of the business day on Monday. Had a lot to do and didn't finish last night so here I am."

Peggy chuckled and waved her hand, "You could've just done it on Monday. Anyway, I can give you my car keys so you can take the car seats out of my car and put them in yours. Just leave my keys with the security desk by the garage."

Rose nodded, "I can do that. No worries, Peggy."

Peggy smiled at Rose as she bounced Sarah on her lap, "Thank you so much, Rose." She moved her head back as Sarah tried reaching to touch her face and play with her hair. Peggy laughed and turned her attention to her daughter, "What are you doing, sweetie?" she quickly pressed her lips against
Sarah's cheek and blew air against her skin. The little girl giggled happily and placed her small hands on her mother's cheeks. Peggy smiled and kissed Sarah in the hair and continued to bounce the little girl on her lap. Peggy did her best not to show the stress she's feeling about letting her husband get Bucky after the FBI ordered him not to get involved. If Steve got into a confrontation with the FBI and police while trying to catch Bucky, there would be severe repercussions for him and possibly her too. Peggy knew very well that her twins would sense her stress and it would affect their attitudes. Much like how couples experience emotional stress when one partner is angry or anxious, for instance, the other partner's emotional state mimics those feelings so that explains how an argument can end up escalating. The emotions end up mirroring each other even if not done consciously. So, it would be beneficial for Peggy's kids if she kept her stress in check in front of them.

Sarah giggled, "mama!" She exclaimed as her mother played with her.

Rose smiled, "What time do you want me to take them home?"

"Now would be good, everything is packed in their baby bags except for a few toys with Michael," Peggy said evenly while holding her daughter in place on her lap. She nodded to the file cabinet behind her desk, "the keys are in my purse over there." Rose nodded and walked over to Peggy's purse on the file cabinet behind the desk.

As Rose looked for the keys, Peggy stood up with Sarah in her arms, "here we go, darling, time to go," she said with a gentle tone as she walked over to the pram by the far end of the couch. She gently lay Sarah down in the carriage and brushed her hair gently with a smile. Peggy then turned around and walked over to Michael who was happily playing with his toy on the floor without a single care in the world. Peggy smiled and squatted down to pick up her young son, "Its time to go home, sweetie." She scooped up her son in her arms and pressed a kiss on his cheek earning a giggle from the boy. As she walked to put her little boy in the pram, Michael accidentally dropped his toy on the floor making him suddenly stir anxiously in her arms and whimper. Peggy laughed, "Oops. Don't worry, I'll get it in a second, darling." She gently put her little boy in the pram with her sister before turning around and grabbing the toy off the floor.

As Peggy returned the toy to her son, Rose found the keys and walked over to Peggy and the pram, "Got the keys."

Peggy smiled, "Good, are you ready to go?"

Rose smiled, "Just got to swing by my desk and get a few things, but I can do that on my way out."

"Sounds good, thanks for this, Rose. Really appreciate it," Peggy said with a smile. "Remember to take the day off," she chuckled.

Rose laughed as she walked over, "I won't forget and it's no problem, boss. Happy to help."

As Rose got behind the pram, Peggy bent over the carriage and kissed her son and daughter on the forehead, "Auntie Rose is going to take you home. Mama will be back later, okay, my darlings?" she said again kissing her two young toddlers on the forehead. Both Sarah and Michael sensed that their mother was leaving and started to cry and pout loudly.

Rose smiled, "Aw, they're going to miss you, Peggy."

Peggy chuckled and bent down over the pram again, "It's okay, my darlings. Mama and Daddy will be home with you soon. I promise." Peggy could only hope she and Steve will be home at a decent hour in the evening to see their kids, but it all depends on the situation with Bucky. The two toddlers continued to cry loudly fully aware that Peggy wasn't going home with them. She kissed her son and
daughter once again, "Don't cry. Don't cry. Mama will see you at home," she said in her best attempt to calm her crying toddler. Peggy smiled at her two children, "I love you both very much." She stood up and smiled at Rose, "Well, its best you leave now before they start really crying, hopefully, they'll calm down once you get to the car."

Rose smiled as she pushed the pram, "Sounds good. I'll see you Monday then."

Peggy nodded and walked with Rose to her office door, "Thanks again." She smiled at her two crying toddlers in the carriage, "Bye-bye Sarah, bye-bye, Michael. Mama will be home soon, I promise." Rose smiled at Peggy as she walked out of the office with the two crying twins. Peggy hated leaving her two babies for any reason, the mother in her wanted to be with them always, but she knew she had work to do.

As Peggy was about to walk back into her office, she spotted Agent Jack Thompson down the hallway, waving at the two toddlers in the pram and Rose as he walked passed them. Thompson called out to Peggy as he neared her office, "Director, I got some bad news."

Peggy sighed, Of course, you do, she said to herself. She walked into her office and called over her shoulder, "come on in, and shut the door behind you." Just as she sat down at her desk, Thompson walked into her office and shut the door. Peggy leaned back in her seat, "What do you have for me, Jack?"

Thompson sighed and shook his head, "Nothing good I'm afraid." He put his hands in his pockets, "FBI just called into the Operations Center…The Winter Soldier broke containment and is on the run in the lower Eastside."

"And my husband?" Peggy asked evenly.

"They're… going to arrest him too," Thompson said with hesitation. Peggy shook her head and sighed, doing her best not to reveal any negative emotion. Thompson continued, "There's a lot of police and FBI casualties… apparently, Captain Rogers helped the Winter Soldier escape capture. Granted this is all from FBI reports."

Peggy nodded, "I see." She stood up and faced the window and crossed her arms over her chest. She sighed, "anything else?"

Thompson shrugged, "Do we need to send back up to the FBI?"

Peggy continued to stare out her window, "No. The FBI wanted to handle this on their own." She paused, "Thanks, Jack. Keep me posted."

Thompson nodded, "I will, Director," he said as he started to make his way out of the office.

Peggy shook her head, Damn it, Steve… What have I done, you're going to be in trouble because I didn't say no to you, she said to herself. She began to rub her belly absent mindedly at the little life growing within her. She is yet to tell Steve she's pregnant again.

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Lower Eastside, New York City, New York

The chase to catch Bucky dragged on and started to become increasingly dangerous the more prolonged as the pursuit continued. The FBI and police officers managed to anticipate Bucky's moves to some extent and blocked and closed off a few roads to contain him to certain streets. Unfortunately for the FBI and police, Bucky still had some freedom of movement which means he
still has a chance of avoiding them. Additionally, the FBI did their best to clear the streets to protect people from getting hurt from the chase, but many people didn't get the message on the public radio stations, so the roads are still occupied with civilian traffic.

In the streets of the city, Bucky continued to weave his motorcycle through the busy streets with the FBI and police hot on his tail. Bucky looked over his shoulder briefly on his bike and saw that the federal agents were gaining on him. He couldn't outrun them at this rate, so he needed to lose them in another way. Bucky then noticed he’s rapidly approaching a busy intersection and right then and there he decided on his next course of action. He swerved his bike to the middle lane and revved the motorcycle's engine like he was preparing to accelerate straight through the intersection like he did the past dozen times. Many of the tailing FBI and police cars thought he was doing the same thing and are prepared to follow him across. The FBI car Steve is riding on is speeding down the left lane, weaved through traffic and was ready to chase Bucky across the busy intersection. Dugan's red Cadillac convertible is toward the right middle side of the chase pack and is rapidly passing the pursuing federal agents and police officers. The whole pursuing group got ready for another deadly intersection crossing to catch Buck.

In a blink of an eye at the busy intersection, Bucky made a 90-degree left-turn on his bike by drifting his motorcycle at extreme speeds from the middle lane of the road. He leaned into the turn where his knee was practically scraping across the pavement while simultaneously using his mechanical hand as a physical handbrake across the ground. In a split second, he completed the turn and managed to avoid getting struck by oncoming traffic. The pursuing vehicles were unable to make the corner as clean as he did and the situation turned from dangerous to deadly in less than a second. The lead vehicles quickly attempted to follow but were immediately struck by oncoming traffic and nearby civilian cars. Many cars, both private and federal and police cars, were hit head-on or struck on the side causing many cars to roll over. The oncoming traffic collided with the FBI and police cars causing a massive car accident in the middle of the intersection. The sound of metal on metal and tires screeching filled the entire block as the crash started to pile up in mere seconds. Cars in the accident began to function as a ball in a pinball machine, bouncing and crashing into any object on the street or sidewalk.

The car Steve rode swerved to dodge an oncoming car, but the driver turned so tight at high speed that the vehicle started to roll over. Just as the car was about to tip to its side, Steve jumped with his shield in hand to a nearby police car trying to find its way through the accident. The FBI car he was previously on rolled onto its side and slid on its roof into the end of the intersection with the high pitch sound of metal screeching across the pavement. While Steve leaped from one car to the next, Dugan managed to weave his convertible through the accident and make the turn at the intersection by turning onto the sidewalk. As he stepped on the gas, he honked his horn and cursed at the pedestrians to get out of the way to avoid further accidents. Pedestrians and people eating outside on patio tables of restaurants jumped and dove clear out of the path of Dugan's dangerous driving. The chaos on the intersection added onto the price tag in the chase for Bucky.

As the police car Steve just jumped on made the sharp left turn, the car suddenly swerved to avoid an accident but collided with a parked car at the side of the street catapulting him into the air from the inertia. Dugan got back onto the road just as Steve got launched into the air, clear from any other car due to the accident behind him; he quickly swerved toward the middle of the road in the hopes of catching him. As Steve flew through the air, he quickly acquired Dugan's red Cadillac convertible in his view and aimed for the rear seats. Almost like it was rehearsed, Steve landed on the back of the car and impaled his shield into the trunk of the car to anchor him to the vehicle the upon landing, and barely missed the rear passenger seats. Dugan quickly looked into the rearview mirror and saw Steve riding on the back of his car. He smiled to himself and stepped on the gas and accelerated to chase Bucky. They were practically alone in the pursuit with only three FBI and police cars following them that managed to get through the pile up.
Bucky briefly looked behind him to check who was still pursuing him and only saw Dugan's car with Steve riding on the back and three FBI and police cars hot on their heels. Just as Bucky looked forward, a pickup truck pulled out from the intersection in front of him too close for him to stop or turn. Unable to stop in time he hit the front of the truck and was launched over his bike and the hood of the truck into the middle of the road. Bucky hit the pavement with a roll to break the fall, and by the time he came to a stop he only had a few bruises, cuts, and a mild case of road rash but virtually unscathed. He stood up slowly as oncoming traffic on all directions came to a skidding stop at the sight of someone standing in the middle of a busy intersection. He stood in silence as he heard the sound of police sirens getting closer from different directions. The longer he stood there in the middle of the street; the more people began to realize he's the Winter Soldier from the description broadcasted all over the radio and even pictures that were recently distributed of what he looks like. Everyone in the immediate vicinity started to give him space and looked at him with more fear than general curiosity.

Dugan stopped his car just shy of Bucky's wrecked bike then got out of the car along with Steve to finally reach Bucky. He and Steve rushed over to Bucky just as the police and FBI cars appeared in front of them across the intersection. Bucky turned around and faced the two men with an emotionless stare as the law enforcement rapidly approached them. Soon the trio stood in front of a line of police officers and FBI agents getting out of their vehicles and pointing a vast assortment of weapons at them. Steve couldn't help but feel like he was staring down a firing squad of over twenty officers and federal agents.

Agent Witwer appeared from the line aiming his M1911 .45-caliber pistol at Bucky's head, "All of you! Hands up and get down on your knees!" Bucky and Dugan did what they were told and put their hands up and got down on both of their knees. Steve took a second to put his shield on his back before getting down on his knees and raising his hands over his head. A crowd of people watched from the sidewalk as the situation unfolded. Witwer and four other FBI agents walked forward slowly toward Steve, Bucky, and Dugan while keeping their weapons pointed at them in case any of them did any hostile act. Witwer stopped in front of Steve, "congratulations, Captain. You're a criminal and a traitor," he said coldly. He turned to his fellow agents, "arrest them, and get the 'jacket' for our Soviet friend, here." The public near the situation watched with shock as the police and FBI arrested Captain America and took him away. His arrest shocked the people in the immediate area and news will soon spread like wildfire. Steve as Captain America is more than just another public figure; he symbolized good moral values, ethics, patriotism, and all-around righteous character to the American people. A arrest of Captain America will send ripples throughout the American public and can have lasting effects on him and the government…

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**Time Square, New York City, SHIELD: AEGIS HEADQUARTERS**

**SHIELD Parking Garage**

A convoy of three black FBI cars and one armored FBI truck in the middle turned off the busy streets in time square and down the ramp into the SHIELD subterranean parking garage. Once the convoy passed the security serpentine barriers and gate, the four trucks continued down the series of ramps at a relatively fast speed through the tight turns of the garage to the supply and motor pool level. At the final turn onto the level, the four FBI vehicles were greeted by a dozen of SHIELD and FBI agents including SHIELD Agents Jack Thompson, Jack Li, and Rick Ramirez, Director of the FBI, a man in a fancy grey suit, and, of course, Peggy all waiting in front of a large cargo elevator. The large group of personnel was assembled as extra security to escort the Winter Soldier into his holding cell within SHIELD. Thorough precautions were set in place to watch Steve and Dugan in case they tried to escape or attempt to free the Winter Soldier.
The convoy stopped abruptly in front of the waiting group, and the FBI agents within the convoy started to step out of their vehicles to begin unloading their prisoners. Agent Witwer stepped out of the front passenger seat of the armored truck and walked to the rear as his fellow agents opened the armored back doors to let out Steve, Dugan, and Bucky. Peggy watched the FBI intently with an emotionless look making sure no one could see what she was honestly feeling. On the outside, she looked serious and composed, but inside she was anything but serious. Peggy fiddled with her wedding ring with her thumb with an uneasy feeling sinking farther and farther into her gut. She didn't stand alone watching, standing next to her is Director Hoover, Agents Li, Thompson, Ramirez, and another government official in a fancy suit, so it's in her best interest as a leader for her to not show negative emotion in front of her agents and the Director of the FBI. Hormones from her pregnancy didn't help anything either, but she's doing the best she can to maintain a professional posture and self-discipline. Today hasn't been a very good day.

Steve immersed from the back of the truck with his helmet hanging lazily on his war belt, but didn't wear handcuffs nor did he have his shield on his back. Dugan stepped out after him with a scowl on his face, and also didn't wear cuffs. Following the two men, stepped out Bucky wearing a titanium straitjacket with his forearms shackled across his chest and held securely by the heavy-duty metal braces. The metal jacket also had a thick leather reinforcing layer under the metal shell to make an effective physical restraint against Bucky's superhuman strength. Once the three men stepped out of the truck they stood by each other and waited to be told to move by Agent Witwer.

Agent Witwer, flanked by two FBI agents on either side, walked up to the trio, "Well...Welcome home, gentlemen." The three men remained silent and stared at him with emotionless stares. Witwer shook his head and took a step closer to Steve and spoke in a hushed tone, "It's truly a shame, Captain. Figured you wouldn't listen to us to stay out of it." Steve didn't respond and looked at him with a cold glare. "I'm assuming your wife, Director Rogers, tried to stop you, huh?" He asked with a smug grin. Witwer shook his head, "yeah, I figured she did, and you wouldn't listen. You two tend to have that habit of not following orders or rules for that matter. You guys like to break the rules...But it's mostly you..." He chuckled, "Do you know what the truth is?"

"What's that?" Steve asked coldly.

"You're yesterday's hero too. You're just too dangerous. You're out of control," Witwer shrugged. "And if you don't have the obedience and discipline to follow orders or simple laws than you shouldn't be Captain America. Let alone a soldier. Funny, how someone like you keeps finding himself in conflict. Almost like you need it."

Dugan spoke up, "You better watch yourself..."

Witwer chuckled, "OR what? You'll arrest me? Yeah right. You two are in big enough trouble as it is, you don't need to add to your bill." He shook his head, "You guys are luckier than your Soviet friend here," he said mentioning Bucky. "He will either rot in jail for the rest of his life or be executed. Frankly, we don't know what to do with you and Captain Rogers. But you two are lucky the Directors of SHIELD are protecting you." Witwer looked coldly at Steve, "How about you get with the program, Captain. Stop trying to find a war to fight. This country doesn't need you to make one; we got the Soviet Union to deal with already. The last thing we need is a washed-up war hero trying to invent one..." Steve remained in silence in response which was all Agent Witwer wanted from him. Witwer then nodded toward Peggy who was anxiously waiting in front of the cargo elevator, "Now let's go. It's time for me to turn you guys over."

The trio was escorted to the cargo elevator by Agent Witwer and his team of FBI agents to the awaiting mixture of SHIELD and FBI agents, and staff. Once Steve and Dugan were dropped off in front of Peggy, Agent Witwer and a team of SHIELD and FBI agents escorted Bucky toward the
cargo elevator. Steve watched as Bucky slowly walked toward the elevator while being guarded by at least a dozen of armed SHIELD and FBI agents. He spoke softly, "What's going to happen to him?" he asked no one in particular.

Before Peggy answered, the man in the suit responded, in a cold tone, "Same thing that ought to happen to you. Fortunately, your record, service, and trust from ranking officials in SHIELD saved you."

Peggy sighed and shook her head at Steve with a neutral expression, "Steve, this is Attorney General Michael Briggs." The Honorable Michael Briggs, the current Attorney General under President Truman, is a short aging man with thick grey hair and wore a fancy grey suit and black tie.

Briggs looked at Steve and Dugan with a cold gaze, "Your…friend… will be processed, questioned, and locked up for the foreseeable future." He nodded, "We even arranged a psychiatrist to see him. You can thank your wife for that one, Captain."

Steve spoke up, "What about a lawyer?"

Hoover chuckled and spoke up, "That's funny." He looked at Peggy, "See to it that their weapons are placed in lock up, Director." He shrugged at Dugan and Steve, "We'll write you a receipt." He then nodded at the Attorney General, "Ready, sir?"

Briggs turned around, "Ready," he said as he and Director Hoover turned around and made their way to the personnel elevator next to the cargo lift. As the two men left, Steve and Dugan saw SHIELD agents walking toward the elevator with Steve's shield and Dugan's shotgun and other equipment he brought with him.

Steve sighed as Dugan spoke up in annoyance, "I better not hear anyone mistreating Sally…" Sally was the name that he gave his shotgun out of love for it and because it was his favorite weapon to use. The name held no particular meaning to him, but he couldn't help to give it a girl's name.

Steve looked over at Bucky and saw that he was looking back at him with an apologetic look instead of his usual emotionless stare. Steve nodded at his old friend just as the cargo elevator doors closed to transport Bucky to the Cell Block. Steve finally turned to Peggy and gave an apologetic smile, "Hey, honey…"

Peggy shook her head and quickly embraced her husband in a tight grip not caring if any of her agents are around to look at them. She let out a gasp of air like she's been holding her breath, "Are you okay, darling?"

Steve instantly returned her embrace, "Yeah, I'm okay."

Peggy kissed his neck multiple times, "They didn't hurt you, right?" she asked quietly.

Steve chuckled, "No, I'm okay. It got messy."

Peggy laughed and let go of her husband then wiped away a tear running down her cheek, "I'm sorry. Bloody... emotions. Had them under control until now." Her hormones got the better of her but she didn't want to tell Steve she's pregnant here in front of a group of people. She did her best to play it off like it was pure emotion getting the best of her.

Steve frowned and wiped away another tear rolling down her cheek, "It's okay. I'm sorry… I... Didn't mean to make you cry. This situation, I..." Steve was lost for words and didn't know what to say. He didn't think Peggy would be that upset about the situation to the point she would cry. Peggy wasn't a big crier and usually only cried when something really bad happened which means Steve
Peggy shook her head and gripped Steve's leather shoulder strap. "We'll talk later about it, okay?" She gave a small smile, "Remember how I said you'd make things worse? This is what it looks like," she said with light humor as she wiped another tear rolling down her cheek. She's still tearing up from her hormones, but she's slowly getting them under control.

Steve nodded, "Sorry, Peg." He sighed, "Didn't think the Attorney General would be down here either." He shook his head, "This is a mess, I made."

Peggy nodded calmly as she got her tears under control. She turned to Thompson, "Jack, take Li and Ramirez and escort them to the conference room by the Operations Center."

Thompson nodded, "You got it." He turned to Dugan and Steve, "Fellas, follow me."

Peggy kissed Steve on the lips briefly, "I'll be up there in a second, darling." Steve nodded and gave an apologetic smile as he walked away with Dugan, Thompson, and Li to the personnel elevator. He couldn't imagine what Peggy is dealing with now that he got involved in capturing Bucky. If Steve could've gotten Bucky out clean without any fighting or bloodshed, the situation would be a lot calmer and easier to manage, but it didn't turn out that way. Now he's sure Peggy is dealing with the fallout of his good intentions. To Steve, Peggy's career might be on the line because of him. Steve now wrestled whether or not what he did was right or wrong in the grand scheme of things.

In the elevator going up to the Operations Center, Thompson looked over at Steve and Dugan, "You two will be in the conference room next to the Operations Center." He chuckled, "Do us a favor and stay in it. We're in enough trouble as it is."

Steve nodded, "I don't plan on leaving anytime soon." His mind was anywhere but the present and focused on what's going to happen to Bucky and how Peggy is handling everything. Bucky is alive and safe, at least for now, which gave Steve time to focus on his wife and think about how she's doing. But what started off as a worry about his friend turned into a concern for his family especially for his wife. Peggy is dealing with the immediate fallout of his decision to catch Bucky himself, and Steve's fear is that she might lose her position as Deputy Director of SHIELD. The presence of the Attorney General doesn't make the situation easier nor does it help them in any way. Though Steve had limited exposure with Honorable Briggs, he can already tell that the man had it in for him and Peggy. Overall, the situation Peggy's in is because of him, and he didn't stop to think of how it would affect her. His rushed decision is costing her now. Truthfully, if he could take all the blame, then he would, but Steve knew that the politicians and the Attorney General would look to blame the both of them. Bad situations like these made him miss his kids and the quiet moments with his family. It hasn't been more than twelve hours and he longs to see his two little kids again.

Although the situation Steve found him and his wife in is terrible, he still believed what he did was right. If he didn't go and didn't contact Bucky, he was pretty sure that Bucky would've been killed in the pursuit. He would even go as far and say that the collateral damage and law enforcement casualties would've been much higher with multiple deaths had he not gone out and get Bucky himself. Granted, the FBI and the police shot at the both of them, but Steve believed his involvement saved lives and assured Bucky's safety. Yes, there were multiple critical injuries, but in the grand scheme of things, he thought he did the right thing with what he had and did the best he could. Steve knew he couldn't protect all the FBI agents, Police officers, and, at the same time, Bucky, but he did his best to mitigate the damages and casualties by getting Bucky himself. The truth is, no one would know what Steve prevented, and they would only see the destruction he caused to reach him. Unfortunately, his intentions caused a significant strain on Peggy, and there's probably nothing he can do to fix it. Peggy is everything to him, and the thought that he put this much trouble on her
made him feel incredibly guilty. Steve never intended to cause her pain and never wanted to, but the fact that he did riddle him with guilt.

Peggy is no doubt feeling the political and operational fallout of Steve's actions to get involved in the apprehension of Bucky. With the FBI Director, Secretary of State, and now the Attorney General involved, Peggy, is exposed to the blowback of her husband going on his own, without authorization, to apprehend the Winter Soldier. Steve's actions essentially meant he went "rogue" and acted without proper approval which caused Peggy to take much of the blame. His actions made it look like Peggy was unable to control her husband as a leader in SHIELD. The overall ramifications would be her losing her job due to the loss of trust and confidence in her. Unfortunately, the fact that she's a woman in an unprecedented director position in a government agency made her vulnerable to political adversaries who were against her in that position. The situation with Bucky may have been more than Steve had bargained for…

Steve was brought back to reality when Dugan spoke up to Thompson, "So what crawled up the Attorney General's rear and died?"

Thompson chuckled, "Impressed by unwavering character too?"

Ramirez shrugged, "He's pissed because he thinks you messed up the capture of the Winter Soldier, and because he still has to figure out what to do with you."

Li looked at Steve and Dugan, "Yeah, you guys aren't out of the woods yet."

Thompson looked over at Steve, "Not to beat you up, Captain. But, because of you, Director Rogers is facing major repercussions from everyone. Especially the Secretary of State and the Attorney General. She's been feeling the stress since the FBI found out that you were trying to catch the Winter Soldier." He sighed, "I have to ask. Was he worth it?"

Steve shrugged, "He's my friend… he would've done the same for me. And I would do anything for my people. If I didn't go get him myself, I guarantee there would be dead agents and police officers, and he would end up dead too."

Dugan spoke up, "If you knew Bucky you would understand. He gone to hell and back for all of us, and even gave his life for us. He deserves a second chance."

Thompson nodded silently in response. Ramirez gave a small smile and spoke up, "We never said he didn't. We read the reports on him."

Steve sighed, "I did what I thought was right, but had I known that Peggy would get blamed for it this… I don't know." He shook his head, "I thought I would be the one in trouble, not her."

Dugan sighed, "Why does everyone hate Peggy so much."

Steve spoke up, "Because she's the only woman in a director position of a government intelligence agency, and many people on Capitol Hill don't like that." He sighed, "If only they could see what we see."

Thompson nodded, "For both of your sakes… I hope your friend can give something to the Attorney General to that makes this situation worth it to the government," he said calmly. He paused then looked over his shoulder, "By the way Captain, you have to turn over your uniform to lock up too, I'm sorry."

Steve shook his head with a disapproving look.
Howard Stark, Director Phillips, Attorney General Briggs, and Director Hoover gathered around Peggy's desk to talk to her about the situation earlier with Steve and the Winter Soldier. Peggy leaned back in her seat with a neutral expression and listened to what the men in the room were saying. Hoover sighed and stuck his hands in his pockets, "Do you understand what happened?"

Peggy sighed, "Yes, I'm fully aware," she said with irritation.

Hoover shook his head, "Your husband and the soviet spy crippled over twenty of my agents and local police! A number of them will be lucky to even walk again," he expressed angrily. He tapped his finger on Peggy's desk, "Your husband is a criminal and a vigilante!"

Peggy leaned forward and placed her elbows on her desk, "My husband will be referred to as Captain Rogers when you talk about him."

Phillips sighed, "Peggy, do you grasp the gravity of what's going on? Do you know what the ramifications of what Steve did?" he said in a regretting tone.

Peggy nodded at her boss, "I'm aware."

Briggs shook his head, "There's going to be consequences, I promise you all that." He crossed his arms over his chest, "His service record won't protect him forever. He's free of charges for now because of it, but I assure you I'll make sure he pays for what he did today." He chuckled coldly, "And don't get me started on the subject how he aided a Soviet agent."

"Again, I'm aware of that," Peggy said with frustration. She sighed, "But if you want to know why Captain Rogers did what he did…"

Hoover shook his head and interrupted her, "We'll get to that, but all in all it seems you can't control Captain Rogers. And if you can't seem to control Captain Rogers, who's, in fact, your husband, then how can the people of the United States and the government continue to trust you as a Director of SHIELD? You couldn't even stop him from aiding a foreign agent of an enemy of the United States."

Phillips spoke up angrily, "That's far enough. I'm the head of SHIELD, and she's my second in command, and I won't let this white wash continue! This isn't about her!" He nodded to Peggy, "Her marriage to Captain Rogers has nothing to do with her ability to lead the agency. Captain Rogers acted on his own accord under my watch as the head of SHIELD which makes me as much to blame as her."

Briggs spoke up again, "See it from our perspective, Director and Mr. Stark. She obviously let personal feelings get in the way and allowed Captain Rogers to seek the Winter Soldier before the FBI got there."

Howard finally spoke up after being silent throughout the conversation, "From my perspective it feels like you're going after her for being a woman."

Hoover shook his head, "I only mentioned her marriage, Mr. Stark."

"Exactly, and that's reason enough. You brought up, Captain Rogers' service record, how about you bring up hers," Howard said in defense of Peggy. "She has done a lot for this country. Do you know how many commendations she was awarded while serving as a field agent in the SSR and in the Army during the war, and as a woman?"
Hoover shrugged, "Great many, I'm sure."

Briggs shook his head, "Don't wave her service record us, Mr. Stark. We aren't here for her history lesson, we're here to discuss present circumstances." he said shutting down the topic of Peggy's distinguished service in the SSR and the Army. It didn't take a genius to figure out what Briggs and Hoover were trying to accomplish by focusing on Peggy, and Peggy knew it too. She usually prefers to defend herself in these type of sexist situations, but given the situation, she's thankful for Howard's and Phillips' support.

Hoover paced, "Now back on topic. My agents reported that Captain Rogers was in the apartment before they got there, how did that happen?"

Peggy responded calmly and without hesitation, "Because I gave him the address." Phillips and Howard looked at her with surprise, but then relaxed as the dots slowly connected in their minds. Briggs and Hoover smiled to themselves at Peggy's quick confession as to how Steve got to the Winter Soldier before the FBI did. Phillips honestly couldn't blame her for it because he figured she and Steve had their reasons, and they're actions are usually guided by sound judgment and principle.

Hoover leaned forward onto her desk, "And why would you do that even…"

Peggy interrupted him and stood up to meet his presumptuous gaze, "Because your agents would've either killed the Winter Soldier or gotten killed by him and allow him to disappear again. Sending Captain Rogers would've done things peacefully without a fight. Especially since he knew…"

Briggs interrupted her, "We're all aware of the history between him and former Sergeant Barnes before he became a traitor and a Soviet assassin. Besides, there's no possible way of knowing how the Winter Soldier would've reacted. The safest bet was to send my agents in heavy, it had the least number of variables, and I still think it was the safer bet had it not been for Captain Rogers." Phillips shook his head in annoyance of Hoover and Briggs' tone and stance against Peggy.

Peggy spoke up in a calm tone, "What you don't know is that Hydra and the Soviets captured former Sergeant Barnes and brainwashed to be their agent, and Captain Rogers knew that." Peggy then opened a drawer in her desk and removed a thick file titled Sergeant Barnes: Winter Soldier, the file recovered during the SHIELD Incident. She dropped the file on her desk in front of Hoover and Briggs to see. Peggy nodded, "The crimes Barnes committed during his time as a Soviet agent occurred when the Soviets and Hydra brainwashed him. He did not do it willingly, and Captain Rogers has reason to believe Sergeant Barnes remembered who he was, and left the Soviets behind and didn't commit those murders earlier today. This file recovered during the SHIELD Incident in '47 proves it."

Hoover stepped forward and briefly looked through the file. After a short moment, he closed the file and crossed his arms refusing to budge, "Regardless, we still have beyond reasonable doubt Sergeant Barnes acting as the Winter Soldier committed those murders today. There's no way you could possibly know that he didn't return to his past as a trained assassin and killed again." He shook his head, "Besides, brainwashed or not, Sergeant Barnes is still guilty of espionage for a foreign power and treason. Plus, the Secretary of State made it very clear with the new executive order…"

Peggy interrupted him and crossed her arms over her chest and leaned back on her hip in irritation, "I know the order… I don't know what happened exactly in the city but I am fully aware your agents executed your raid early." She nodded to the door, "look what happened when your agents breached early when the Captain, who I'm sure was in the middle of talking to Sergeant Barnes, had a chance to take him peacefully without a fight. But, no, your idea of least number of variables caused this situation." She shook her head, "You have evidence in front of you that shows Sergeant Barnes was brainwashed and…"
Briggs shook his head, "Director, it doesn't matter, Captain Rogers still broke the law and regulations..."

Peggy shrugged, "Would you be this worked up if no one got hurt? No agents hospitalized? And no infrastructure damage?" The two men went silent and couldn't find a response. Peggy smiled confidently, "Didn't think so. I'm sure we wouldn't be having this conversation if you didn't cut SHIELD out. You may not like what happened, and I understand there will be consequences, but what Captain Rogers and I did was necessary to try and avoid the extra damage." She shook her head, "Unfortunately, we couldn't avoid it in time."

Briggs stepped closer to Peggy's desk and spoke sternly, "What you said is purely circumstantial, but it doesn't change the fact that your judgment is skewed and you let personal feelings get the better of you!" Peggy didn't break her glare at him and didn't look phased by his words. Briggs pointed a finger at her, "I don't think you're fit to be Deputy Director of SHIELD let alone the director of a coffee shop!"

Peggy smiled confidently and showed a look of defiance in the face of two men who wanted to see her fail. At the worst possible moment, she suddenly felt sick to her stomach as morning sickness kicked in again. She maintained a calm expression as the nausea continued to increase. She absentmindedly placed a hand over her belly, "well you better find someone more important than you to relieve me of this position." She stepped around her desk, she spoke in a cold tone, "You two better read that file before you start questioning Captain Rogers' motives," she said pointing to the file on the Winter Soldier on her desk. "Now excuse me," she said as she walked to the door to use the bathroom.

Once Peggy left the office, Briggs crossed his arms, "Well..."

Hoover chuckled and shrugged, "She has that attitude of hers. We shouldn't have let her go."

Howard spoke up and shook his head, "Are you kidding? You didn't break her. She didn't cave to you, and you probably can't make her. If you think she will act like a 'girl' and quit then you're wrong. If you knew her, she's damn good at her job and will kick your ass given the opportunity."

Phillips nodded, "He's right. You won't force her out without a fight."

Hoover chuckled, "Come on, Chester. Do you two really think she's that good at her job? I don't doubt she got other private talents but..."

Howard laughed and stuck his hands in his pockets, "Why does everyone mention the sex thing with her? In case you haven't noticed, she's a married woman, so best watch what you say, Director." He smiled, "SHIELD likes to watch people." Hoover frowned at him unamused by his comment.

Briggs sighed, "Don't tell me y'all going to defend her when there's a motion against her."

Phillips smiled, "We won't need to... she'd do it herself."

Howard nodded at the file on Peggy's desk, "You better read that file to help cure your ignorance on the situation..."

Briggs shook his head at Phillips and Howard then left the office with Hoover following close behind, not bothering with the file. Phillips frowned and put his hands in his pockets, "Do you think this is a government conspiracy?"

Howard laughed, "You couldn't make that up even if you tried, Chester." He sighed, "Those two are going to make it their own personal mission to get rid of Peggy." He shook his head, "I don't think..."
they even care about the murders anymore." Phillips nodded silently in agreement.

As Hoover and Briggs left the office and walked the hallway in a calm pace, Briggs sighed and looked over at Hoover, "Margaret Rogers...she's a big problem. I don't think she's cut out for the job. She just proved a lack in trust and confidence in her."

Hoover nodded, "We'll deal with her, I assure you." He smiled, "Remember why we're accusing her. Once we give the Secretary of State his next update, we'll wrap this situation around her neck and hang her with it."

Briggs smiled, "See to it that we remove her. We don't need her back in the National Security Council to second guess the decisions of those who are qualified."

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**SHIELD: Operations Center, Conference Room**

Steve and Dugan sat near each other at the long table in the conference room that overlooked the Operations Center. The Operations Center or Ops Center conference room is mainly windowless with one side made entirely of glass so the occupants in the room can observe the work within the Ops Center below them. The conference room functioned much like an observation room in a way anyone within can see everything taking place in the Ops Center. The long-polished wood conference table could fit twenty people and also had a black telephone so anyone in the conference room can communicate within and out of the facility. The room's walls were like most of the building with smooth old growth hardwood paneling with various pictures frames of the SSR and the beginning of SHIELD hanging on the walls. The floor below the conference room is the wide-open room that contained SHIELDs Ops Center which functioned as the nexus of all SHIELD domestic and foreign operations. At the very center of the room is a massive map of the world that had small board markers with various symbols marked on them placed on numerous countries including the United States. Men and Women often moved the markers from place-to-place on the map with long rakes to reach across the board, much like using a croupier stick in a casino. Surrounding the map and facing the wall opposite of the conference room, are organized ranks of desks with each having a telephone for analysts and Ops Center control operators. On the opposite wall of the conference room are a series of boards that had the various SHIELD operations, key locations, agents in the field, targets, and any intelligence pertaining but not limited to Hydra and the Soviet Union. On the upper wall, directly in line with the conference room window is another world map that is colored where Hydra, Soviet, NATO countries, and SHIELD have a significant presence.

Steve, now dressed in a white dress shirt with the collar unbuttoned and black suit pants, the same clothes he wore to Angie's and Sousa's wedding minus the coat, leaned back in his chair and stared at the world map on the wall and sighed. Dugan leaned forward onto the table, "You know, initially I thought we were crazy to go get Bucky ourselves. Then the FBI started shooting…" He shook his head, "I don't think they planned to take him alive."

Steve nodded, "Yeah, I never believed they would. Even if they did plan to, I don't think they would be able."

"I don't know, Captain. It always seems like we're always in trouble for something," Dugan said shaking his head. "Doesn't matter that we do right, always seems like someone after us."

Steve chuckled, "I understand the feeling. I appreciate you coming with me to help, but…" He looked at Dugan apologetically, "I'm sorry I got you into this."

Dugan smiled at his boss and friend, "I don't regret it, Captain. You're right about one thing."
"Which is?" Steve said with a raised brow.

"Bucky would've done the same for us," Dugan said with a confident smile.

The conference door opened causing the two men to turn and see Peggy standing in the doorway, "How you boys doing?" she asked calmly.

Dugan leaned back in his seat, "You know… in the hot seat again. Just like old times," he said with a chuckle.

Steve looked up at his wife, "Hey, hon," he said calmly.

Peggy walked into the conference room and nodded at Dugan, "Timothy, do you mind giving Steve and me some space?" She nodded to the door, "Thompson and Li are standing outside so just step out for a moment."

Dugan nodded and stood up, "Sure thing, boss lady." He chuckled, "But I don't need a babysitter," he said in a cocky tone as he walked toward the door.

Peggy rolled her eyes with a humorous smile, "Just go."

Dugan raised his hands, "I'm going, I'm going," he said as he left the room, closing the door behind him to leave the couple alone.

Peggy pulled up the seat next to Steve and positioned herself to face her husband. Steve turned in his seat and frowned, "Peggy, I…"

Peggy interrupted him with her actions by placing a gentle hand on his thigh. She smiled warmly, "I'm glad you're okay, darling. But this is a mess," she said referring to the situation regarding the Winter Soldier and Steve's involvement.

"But at least he's alive," Steve responded plainly.

Peggy sighed, "Steve, over twelve FBI agents are hospitalized, a few would be lucky to walk again. But at least no one was killed today, remarkably," she said with a small reassuring smile.

Steve nodded, "I'm sorry that had to happen. If there was any other to avoid the fight, I would've taken it."

Peggy leaned forward in her seat and gripped Steve's thigh affectionately, "Darling, the FBI are calling you a criminal and even a wrongful vigilante because of this situation. They might be considering jail time, and if wasn't for your reputation and service record they'd lock you up already." She sighed, "This is a big deal what happened."

Steve responded calmly, "I know, I…"

Peggy interrupted him and spoke in a harsher tone, "I took a hunch and hoped something like this was avoidable. But instead multiple people are hospitalized and an entire street is blocked off."

Steve frowned, "Have you lost faith in me?"

Peggy looked taken back from his question, "What? Steve of course not."

Steve shook his head, "Peggy, I can't sit by and be a bystander when there's something wrong. Especially when the wrong is described as the right option. Bucky is innocent of this crime, and I know it to be true." He sighed, "The FBI would've killed him if they had the opportunity today so I
Peggy frowned, "Steve, what are you really doing? You're just prideful, stubborn, and selfish." She spoke up angrily, "Did you ever stop and think of what you did would affect me? Even our family? The Attorney General and FBI Director are trying to hang me with this. Don't confuse your will with morality." She sighed, "I shouldn't have given you the address if this was going to happen…" Peggy suddenly when she realized what she just said to Steve. The words she said came out harsher than she wanted and Peggy immediately regretted it. Today has been emotionally tiring with the whole situation with the Winter Soldier and Steve, and now the Attorney General and Director of the FBI questioning her abilities as Deputy Director of SHIELD. In any given day, she would be able to handle the two of them without issue, but with Steve's involvement in the Winter Soldier case and his actions being the criteria for her lack of abilities, caused stress and emotional strain on her. Peggy is right to be mad at Steve, but she knew he had no intention to get her into trouble, and getting mad at him won't fix anything. Her emotions got the better of her.

Steve looked away and frowned, "Peggy," he began to explain.

Peggy interrupted with an apologetic look, "Darling, I'm sorry. I shouldn't have…"

Steve shook his head and looked at his wife with a sad look, "I've been prideful…maybe I have… But I admit…I was selfish." Tears built in his eyes as his inner strength weakened and the guilt within him appeared, "I didn't think of you first or our family. I just felt like I needed to protect Bucky, and not once thought of how it would harm you. I was wrong to not consider you." A tear rolled down his cheek, "I still believe I was doing the right thing by protecting him. But, Peggy, the last thing I wanted to do was harm you, but in my mind, I couldn't let my friend go down for something he didn't do." He sighed, "He deserves a chance of redemption. But I went to get him myself because I thought that was the right thing to do, and if I didn't he probably would've been killed. The conflict between saving him and protecting you should've been obvious, but I chose different because I thought my actions wouldn't come back to harm you." He looked at Peggy in the eyes, "Peggy, if they want to punish me than I can take it, but I can't take them punishing you. It isn't right for them…" He looked away, "But though I put you in this situation…I don't know how I can live with myself if I don't stand up for what I believe. Much less how you can live with me. If I don't than I would never be the man I want to be in your eyes." He frowned, "I thought I was doing the right thing. I didn't want to harm you or our family. You don't deserve the pain I caused…but, I have to believe that this cause is just."

Peggy shook her head and started to build up tears herself, "Darling, I fell in love with you because you weren't like anyone else, and you didn't try to be." She leaned forward and cupped Steve's cheek, "Do not think for one moment that you will disappoint me. I will love you no matter what." She gently planted a kiss on his lips briefly which Steve reciprocated. After a moment they broke the kiss and held each other in a long embrace. Peggy kissed his neck and leaned back to look at Steve, "I'm sorry I said that. I'm just scared that those people who might separate us are those we are serving." She kissed him again briefly, "Your word on your friend is all we have." She sighed, "I don't think the Attorney General and the FBI Director very much care about the file we found during the Hydra incident."

Steve nodded, "I figured as much." He shook his head, "And my word is all that I have…"

Peggy gave a sad smile, "If people knew you as I do then that would be enough." She frowned, "Darling, I gave you the address because I believed that you believe, and you never gave me a reason not to trust you. I knew whatever happened that you would only go for the right reasons. I'm sorry that I said that I regretted giving you the address…I was emotional."
"It's okay," Steve said as he gently touched her chin.

Peggy nodded, "You believe he's innocent and he deserted Leviathan?"

"I do and I'd bet my life on it," Steve said calmly.

"If you feel like this is the right thing then continue to believe it. No matter what the Attorney General and the Director of the FBI says or does to me." Peggy gripped his thigh to physically show her confidence in him, "Because I know you. You wouldn't do things unless it was absolutely necessary." She chuckled, "And you know I'd do what's necessary for you and for a close friend."

Steve chuckled, "Right. Forgot about that Stark thing."

"Exactly," Peggy laughed lightly. She turned serious, "During the war, your friend fought alongside with you because he knew you were worth it, and I know you feel the same way to save him now. I know people will always counter you no matter what it is whether you're right or wrong."

"But darling if someone says you're wrong and argues with you, compromise when you can, and when you can't then don't. Even if everyone is telling you that something wrong is something right, you must believe that your cause is worth it. Believe it to your very bones, and commit to it. Prove that you're right."

Steve smiled, "Thank you, Peggy." He touched her thigh, "I don't know what I'd do without you. Honestly." He frowned, "And I know I put you in hot water, and you're the Director of Shield…"

Peggy interrupted him, "Steve, you know I've done things outside the law for the greater good." She chuckled, "I know you wouldn't do things unless you had to and because you never strayed from trying to do the right thing. That's one of the things I love about you." She smiled lovingly at her husband, "We've been married for two years, known each other longer than that, and have two kids. You know that today women aren't expected to be good at diplomacy and espionage, and no one wants us to succeed in both. When everything is against you, you can't just give up. I know you would stand for what's right and stand your ground. And I will love you no matter what. So, protect your friend, and I will protect us." Peggy spoke confidently, "They'll say my personal feelings are getting in the way. They can go to hell. There is some good in this world, and it's worth fighting for."

Steve smiled confidently at his wife, "We'll protect each other like we always do."

"I love you," Peggy replied with an affectionate smile.

"I love you too." Steve chuckled and shook his head, "It seems I might be a villain in the eyes of the government now…"

Peggy laughed, "That's not even funny." She turned serious, "But you'll still be my husband and the father of my children. Nothing will ever change that, whatever happens..." Steve nodded quietly as the two of them went into comfortable silence for a moment. After a few minutes, Peggy took Steve's hand in hers, "I need to tell you something."

Steve looked confused, "What's the matter?"

"I wanted to surprise you, but given the circumstances this is the best time," Peggy said with a small smile as she tried to hide her excitement at the news. Regardless of what's going on, she couldn't help but be excited to tell Steve, finally.

"What is it, hon?" Steve asked as a smile formed on his lips in response to Peggy's infectious grin.

Peggy guided her husband's hand over her stomach and smiled, "I'm pregnant."
Steve's eyes went wide and for a long few seconds he couldn't speak. It's been a long chaotic day and the news of Peggy pregnant stopped all brain functionality in his head. The news no doubt shocked Steve and for a moment he didn't know if he heard her right. "You…you're…you…" Steve stuttered in shock.

Peggy nodded and giggled, "Yes, my darling. I'm pregnant. You're going to be a father of three." She grinned, "Surprise." Finally, her words hit home, and Steve broke out into a wide smile. He remained silent as his smile grew and happy tears filled his eyes. The excellent news overcame the hardship of the day that wasn't quite over yet, but Steve couldn't help but be overcome with joy as the happy feeling overtook the stress in his mind. Peggy continued to hold his hand but lowered it to her thigh, "I know we talked about having more kids later, but…"

Steve shook his head, "No… this is great! You know I'm happy with having more kids! I want this as long as you do," he said happily.

Peggy giggled, "You know I do." She leaned forward and kissed her husband who happily reciprocated with equal fervor. After a moment, they broke the kiss and Peggy stared happily into her husband's eyes.

Steve chuckled, "When did you find out?"

Peggy chuckled, "Few weeks ago. I just thought I was sick, but all the other signs pointed to pregnancy." She smiled, "I wasn't crying earlier because I was emotional, I was crying because of the hormones."

Steve laughed, "This is great!" He sighed, "But…on the downside, there will be more sleepless nights, dirty diapers, and crying," he said with a grin. He shrugged, "That's the price we pay for bundles of joy."

Peggy laughed, "I love it." She kissed his lips briefly, "And I love you." Steve smiled with a silent loving look in response. He was overcome with joy at the news of his family growing. Peggy is truly the best thing to ever happen to him. She's the right partner, the best mother, most dedicated and patient woman he ever met other than his mother, and an incredibly driven individual. All in all, Peggy can do it all while being a capable director in SHIELD. Peggy frowned, "Wish I told you in better circumstances. We just have to get through this situation."

Steve nodded, "Yeah."

Peggy gave a small smile as she turned serious, "We'll be okay, Steve," she said in reassurance more to herself than to him.

Steve cupped her cheek, "We will."

Suddenly, there was a loud knock on the conference room door interrupting their conversation, Peggy turned to the door, "Yes?"

Thompson opened the door, "Director, the psychiatrist and his assistant are here to evaluate the Winter Soldier."

Peggy leaned back in her seat and nodded, "Good, where are they?"

"Still in the lobby."

"Great, grab a few agents and escort them to the holding cell," Peggy said plainly.
"Got it," Thompson said as he closed the door behind him to go to the lobby.

Peggy stood up and kissed Steve on the head, "I'm going into the Ops Center for a moment."

Steve nodded quietly, "okay."

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**Holding Block, Basement Level B5**

The Holding Block on basement level B5 is the only holding block in the Aegis Head Quarters, and only has six holding cells, and are for temporary solitary confinement before prisoners are transferred to more permanent holdings in SHIELDs Delta and Rat maximum security prisons. Since SHIELD isn't a law enforcement agency it doesn't generally apprehend civil criminals, so the holding block is more designed for temporarily holding spies, assassins, terrorists, enemies of the state, and suspects for all four. There is only one way into the holding block and one way out. The main entrance to the holding block is secured by a steel blast door with a small view window and locked by both electrical and manual locks. The guard room adjacent to the block has four desks with a minimal six armed guards present at any time. When cells are occupied, two guards patrol the inside of the block to maintain a high state of security regardless of how many prisoners are present. In addition to the guards, before anyone can set foot in the guard room and inevitably into the holding block, all personnel outside of the immediate security team in the block have to go through a security checkpoint. The holding block security does what's designed to do by holding detainees and prisoners, and preventing unauthorized persons from entering the cell block.

Thompson, two SHIELD agents, two SHIELD guards, and three FBI agents escorted the psychiatrist and his young female assistant to Bucky's cell located at the back of the cell block. Bucky is currently the only resident in the Aegis HQ, but due to his abilities, the security is extremely tight with the added FBI agents on the cell block. The psychiatrist is a middle-aged man with a thick mustache and a receding hairline and wore a wrinkled grey suit. His assistant is a tall young woman with long wavy raven-black hair who wore red lipstick and a pressed women's business suit and black pumps. As Thompson lead the group to Bucky's cell, he briefly looked over his shoulder to speak to the psychiatrist and his assistant, "Doctor, your conversation will be recorded and it's not negotiable. It's for security and investigative reasons. I hope you understand."

The doctor was sweating profusely, "yes, of course. No problem, sir," he said nervously.

Thompson smiled, "Don't be nervous, Doctor. He's well secured and shackled. Not even Captain America can break out of those restraints, believe me." He chuckled, "But please keep one full arm distance away from him. He's still very dangerous."

The doctor wiped his brow of sweat with a handkerchief from his jacket, "If you say so, sir."

The assistant, carrying the doctor's briefcase, nodded, "Don't worry, Doctor Shaw, these agents will be here to protect us if something bad happens." The doctor didn't respond and simply continued to walk nervously.

Thompson stopped at the end of the cellblock in front of the thick steel door that leads into the Winter Soldier's cell. He nodded at the doctor and his assistant, "She's right. Don't worry, Doctor. We'll be in there if you need us."

The woman spoke up eagerly, "Actually, agent…"

"Agent Thompson, miss," Thompson said evenly.
"Yes, Agent Thompson. The doctor likes to analyze his patients in private so he doesn't feel coursed
to ask certain questions. We're okay with recording it, but for privacy please stay outside," the
assistant said confidently. She waved her hand, "But be nearby for security."

Thompson nodded, "No problem. If you need us, we'll be out here." He turned to the door and
opened the small view window to check inside the cell to assure the Winter Soldier isn't showing
hostilities. The Winter Soldier's cell is an uncomfortably small windowless room with only the bare
necessities of a hard bed and a small toilet. Thompson noted that the Winter Soldier is still secured in
the titanium straitjacket, and sitting quietly on his hard bed with an emotionless stare. He turned to
the SHIELD Cell Block guard, "open it."

The guard approached the door with the key and inserted it into the lock. Before he unlocked the
door, he called out to the Winter Soldier, "Stand up and face the wall!" he yelled to make sure the
Winter Soldier wouldn't jump the group when he opened the door. Thompson watched through the
view window as the Winter Soldier slowly stood up and faced the wall opposite of the door and kept
his feet spread apart. The guard then opened the door and let the psychiatrist and his assistant into the
cell. Before the guard closed the door behind them, another guard handed the doctor's assistant a
wooden stool so the doctor can sit while interviewing the Winter Soldier.

As the door closed and locked, sealing the psychiatrist and his assistant in with the Winter Soldier,
Thompson called out to them, "Just call us if you need us! We'll be standing outside the cell."

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**SHIELD: Operations Center**

Peggy, Phillips, Stark, Director Hoover, and the Honorable Briggs silently stood as they listened to
the psychiatrist evaluation of the Winter Soldier on the speakers in the Ops Center. While the bosses
listened intently at the psychological evaluation over the sound system, the SHIELD analysts are
working in the Ops Center, sat at their desks working diligently at their respective tasks of
information gathering, and domestic and foreign operation analysis. Peggy crossed her arms over her
stomach as she heard the psychiatrist speak, "So… Sergeant James Barnes. How are you feeling?"
There was no reply to the question. "James, can you respond me to me?" Still no reply from the
Winter Soldier to the psychologist's questions.

Peggy sighed and walked over to a tech who was managing the sound system at his desk, and
whispered, "play audio to the Ops Center Conference Room." Hoover and Briggs watched her
carefully with sour stares at every move she took.

The tech looked up at Peggy, "Ma'am?" he asked confused.

Peggy nodded, "Do it."

"Yes, ma'am," the tech said as he quickly flipped a few switches on the sound system to allow audio
in the conference room.

Peggy nodded, "Thank you," she said patting him on the back.

In the conference room, Steve and Dugan started to hear the psychological evaluation on Bucky on
the speakers. Steve looked out the window into the ops center and saw Peggy briefly look up at him
as she left the room. His gaze shifted to Hoover who was whispering something to the Attorney
General as Peggy left the room. Steve stared coldly at the two men, knowing they fully intend to
destroy Peggy's career.

Steve leaned back on his heel and crossed his arms over his chest as he listened carefully to the
psychologist speaking up again. "James, I'm not going to judge your actions," the psychologist said with a hint of nervousness in his voice. "Am…Am I making you uncomfortable, James?"

**Bucky's Cell**

Bucky looked up at the psychologist with a cold stare, "My name is, Bucky."

The psychologist sat nervously on a stool and wiped the sweat from his brow while his young assistant stood confidently and undisturbed behind him. He nodded, "I know you've seen a great many things, but let me ask you a few questions." He took a deep breath, "But you're going to have to talk to me. I-I can't help if you don't talk."

The assistant started to pace back and forth catching Bucky's eye as he sat rigidly in his titanium straitjacket. The woman looked suspicious and seemed oddly familiar to him, but he couldn't figure out where he has seen her. The woman grinned in a strange smile which sparked an uneasy feeling within Bucky. The suspicious woman seemed out of place causing him to lose focus on the psychologist's questions and prodding. The only thing Bucky could focus on is the strange woman pacing back and forth. His gut told him she was up to something, and it wasn't going to be good.

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**SHIELD: Operations Center, Conference Room**

Peggy walked into the conference room with a stack of papers and saw Dugan sitting back in his chair and Steve staring out the window with his arms crossed. Dugan looked up at Peggy, "What do you got there? Our arrest warrants?"

Peggy shook her head, "Don't be dumb, Timothy." She put the papers down on the table and revealed a mugshot of Bucky on the top of the pile. Steve turned around and greeted Peggy with a small smile. Peggy briefly smiled at her husband before addressing Dugan's question, "Mostly wanted to show you boys, this, the mugshot of Sergeant Barnes," she said tapping the photograph with her fingers. She then leaned back and crossed her arms, "The FBI is going to run this photo on every public newspaper." She sighed, "They already notified the press that we have him in custody. That and the chase through the city to catch him alerted everyone."

Steve walked over to Peggy and Dugan and looked at the mugshot of Bucky. He hummed to himself as he got an uneasy feeling, "You said the FBI is going to run these photos? And notified the press that they apprehended him?"

Peggy nodded, "Yeah, why?"

Steve picked up the photo and paused as he thought to himself. He shook his head, "Why would the FBI tell the press about Bucky and release these photographs?" he asked calmly.

Peggy shrugged, "Get the word out and get as many eyes to find him as they can."

"Right," Steve nodded in response. "It's a good way to flush a guy out of hiding. Shoot up a plaza, commit multiple homicide, get your photo and description distributed. We had millions of people looking for the Winter Soldier."

Peggy quickly realized what Steve was leading up to, "You're saying someone framed him to find him."

Dugan leaned forward in his seat, "Steve, we and SHIELD have been looking for the guy for two
"We didn't murder five people in front of a government building," Steve said quickly. "A multiple homicide turns a lot of heads."

Peggy spoke up, "That doesn't guarantee who framed him will get him, it guarantees that we would," she said quickly. She paused as a look of realization came across her face.

Steve nodded and turned to the speaker, "yeah…"

"I'll call Jack down on the Holding block," Peggy said reaching across the table to get the phone to call the security post on the Holding Block.

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**Bucky's Cell**

The psychologist nervously wiped his brow once again, "So…Bucky…you've seen a great many things, haven't you?"

Bucky spoke plainly, "I don't want to talk about it," he said as he coldly stared at the psychologist's assistant who was still pacing back and forth.

"You feel if you speak that the horrors may never stop…" the psychologist was abruptly cut off by his assistant who had her hand over his mouth and her other arm wrapped around his neck in a tight chokehold.

"What the hell is this?" Bucky asked confused.

The woman silently squeezed her arms tight around the psychiatrist's neck causing the man to flail in desperation for air in a futile attempt to break free. After a moment, the woman suffocated the man in her arms and gently laid him down on the cold cell floor. The woman smiled with a big grin, "Don't worry, Sergeant Barnes. We'll take good care of you. This is the part where… the doctor lets me use his very unorthodox methods," she said lying for the sake of SHIELD listening to the conversation.

"Who are you?"

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**SHIELD: Operations Center**

In the Ops Center, Phillips cringed in confusion, "Something doesn't sound right."

Hoover looked at Phillips with a quizzical look, "What do you mean?"

"I don't know what it is..." Phillips said cautiously. He nodded to an analyst at his desk, "What can you tell me about the shrink."

The analyst nodded, "yes, sir. It's a Doctor Arthur Ruele. Been practicing as a psychiatrist for over ten years now. Has helped many vets after the war to adapt them back into civilian and family life." The analyst flipped through the documents he had on the doctor, "Very positive feedback from his patients and…apparently, he also teaches at a local college in the city. A very well-liked professor."

Howard raised a brow, "He sounds like the real deal to me." He smiled, "I think the FBI has you paranoid, Chester."

"No…something still doesn't feel right," Phillips said yet again.
Briggs rolled his eyes, "You're paranoid, Director. This guy has been checked out and cleared. And he's here to help the agency analyze the Winter Soldier."

"Why did he sound so nervous?" Phillips spoke up.

Hoover chuckled, "I'd be nervous if I was sitting face-to-face with a foreign super soldier assassin."

Chester nodded, "I'm telling you something doesn't feel right. I'm not going to take any chances." He walked over to a phone and picked up the handset to call Agent Thompson.

Bucky's Cell

Standing outside of Bucky's cell, Thompson, the two SHIELD agents, two holding block guards, and the three FBI agents waited patiently for the psychiatrist to finish his interview with the Winter Soldier. To the men standing guard, it seemed like everything was going perfectly fine within the cell and nothing raised suspicion or concern. A guard appeared at the far end of the block from the guard room, "Hey, Jack, phone for you! Both the Directors are calling you!"

Thompson looked confused, "Rogers and Phillips?"

"Yeah, apparently, they called at the same time!"

Thompson still looked confused, "what the hell?"

One of the SHIELD agents nearby chuckled at him, "you must've done something wrong if both the Directors are calling you."

"Yeah, your funny sense of professionalism probably got you into trouble again," said another agent humorously.

"Alright, lock it up," Thompson said with a grin. He called out to the guard at the other end of the holding block, "I'll be right there!" he said as he started walking toward the guard room to answer the phone.

Halfway to the guard room, Thompson heard a knock on the cell door causing him to stop and turn around to see what the psychiatrist needed from the guard detail. One of the SHIELD guards waved his hand at Thompson, "We got it, Thompson!" Thompson nodded and continued walking away.

The guard slid the steel plate to the side to open the view window, "Need somethin', doc?" he asked curiously.

The assistant smiled through the view window, "No," she calmly said as she tossed out the doctor's shoe through the view window. The guards jumped away in surprise as the brown leather shoe hit the floor with a thud. The assistant quickly took cover behind a wall and away from the door. In a split second, the shoe, lined with a Soviet plastic high explosive in the sole, exploded in a massive blast instantly killing the guards and agents by the door. The explosion sent Thompson to the ground, and the concussion knocked him unconscious. Unfortunately, the guards, and SHIELD and FBI agents were killed by the concussion due to their proximity to the bomb. The explosive hidden within the doctor's shoe by his assistant was to counter SHIELD's extensive security measures and searches.

In Bucky's cell, the assistant stood up from her covered position and smiled at Bucky, "Now, shall we continue?"
Bucky looked at her with an agitated look, "what is this?"

The assistant sat down on the stool and picked up the briefcase off the ground, "let's talk about your home." Bucky looked at her confused. She smiled as she opened up the briefcase, "I'm not talking about Germany. And definitely not Brooklyn. She revealed a red leather-bound book out from the briefcase which Bucky instantly recognized. A look of shock came across his face as his gut sank at what she held in her hand. The woman smiled, "You asked who I am, my name is Bridget Regan. You knew me as Dottie Underwood," she said coolly. She put the book down on her lap then took out a pistol from the briefcase and pointed it at Bucky's head. Bucky stared down the barrel of the gun defiantly but to his surprise, Bridget turned around and shot the microphone on the ceiling above the door.

**SHIELD: Operations Center**

Immediately after the explosion in the basement level, the alarms started to go off all throughout the building. In the conference room, Peggy's heart sank to her stomach once she heard Dottie's name over the speaker. The SSR and subsequently SHIELD has been hunting "Dottie" for years since she disappeared after the Stark case in '46. The last time Peggy saw "Dottie" or "Bridget Regan" was during the Stark case, and she managed to disappear without a trace. But she has reason to believe that "Bridget Regan" is responsible for numerous acts of terrorism, espionage, and homicide in multiple cases for the past few years. Peggy composed herself and tensely gripped the phone, and quickly looked over at Steve, "She's back," she said referring to Dottie. She nodded to the door, "Basement level, B5, go!" Without hesitation, Steve and Dugan bolted out of the room to stop Dottie, now named Bridget Regan, from whatever she hopes to accomplish. As the two men left, Peggy quickly turned her attention back to the phone and started to activate SHIELD's security measures.

In the Operations Center, there was an atmosphere of confusion as the alarms blared in a near deafening volume. Phillips briefly looked up at the conference room just as Dugan and Steve sprinted out of the room. He then focused on the staff in the ops center and yelled over the alarms which silenced the confusion in the staff, "Ladies and gentlemen! Calm down and activate security protocol Condition 1! Lockdown exits and critical areas! And get all departments to check in!" The techs, analysts, and ops center controllers quickly calmed down and hastily started to get the security measures in place like they were repeatedly drilled to execute. Phillips turned to Hoover and Briggs, "I knew something wasn't right."

Briggs looked at Phillips, "Well, what are you doing to solve this problem?" he said frantically, suddenly scared and losing all composure.

Phillips looked sternly at the man, "Compose yourself, your honor. We're taking care of it."

Hoover shook his head, "Whoever this woman is, obviously went to great lengths to get to the Winter Soldier. Why?"

Howard frowned, "Dottie or Bridget, now. We've been hunting this woman for years. She's the same woman who framed me for treason. She's a Hydra and Soviet assassin." Briggs looked at Stark with a fearful expression on his face.

Phillips nodded, "She's skilled in both spy craft and field craft. She's part of the Red Room Assassins, a Soviet all female kill program."

"How'd she get through security?" Hoover asked confused.
Phillips shook his head, "We have a photograph of her, but she likely altered her appearance to avoid detection. As an assassin trained in the Red Room, she's a chameleon. She can blend anywhere…"

Their conversation was interrupted by Peggy's voice over the intercom, "Security teams to Level B5. Block off the level, hostile subject is female and is extremely dangerous."

Hoover looked at Phillips with a confused and agitated look, "What is she doing?"

Phillips turned to him, "Her job," he said coldly as he walked over to a phone.

"You don't want her alive?" Hoover asked quickly.

"She likely won't be taken alive. We're cutting out the middle-man," Phillips said as he picked up the handset of the phone.

Howard looked at Briggs who was sweating surprisingly a lot, "Are you okay, your honor?" Briggs wiped the sweat off his brow while Howard looked at him with a confused stare.

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**Bucky's Cell**

Bridget opened the book and began to read off the list of Bucky's trigger words in Russian, "longing… rusted…"

Bucky twitched and his fists clenched under his titanium straitjacket as he did his best to resist and shut her out. He closed his eyes in a futile attempt to ignore her, "No…" His breathing started to increase in a rapid and intense manner, "Stop…" he groaned.

Bridget stood up and looked into Bucky's eyes, "seventeen!"

"Stop!" Bucky yelled angrily clenching his fists with rage. The trigger words were starting to affect his mental state, and he was quickly returning to the Winter Soldier against his will.

"Daybreak!" Bridget yelled as she took a step closer to Bucky. Bucky screamed in agony as the weapon within him woke up. The dormant Winter Soldier has returned in his mind and quickly took over leaving no space for Bucky. The Winter Soldier yelled as he strained to break free from the titanium braces that restricted his movements. Bridget stopped and stood to his side, "Furnace!" In a split second, the Winter Solider yelled and broke free from his titanium straitjacket like it was the easiest thing in the world. "Nine, Benign, homecoming, one!" As Bridget continued, the Winter Soldier quickly rushed forward and started punching the steel holding cell door with his mechanical fist, using all his combined enhanced strength to break the door down. With each massive punch and a loud grunt, the door bent and creaked more and more out of shape. Finally, when Bridget called, "Freight Car!" the last trigger word said, the Winter Soldier, with one final blow, broke the steel door down with a loud grunt. The steel door hit the floor with a loud bang on the hard surface, bent and dented from repeated powerful punches from someone who possessed superhuman abilities.

The Winter Soldier's breathing steadied and an emotionless and a seemingly cold expression rested on his face. Bucky was no longer present. Bridget calmly stepped beside him, slightly cautious to be near him, "Soldier?" she asked calmly to see if the Winter Soldier will comply with her commands.

The Winter Soldier responded without emotion, "Ready to comply." Bridgette smiled as she heard the sound of multiple boot steps running toward the cell.

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The elevator door opened and Steve and Dugan immediately rushed out into the guard room to find
over a dozen SHIELD guards incapacitated. A few guard desks were flipped and destroyed, dozens
of bullet holes all over the walls, and weapons and debris were strewn chaotically on the floor. The
guards looked like they put up a fight but judging by the spray of bullets and debris, it didn't look like
they stood much of a chance. The fight was over before it began. This level of damage could only be
from one person, and that person is Bucky. Steve frowned and wished it wasn't true. He knew for
certain that Bucky deserted Leviathan and refused to doubt it, but he figured Bridget Regan had
something to do with coursing Bucky into this violent breakout. Steve and Dugan cautiously but
quickly walked through the guardroom, carefully stepping over the bodies of the guards, and
continued toward Bucky's cell.

Dugan briefly checked one of the bodies and found a faint pulse, "What did this woman do or say to
Bucky to make him go on a rampage?"

Steve shook his head, "I have no idea, but we'll soon find out."

Dugan stood up, "Whatever she said, made him return to his Winter Soldier training."

Steve nodded, "Dottie or Bridget, is at the center of all of this. We need to find out why and stop her
before more people get hurt," he said leading the way into the holding block only to find another
dozen of incapacitated agents and guards scattered on the floor. The two men left the conference
room before hearing Bridget say the trigger words to reawaken the Winter Soldier over the speaker,
but they had a pretty good idea which Bucky they were dealing with at the moment.

Steve and Dugan figured the down agents and guards were the team that was supposed to contain
Bridget Regan and Bucky in the cell but didn't stand a chance. In quick observation, it looked like
eyeasily broke containment and escaped, but they couldn't have gone far. But before turning
around and chasing after Regan and Bucky, Steve and Dugan hastily decided to inspect Bucky's cell
to investigate what happened. They didn't have long to investigate if Bucky blew through over two
dozen SHIELD agents and guards with ease than the SHIELD Security protocol wouldn't stop him
and only end up slowing him down. Steve and Dugan walked to the end of the holding block and
stepped into Bucky's holding cell and to their surprise saw Bridget Regan standing calmly with a
smile on her face at the end of the cell.

Steve rushed in and picked up Regan by her collar and pinned her against the wall, "Dottie or
Bridget, whichever you go by…"

Bridget smiled, "Captain Rogers, a pleasure."

"What are you planning?" Steve asked angrily.

"To see your reign come to an end," Bridget said with a smile.

"Where's Barn…" Steve began but was interrupted by the Winter Soldier appearing from the corner
and nearly killing Dugan with a powerful punch from his mechanical arm. The Winter Soldier
punched and shattered the steel and concrete cell door frame as Dugan barely ducked away from his
punch.

Dugan quickly recovered and attempted to strike the Soldier, but the former Soviet assassin was too
fast and blocked his punch with his arm. In a fluid motion, the Winter Soldier hit Dugan in the gut
then grabbed him by the back of the neck and tossed him off his feet to the far wall like a rag doll.
Dugan flew and collided head first into the concrete wall then slumped down on the ground
unconscious. Steve instantly dropped Bridget and immediately went to engage Bucky in a hand-to-
hand fight. In an instant, the Winter Soldier quickly turned around and swung at Steve with his
mechanical arm. Steve leaned back and barely dodged the Winter Soldier's strike, and quickly
countered punched with an uppercut which the Winter Soldier narrowly dodged by the skin of his chin. Steve then seized his brief initiative and started to throw heavy punches from his forward and rear hands. The Winter Soldier wasn't disoriented or phased, and immediately blocked Steve's punches while simultaneously sliding back to get out of reach. Steve took a step forward and immediately threw another punch, but the Winter Soldier expertly blocked the blow and, in one concurrent action, kicked him in the gut sending him staggering backward and out of the cell.

Steve lost his balance and tumbled onto his back outside of the cell as the Winter Soldier walked to re-engage in the fight. He quickly got back up, and in an instant, the Winter Soldier pressed his attack and swung and threw punches in rapid succession before Steve could adequately protect his face. Bridget watched the fight unfold from her spot in the cell and the devil smiled at the scene. Steve got hit in the jaw then in the gut before he was able to bring his hands up to defend himself. He was instantly in the defense and was being pushed back toward the guard room as the Winter Soldier threw consecutive punches. Steve began blocking and dodging the repeated punches and kicks from the Winter Soldier while being pushed back toward the guard room. The Winter Soldier quickly kicked with his lead leg, but Steve blocked it with his forearm and seized the brief opening by landing a few solid punches into the Winter Soldier's kidney. The Winter Soldier reeled from the blows but quickly recovered and defended his body from Steve's hard punches to his side. He then regained the initiative and swung with a heavy left hook with his mechanical arm and hit Steve directly in the temple instantly disorienting him. Steve stumbled to the side confused and fought to regain focus and to maintain his balance. The Winter Soldier then grabbed a dizzy Steve by the neck, slamming him into the wall, where he started landing solid punches into Steve's gut. He then picked up Steve and threw him down onto the ground. Steve was conscious enough to tuck his head and roll his shoulders before hitting the ground to avoid landing on his head but still got the wind knocked out of him. Steve groaned and laid on the ground in a dazed state, unable immediately move or stand. The Winter Soldier stared at him for a few seconds before walking away and out of the holding block.

As Steve tried to sit up, Bridget walked over to him and stepped on his chest and instantly applied pressure on his many forming bruises from the fight. She leaned down and smiled at him, "You're going to want to see this, Captain. I promise you." She chuckled, "This is all part of the plan. Don't worry the intention was never to kill you…"

Dugan groaned as he regained consciousness, and started rubbing his throbbing head from getting thrown into the wall. It felt like he just woke up from a night of heavy drinking combined with an ass kicking. He slowly stood up and made a slow staggering walk to the cell door. Dugan stopped at the doorway and gripped the bent frame to keep his balance as he rubbed the side of his aching head. He suddenly saw Bridget standing on Steve, "Hey!" he immediately called out to her. Ignoring the pain to his head, re quickly composed himself and ran toward her to help Steve.

Bridget smiled at Steve, "I'll catch you later," she said running off.

Dugan stopped by Steve and looked down at him, "You alright?"

Steve slowly sat up, "Yeah. Yeah, I'm fine."

Dugan immediately helped him up back onto his feet, "I'm going to go catch her."

Steve nodded, "Go. I'll get Buck." With that, Dugan took off in Bridget's direction to prevent her escape.

As Steve was about to leave the holding block, he heard Thompson's faint call, "Captain…"

Steve turned around and saw Thompson slowly roll over to his side and try and get up. He quickly
Thompson groaned and cursed in pain from surviving the explosion moments earlier as Steve tried to help him up, "Ah, God." He waved his hand, "No, don't help me up. I think I'd rather take a break against that wall," he said nodding over to the wall.

Steve nodded and gently dragged Thompson's hurting body to the wall, Thompson grunting in pain as he got pulled. Steve gently leaned him up against the wall and patted his shoulder, "I'll find you a medic."

Thompson chuckled and nodded. Just as Steve stood up to leave, Thompson called out to him, "Captain, wait!"

"Stop her… stop your friend…" Thompson said weakly. He was able to hear some of what Bridget was telling Steve after Bucky took him down.

"I will," Steve said confidently.

"He will head to the rooftop. There's a SHIELD helicopter, it's the best way for him to get out of this building. Go!"

Steve nodded, "Got it," he said as he turned and ran out of the holding block. The helicopter is still a relatively new piece of technology, but since its significant developments during the end of the war, the aircraft has been adopted for use in SHIELD, civilian use, other government agencies, and the U.S. military.

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**SHIELD: Operations Center**

Phillips put down the handset of the telephone, "the Winter Soldier broke containment from the holding block along with Bridget Ford," he said to the FBI director and Attorney General.

An Ops Center tech stood up from his desk, "Director, the Winter Soldier has been spotted in the cafeteria, team-5 is engaging him now."

Phillips nodded and the tech, "Get the adjacent teams to converge on his location. Bottle him up there." He then picked up the handset of the phone again, "Get me a perimeter around the building and Evac all nonessential personnel and civilians, now!"

Hoover nodded, "Where's the Rogers?"

Phillips shook his head while still holding the phone to his ear, "I don't know. They're probably trying to handle the situation themselves." Briggs wiped sweat from his brow and was about to speak up in protest when Phillips pointed a finger at him, "If you're going to argue, I'm going to tell you to shove it. Like it or not, the Rogers are the best ones to stop the Winter Soldier."

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**Cafeteria**

The scene at the cafeteria was chaotic with numerous tables broken and flipped. Six SHIELD Security Guards were already unconscious and lay on the floor or top of broken tables. Two remaining guards, armed with nightstick batons, were in a losing fight against the Winter Soldier. One guard swung his baton and missed when the Winter Soldier ducked out of the way. The Winter
Soldier then grabbed the man's wrist, got behind him, and threw him onto the ground and immediately broke the guard's arm at the elbow.

Peggy got to the cafeteria and peeked around the corner of a wall and saw the Winter Soldier fighting the last standing guard. She looked away from the fight to the modified pistol that fired tranquilizers in her hand. She quickly checked the chamber to make sure a sedative is loaded before peaking around the corner again. Peggy saw the Winter Soldier block a swing from the guard and throw him down onto a table, the guard dropping the nightstick on the floor as the table broke beneath him. The Winter Soldier bent down and picked up the nightstick and right when he was about to smash the stick down on the immobile guard, Peggy slid out from her position and quickly aimed her pistol at the Winter Soldier.

The Winter Soldier spotted Peggy from his peripherals and immediately brought his mechanical arm up to protect his face right when Peggy fired a tranquilizer at him. The dart fired from a 9mm pistol cartridge pinged off the Winter Soldier's metal arm. Peggy didn't hesitate and quickly fired again while also slowly closing the distance. The only reservation she had about being in this particular fight is that she's pregnant and prayed her developing fetus wouldn't be harmed. No guarantees in a fight, but she still had to do her duty. The Winter Soldier deflected and ducked away from each of Peggy's shots. Peggy pressed the trigger again and heard a click signaling that she was out of rounds. She quickly threw the empty pistol at the Winter Soldier, who briefly ducked to avoid getting hit, which gave Peggy an opportunity to close the remaining distance and engage with hand-to-hand. Peggy managed to punch the Winter Soldier in the jaw then the ribs numerous times before he was able to fight back. The Winter Soldier attempted to punch Peggy in the stomach but she was able to block his punch with her forearm. Peggy grunted in pain as she felt the Winter Soldier's knuckles hit her forearm. She recovered and punched the Winter Soldier in the cheek then round kicked him in the side. The Winter Soldier was pushed back a little bit from her blows, but instantly kicked her in the hip sending her sliding into a table then onto the floor.

Peggy gripped her hip in pain as she slowly got up off the floor. The Winter Soldier slowly walked up to her with an emotionless expression on his face to finish her off. Peggy got up and nodded as she brought her hands up in a fighting stance, "Is that all you've got?" she said defiantly.

Right when the Winter Soldier was about to strike, Steve suddenly appeared and tackled the Winter Soldier to the ground before he could react. Peggy relaxed and produced a small smile, relieved to see her husband. The Winter Soldier wrestled with Steve for a moment before he was able to push Steve off and toss him across the floor. Steve quickly recovered and immediately reengaged the Winter Soldier as he was standing back up. The two-super humans exchanged fists and kicks in rapid succession with neither gaining the upper hand.

Peggy stood to the side and absentmindedly rubbed her growing belly bump, deciding best to not get into the fight. She could hold her own against the Winter Soldier for only a few moments before his speed, skill, and strength can overtake her. Peggy unknowingly bought Steve time to get here from the holding cell, and she's thankful for his impeccable timing to save her from the onslaught. She watched as her husband and the Winter Soldier fight, exchanging blows, and drawing blood. Suddenly, the Winter Soldier kicked Steve in the chest, sending him crashing into a table next to her.

Steve groaned, "come on, man," he quietly said to himself. The Winter Soldier seized the opportunity and ran off and escaped for the roof. It was clear Steve was pulling his punches, kicks, and strikes since he didn't want to hurt his friend even though the Winter Soldier in Bucky intends to kill him.

Peggy rushed over to Steve and help him up, "You okay?"
Steve nodded, "Yeah, but I should be asking you that." He put his hand over her belly and the other cupping her cheek, "Are…"

Peggy nodded, "We're okay, darling. You have the best timing," she said with a small smile. Before Steve could speak, Peggy looked over to where the Winter Soldier disappeared, "Go get him. I'll be right behind you."

Before Steve left, he kissed Peggy on the cheek, "I'll be back." As he left, he turned and called out to her, "Thompson is wounded, he needs a medic down in the holding cell."

Peggy nodded in acknowledgement and watched her husband chase after the Winter Soldier.

Outside of the headquarters building in the streets of time square, it was chaos on with people running out of the headquarters building into the crowded streets. With the alarms from the headquarters building going off combined with the police sirens and frantic screams of fleeing people made the sidewalk and streets cluttered and chaotic. Police and SHIELD Security teams had their hands full on the sidewalk trying to evacuate SHIELD personnel while simultaneously searching people who may look like the Winter Soldier and not looking for Bridget Regan.

Dugan exited the building and into the crowd after chasing Bridget throughout SHIELD headquarters. Throughout the chase, he always had her in visual range but was not fast enough to prevent her from getting out of the building. Now, Bridget blended with the crowd and could be anywhere. Dugan slowly walked out into the chaotic crowd and whispered, "Damn it," to himself. There's no way he could find her. He lost her.

The Winter Soldier slammed open the door for roof access and coldly walked toward the steps leading up to the SHIELD helipad where a dark blue Sikorsky H-5 utility helicopter is parked. The Winter Soldier walked up the small flight of steps and hastily removed the cable holding the static chopper down. He then got into the aircraft and quickly began turning on all the systems and the engine. As the H-5 whirled to life, its long rotor blades picked up speed and made the characteristic rapid "whup-whup-whup" noise of helicopter blades slicing through the air. Just as the helicopter started to gain full power and started to lift off the pad, Steve burst through the door to the roof and spotted the aircraft slowly rising above the helipad. Without wasting any time, Steve sprinted onto the helipad and jumped for the helicopter as it slowly gained altitude and grabbed the side wheel strut. The helicopter jerked to the side as Steve temporarily off balanced the aircraft. Steve did his best to bring the aircraft down with his weight by swinging his legs to use the momentum to offset the helicopters hover. The helicopter slightly decreased in altitude enough for him to use his feet to try and bring the aircraft down.

The Winter Soldier stared at Steve from the cockpit and increased the power of the aircraft and was able to begin pulling away from the helipad, dragging Steve with him. The modified H-5 helicopter had an 800shp (shaft horsepower engine) Stark Industries 251-C42A turboshaft engine that generated more power than the standard 450shp engine that came stock with the helicopter originally. But even with the increased power, the helicopter's engine still whined and stressed to fight Steve's efforts of stopping the aircraft. As Steve fought to bring the helicopter down by hanging onto the wheel strut, the Winter Soldier continued to try and pull away, dragging Steve across the cement helipad. Eventually, Steve was forced off the pad and onto the safety nets lining the helipad. Losing ground and risking falling into the street below, Steve quickly turned and grasped a safety bar that lined the helipad and held on with all his might. He clenched desperately to the wheel strut and the bar as he strained to stop the helicopter from leaving. The helicopter whined and whirled as it fought to break free, and the metal bar strained and creaked from Steve pulling on it with all his...
strength. Fighting intense muscle exhaustion and pain, Steve continued to pull and pull, gritting his teeth with exertion, until the helicopter started to slowly decrease in altitude. Steve stepped closer to the helipad and slowly brought the helicopter lower.

The Winter Soldier watched Steve as he struggled to bring the helicopter down. He felt the aircraft start to shake violently as the engine began to be overworked. It was only a matter of time before the engine would blow. The Winter Soldier made a hasty decision to try and kill his adversary, and forced the stick to the left causing the helicopter to bank 30 degrees toward the helipad. Steve quickly reacted and let go of the helicopter and ducked below the pad just as the helicopter crashed into the cement. The aircraft slammed into the pad on its side causing the Winter Soldier's head to collide into the control surface and knock him unconscious. The helicopter's fuselage spun on its side from the rotor blades continuing to spin, the blades snapping into hundreds of pieces as they struck the hard surface of the pad. Steve continued to duck in cover below the helipad as the helicopter slowly stopped spinning on its side. Finally, when the helicopter came to a screeching halt, Steve peered over the pad and saw the destroyed aircraft. The dark blue H-5 was dented, bent, and in pieces with the engine smoking a thick cloud of black smoke and the windows cracked or shattered. Steve vaulted onto the pad and checked the cockpit to see Bucky seemingly unconscious, still strapped in his seat. He broke the windshield and reached in to retrieve his friend.

Peggy appeared on the roof and saw the destroyed SHIELD helicopter. She quickly rushed to the pad to investigate what happened and to find Steve. As she got onto the pad she saw her husband dragging the body of the Winter Soldier out of the helicopter. "Darling!" she called her husband as she rushed over to his side.

Steve stopped and gently rested Bucky's head down on the ground then looked to see Peggy coming toward him. "He's alive but unconscious," he said to her as she kneeled down beside him.

Peggy placed a hand on his back, "Is he going to wake up as the Winter Soldier again?"

"I don't know yet,"Steve said honestly.

Peggy looked at the carnage on the helipad, "Did you bring the helicopter down?" she asked surprised.

Steve nodded, "Sort of, I was working on it when Bucky tried crushing me with it."

Peggy snapped her had back at Steve, "What? Goodness, darling…"

"Yeah…" Steve said with a sigh.

Peggy hugged her husband, "You should go."

"What?" Steve said in surprise.

"Grab your friend and get out of SHIELD. I'll clear you a way," Peggy said plainly.

"Peggy, SHIELD, the FBI, and the police are going to be looking for us, and they'll fry you," he responded with concern.

Peggy shook her head and smiled, "They won't know I let you two escape." She nodded to the door, "You need to find Dottie or Bridget, whatever she calls herself now. Because you were right, your friend is innocent. She obviously went to great lengths to frame him and to turn him back to the Winter Soldier. She's planning something and you need to stop her and we can't waste time."

Steve nodded, "What about you? And what about SHIELD?"
Peggy chuckled and shook her head, "SHIELD won't be able to do much because we'll be working closely with the FBI, and we'll take too long trying to find Bridget. SHIELD and the FBI already have a difficult relationship, and it will only slow the case down." Steve nodded silently. Peggy spoke up again, "Your friend is the best ticket to finding her. Unfortunately, if Barnes stays here, the FBI will waste time by questioning him and whatever he says they probably won't believe him."

"How can you be sure?" Steve asked curiously.

"Because I know Hoover enough to know that he's extremely fixated on his own ideas and perception of reality. He will see your friend burn if he doesn't hear what he wants from him. Barnes will be interrogated harder if he resists." Peggy sighed, "Besides, Hoover and Briggs are more interested in apprehending him and executing him for treason than anything else. We'll waste too much time questioning Barnes even if SHIELD handles the interrogation it will still take too long. We'll never find her. We'll miss her true intentions, and by the time we find out, it'll be too late." She leaned into him, "It's up to you and him. I'll help you personally in any way I can."

Steve shook his head, "You think Bucky knows where she is?"

"I don't know, but it did sound like he knew her. I know he has more information of where she could be from his time with Leviathan which is much more than what we have to go off of," she said evenly.

Steve nodded, "Okay..." He sighed, "Peggy, I..."

Peggy smiled and silenced him with a lasting kiss on the lips. After a moment, she broke the kiss and caressed Steve's cheek, "Go get her and when you're done... I'll be waiting for you."

"I love you," Steve said softly.

"I love you too." Peggy smiled, "Our kids will be okay, I promise."

"I know, they're Carters and Rogers," Steve said with a smile. He frowned, "I'm worried about you mostly. You're pregnant and you got... all this..."

Peggy gave him a reassuring smile, "The kids and I will be fine. Just come back home to us." She kissed him for the last time, "Now go. I'll make sure you got an exit."

Steve nodded and picked up Bucky, "Thank you, Peggy," he said with the most gratitude toward her. He knew what she was sacrificing and what she was asking of him to stop Bridget. She's risking her job, risking him, security of her family, and even her life. If she's caught aiding Steve and Bucky, the government might charge her and send her to prison, or worse.

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**Ops Center**

Phillips, Hoover, Stark, and Briggs stood around the table map discussing their next course of action. As the three men were talking amongst themselves, the security alarms were still going off loudly. Hoover sighed, "My agents in the building have no eyes on the Winter Soldier or Bridget Regan, or whoever she is," he said over the blaring alarms.

Phillips nodded, "The Winter Soldier was last seen in the cafeteria but after that he disappeared. He broke containment and I got multiple teams down throughout the building. That and Regan likely slipped away during the evacuation with all the chaos." He shook his head, "We won't be able to find her. Her true identity is still a mystery to us."
Briggs spoke up, "Didn't you say she was the same woman who framed you for treason?" he asked Stark.

Howard nodded, "Yes, but she is a skilled Soviet assassin who, without a doubt, changed her name, identity, and appearance. It will be almost impossible to find her when we have no leads of her whereabouts."

Phillips turned to a tech, "Shut the alarms off."

The tech nodded, "Yes, sir," the young tech said switching off the alarms. The Ops Center quieted down with only the low conversations going on between the techs and analysts in the room.

Phillips rubbed his temple and sighed, "This is a mess." He shook his head, "We need to find Bridget Regan, whoever and wherever she is, she's up to her eyeballs in this."

Hoover spoke up, "You're right, but I think we should focus on the Winter Soldier. He's more of a threat than she is."

Phillips shook his head, "No, I don't think so, Regan is more than a threat than he is."

Hoover crossed his arms, "Whoever you think is more of a threat, they're both Soviet assassins and need to be terminated with extreme prejudice. But, the Winter Soldier more so than her because he's a Soviet super soldier like Captain Rogers. He poses more of a threat."

"Hoover, Regan went through great lengths to get to the Winter Soldier, why? Because she's dangerous, devious, and she's definitely planning something big," Phillips said sternly.

"I'm not denying that, what I'm getting at is that her plan required the Winter Soldier. We stop the Winter Soldier we foil her plans," Hoover replied calmly. He nodded, "Find the Winter Soldier and we find her. The FBI will lead."

Phillips shook his head, "No, with respect Director, SHIELD was created to handle this type of situation. We're more effective in handling personnel like Regan and an enemy super soldier."

Hoover shook his head, "We can dick measure later, Chester. We got more pressing matters."

Phillips sighed, "Hmm. Whatever the case, we need to find the Winter Soldier to get to Regan," he said reluctantly. He looked at Howard, "Where's the Rogers?"

Peggy entered the Ops Center, "Captain Rogers is gone. Gone pursuing the Winter Soldier as he left the building. I last saw them in the cafeteria."

Phillips nodded at Peggy, "You alright, Peggy? Heard you held your own against the Winter Soldier," he asked breaking professionalism for a moment.

Peggy rolled her shoulder, "Did better in other fights."

Hoover put his hands on his hips, "Captain Rogers is gone too?" He grunted, "Things are getting better and better."

"The Captain will get the Winter Soldier back, and he'll find Regan for us. With or without our help," Peggy said defiantly.

Briggs spoke up, "You know he's not authorized to do this, right?"

Before Peggy could answer, Phillips spoke up, "We all know, but is there anyone more capable
apprehending the Winter Soldier than him?"

Hoover shook his head, "He did destroy numerous city property earlier."

Peggy crossed her arms and shifted her weight to her hip, "That's because you sent an army to apprehend Barnes." She shrugged, "He can do it cleaner than all your agents and teams combined."

Hoover chuckled, "If he's so good then why do you guys exist and why do we even bother?"

Peggy spoke up, "Because he's just one man. He can't be everywhere all at once."

Hoover crossed his arms and shook his head, "He's still not authorized, we should still send people out to find Barnes."

"I agree," Briggs nodded with a sudden revegetated spirit. He shook his head, "We should also arrest Captain Rogers for going rogue."

Peggy looked shocked, "What?" she asked with tension and shock in her voice.

Phillips shook his head, "Why?"

"Simple. Captain Rogers can't be controlled and isn't conforming to authority. Regardless of his good intentions, he's in direct violation of Executive Order 9940," Briggs said coldly. He shook his head, "because of your lack of control over the Captain, we have two super soldiers to hunt down now."

Phillips spoke up, "Give the Captain a chance, he will do the job. We don't need to micromanage him and that's the core problem with that stupid executive order."

Howard whispered to Peggy, "Suddenly the honorable Briggs grew a pair," he said poking fun at Briggs' clear nervousness during the security lockdown. Peggy rolled her eyes in response.

Peggy stepped forward, "Give him a chance to do the job. Why do you not trust him?"

Briggs shook his head and pointed a finger at Peggy, "The law is not flexible and nor am I. It is my duty to uphold the law and we have to apprehend your husband." He sighed and looked at Hoover, "The FBI is leading in this situation and SHIELD will support." He turned to Phillips and Peggy, "If you got a problem with that call the Secretary of State." Briggs turned back to Hoover, "Get Rogers and get the Winter Soldier. Those are your priorities," he stressed.

Peggy focused on Briggs, "Why are you so focused on Ste…Captain Rogers and the Winter Soldier so much. You're missing the bigger picture."

Briggs pointed at Peggy again, "You have done enough and you don't need to tarnish more of your reputation." Peggy looked confused and irritated at the same time.

Hoover nodded, "Right… I say that we focus on the Winter Soldier more than Regan. If we can't find Regan than at least we set her back a little by taking the Winter Soldier."

Peggy shook her head in disagreement. Phillips put a hand on her arm and spoke up, "With respect, your honor, this is the very task SHIELD is designed to handle. Not the FBI. We can handle the Winter Soldier and Regan…"

Briggs held up his hand, "FBI will lead. The decision is final, but if you want you can call Acheson yourself." He turned to Hoover and brought him aside, "Find Rogers and find the Winter Soldier."

Phillips shook his head in annoyance. He then turned to Peggy and whispered, "Do you know where
Steve is?” Howard leaned into their conversation to hear as well.

Peggy shook her head, "I don't."

Howard chuckled, "Is that an 'I actually don't know' or 'I do know and don't want to tell you.'"

Peggy rolled her eyes, "A 'I actually don't know.'" She said telling the truth since she doesn't actually know where Steve went.

Phillips sighed, "Unfortunately, Peggy… I'm sorry, but whatever he's doing, he's going to have to do it alone this time. We're going to have to hunt him down and arrest him…"

Howard shrugged, "Why is it that we always find ourselves looking for Rogers or covering him."

Peggy looked at Phillips with a look of surprise, "What? Phillips, Steve is trying to do the job, last time he acted upon himself and saved many…"

Phillips shook his head, "Peggy, last time was different. I'm sorry, but there's nothing we can do to help him."

"But…"

"Last time, he was stopping Hydra infiltration, this time…"

Phillips was cut off by Howard, "This time the situation is more fragile with all the politics and restrictions."

Peggy crossed her arms over her chest in irritation. "I'm sorry, Peggy. We can't help him," Phillips said.

Peggy sighed, "Steve always tries to do the right thing. He always aims to do right and keeps his family, people, and the country in mind. But the current pattern shows that whenever there's something to be done right, he's told to turn the other way. Then when he tries to fix the wrong, he's punished for it."

"This is a delicate and complicated situation, Peggy," Phillips responded understandingly.

Peggy shook her head, "I know." She looked at Phillips and Howard, "I'm pregnant again…"

Phillips and Howard looked at her with surprised looks. "And that's why I've been disappearing to use the ladies room frequently."

Howard spoke up, "Congratulations, Peggy…"

Phillips nodded in agreement, "Yeah… congratulations. But, did you tell Steve before he…"

"Yes, of course," Peggy said softly. She sighed, "I want my children to know their father as I know him. As a hero, not a criminal. The FBI and the Attorney General seem dead set in pushing that agenda."

Phillips nodded, "I know. I'm sorry, Peggy. We're going to do our best for Steve, believe me. Unfortunately, that's all I can do at this point." Suddenly FBI Special Agent Witwer walked into the Ops Center and quietly joined the conversation with Hoover and Briggs. Phillips groaned, "Agent Witwer. He looks like he's the one leading the search for the Captain and the Winter Soldier."

Peggy looked at the man then back at Phillips and started to think to herself of what to do next.
The sun was setting over the skyline of New York City, and the red orb of the sun slowly sank toward the horizon. The threads of light lingered in the sky, mingling with the rolling clouds, dyeing the heavens first orange, and then red until the sky was illuminated with a beautiful display of color. The sunset over the city was indeed a beautiful sight to see, an everyday phenomenon that many pass it by on their way home. Steve leaned against the open doorway to a large warehouse and watched the radiant heavens change with colors. It's been a long day, and his heart ached to be home with his wife and kids. He wanted to have a nice quiet dinner with Peggy, dance in the kitchen with her, play with his two small toddlers, put his joys to bed for the night, and finally crawl in bed with his wife and sleep his troubles away. Sadly, he couldn't. He had a job to do and needed to keep his mind ready for the next event.

Dugan appeared behind him and leaned against the opposite side of the doorframe, "You know they'll be looking for us, and looking for him."

Steve turned around and briefly looked at Bucky who was sitting unconscious on a chair with his mechanical arm securely fastened in an industrial-sized hydraulic press. Steve looked back up at the sunset, "Yeah."

Dugan chuckled, "Fair enough." He looked at Steve, "What's next?"

Steve turned back to Bucky, "We wait for him to wake up."

Peggy entered her home with the dress she wore to Angie's wedding draped over her arm and closed the door behind her. "Kathryn! I'm home," she called out to the babysitter.

Kathryn appeared from the living room, wearing a white and green pattern sundress, with a warm smile on her face, "Peggy, welcome home."

Peggy walked over to her and gave her a tired smile, "Thank you so much for being flexible and coming over in such short notice. We had an emergency at work and got called back during my friend's wedding."

Kathryn frowned, "Oh, I'm sorry to hear that. Must've been a very hectic day since you had the wedding to attend and deal with work."

Peggy entered the living room and saw her two wonderful toddlers playing on the floor. Her heart instantly fluttered and she instantly relaxed upon seeing the two joys of her life again after such a long day. Though, she still worried about her husband. Peggy gently draped her dress over the couch and turned to the babysitter, "So how was Sarah and Michael?"

"Good, good. Both been fed and changed, but they don't seem to be too tired. I guess they're waiting for mommy and daddy to come home," Kathryn said with a smile. She shrugged happily, "They've been good as always. Very little oopsies today."

Peggy smiled, "That's good." She removed her purse from her shoulder and took out some money before tossing her bag on the couch. She handed the cash to Kathryn, "Here's today's pay, and some extra for coming over on your day off and such short notice."

Kathryn took the money and frowned, "You don't need to pay me extra, Mrs. Rogers. Your standard pay is enough."
"No, please, it's literally the least I can do for the trouble," Peggy said kindly. "Please I insist."

Kathryn smiled and nodded, "Oh… well… thank you, Peggy." She gripped the money in her hand, "Do you need me to come back tomorrow?"

Peggy nodded, "Probably."

"Okay, just call me when you need me, I'll be available to babysit," Kathryn replied.

Peggy smiled, "Thank you for being so flexible with us."

"Anytime, it's always wonderful to see your kids." Kathryn nodded to the door, "Well, I better get home."

Peggy gave her a hug and patted her on the shoulder, "Again, thank you for coming. I hope you have a good evening."

"You too," Kathryn said as she walked to the front door.

Peggy walked over to her two kids and sat down on the floor in front of the couch. She scooped up James in her arms and smiled, "Hey there, sweetie," she said resting her son on her lap.

James smiled, "Mama!" He called waving his hands.

Peggy kissed her son on the cheek then looked at Sarah, "How's my two darlings?" She said in a pleasant tone, trying to hide the stress of the day from her two young children.

Sarah waved her hands at Peggy, "Mama! Mama!" Peggy stretched her arm out to touch her daughter on the cheek with a mother's touch and gave a warm smile to her two children. Sarah cocked her head to the side, "Dada?"

Peggy frowned, "Daddy's not coming home tonight. I'm sorry, darling."

Sarah frowned, "Dada! Dada!" She continued to pout.

Peggy brought her daughter close to her side and wrapped an arm around her, "I know you want your daddy, sweetie. But, Daddy has some work he has to finish," she said softly. Sarah frowned and started to tear. Peggy hugged her tightly with one arm, "I want your Daddy to come home too, but he'll be back, I'm sure," she said in a hopeful tone. She kissed her son and daughter on the tops of their heads and embraced her two children tightly. Though Peggy had to prepare for the next day’s events, she found comfort and relaxation with her two children, and spent much of the evening playing and cuddling with them to take her mind off the situation she and Steve are in.

The next day would be another long day.

LONG CHAPTER! I know LOL

STAY TUNED! If you haven't guessed, this is a take on Civil War if it occurred during the Cold War.

Thank you for reading and patience!

Comment and Follow, I appreciate the feedback.
Bucky slowly woke up to the early morning sun beating down on his face, and felt like he was at a beach staring up at the sun. As he tried to focus his vision, he felt his head throbbing and felt like he was spinning in circles. The bright sun on his face gave him a warm and pleasant feeling as his vision slowly returned. Then for a brief moment, he felt a warm sea breeze wash over him. The sensation of being at the beach with the sun and the sea breeze occupied him, and a strange sense of calm came over him. The feeling was short lived as his vision focused on seeing the sun peering through the clerestory windows. Bucky cautiously looked around to assess his surroundings and realized he was in a wide room in some warehouse or factory. He took a deep breath and sighed as the feeling of the beach faded into what seemed like a distant memory. As Bucky, fully regained consciousness, awareness, and feeling in his body, he felt something heavy pressing down on his augmented left arm. To his surprise, he saw an industrial-sized hydraulic press trapping his metal arm to the base plate making his arm completely useless. Bucky took a deep breath and ran a hand over his aching head as he tried to make sense of where he is and how he ended up in this warehouse or factory. He had a guess how he got to this position, and Bucky dreaded to know if he was right.

Steve, with his dress shirt sleeves, rolled to his elbows, looked out through a crack of the door to the city street, keeping an eye out for FBI agents and the police. It's been over twelve hours since he and Dugan snuck out of the SHIELD headquarters building while smuggling an unconscious Bucky with them, and Steve knew the FBI would be looking for them since then. Hiding in this vacant warehouse was the best option, but Steve knew they couldn't stay here forever. Their next course of actions heavily depended on Bucky and whether or not he can lead them to Bridget and stop her from completing whatever it is she's planning. Steve sighed and rubbed his neck tiredly as his mind shifted to Peggy and his family. He wanted to contact her but knew he couldn't without getting the two of them in trouble. He hoped and prayed that she wasn't in trouble and was safe from any FBI probing into SHIELD after he and Dugan disappeared. Steve returned from his thoughts at the call from Dugan.

"Captain!" Dugan called out.

Steve turned around and quickly jogged over to Dugan who was standing in the wide doorway to the room. Once Steve joined Dugan, the two men calmly walked in to speak to the now fully conscious and restrained Bucky. Bucky groaned and massaged his sore left shoulder from being torqued back in an awkward position for an extended period of time. "Steve," he said weakly.

"Which Bucky am I talking to?" Steve asked cautiously.

Bucky looked up and quickly thought of a memory he had of Steve to prove who he was. "Your mom's name was Sarah," he said softly. Bucky smiled as a distant memory came to mind. "You used to wear newspapers in your shoes. Through middle school and high school, you had a crush on the prettiest girl named Abigail," he said with a chuckle from a far off pleasant memory.

Steve smiled, content at the return of his best friend's true former self. "Can't read that in a newspaper clipping," he said confidently.

Dugan looked at Steve with a surprised look, "And just like that he's supposed to be cool?"
Bucky looked up at the two men, "What did I do?" he asked nervously.

"Enough," Steve said briefly.

Bucky sighed, "Oh God, I knew this would happen," he said quietly. "Everything Hydra put inside me is still there. All he had to do was say those goddamn words."

"You also fought his wife. Though she did hold her own longer than anybody else, which comes to no surprise," Dugan said nodding to Steve.

Steve didn't want to address Bucky fighting Peggy; it wasn't a pleasant subject even though Bucky didn't willingly intend to harm her. He spoke up in a serious tone, "What happened in there? Why did Bridget or Dottie, whatever you want to call her, go through this trouble to get to you?"

"I don't know," Bucky said truthfully.

Steve sighed, "People are dead. The shooting at city hall, the setup, the woman did all that just to get ten minutes with you. I need you to do better than 'I don't know.'"

Bucky took a moment and tried to remember what Bridget Regan asked him while he was brainwashed to be the Winter Soldier. After a few seconds, he cocked his head to the side as the faint memory came back to him, "She wanted to know about one of the victims in the city hall shooting. She wanted to know everything about him."

"Who?"

"FBI Special Agent named Neil Berman. He was one of the victims."

Steve looked confused, "Why did she care about him in particular?"

Bucky made eye contact with Steve, "Because she was tying loose ends for Attorney General Briggs."

"So, Bridget is the one who murdered all those people?" Steve asked calmly to clarify. Bucky nodded calmly.

Dugan shook his head in shock and realization, "Wait, wait, wait..." he said quickly. "Are you telling me Briggs, the Attorney General of the United States, is working for the Soviets and Hydra?"

"Yes, he's Hydra." Bucky sighed, "Agent Berman was a seasoned FBI agent ready to retire who successfully brought down mob bosses and gangsters since the 30s. I've shadowed him for months, and from what I've seen, he was a steadfast, respected, and had a high sense of moral principles. So, after following him for a while, I unanimously tipped him off about Briggs because he seemed to be the best man for the task. Berman then quietly investigated Briggs for treason and corruption for a few months. But it seems he dug too deep, and with no support, he was written off." He shook his head, "If we're going to find Bridget, we have to go through Briggs."

Steve crossed his arms, "What does Briggs do for Hydra and Leviathan? How did he end up working for them?"

Bucky shook his head, "I don't know how, but I know what he does. Briggs is the main point of contact for the sleeper agents, spies, and Huntresses or what SHIELD calls the Red Room Assassins when they first enter the country through the Eastern seaboard. He passes preliminary information of targets and persons of interest since he has control of the Department of Justice and has direct sway in the FBI. He passed me information numerous times while I was operating unwillingly as the
Dugan couldn't believe it, "This is unbelievable. We brought down a major insider Hydra plot a few years ago, and a lot of those arrested and convicted were those working in the federal government. Briggs was part of the trials; how did we miss someone that high up?" He asked shocked.

Steve sighed, "the records we found didn't expose everything and everyone. Hydra is careful not to put all their information in one place."

Bucky nodded, "Briggs knows how to play the game. He can make the right people disappear, stop people from talking, and frame others for crimes. But he will also convict Hydra agents, operatives, and assets regardless of utility if they're caught like he did during the Hydra trials. His position in the government and his ruthless attitude during those trials made it seem that his loyalty was beyond question. His position in the government allows Hydra and Leviathan to control the Department of Justice and even influence the FBI." He sighed, "I know many innocent people went down for crimes they didn't commit because it suited Hydra's agenda."

"How come those on trial didn't give him up in exchange for clemency?" Dugan asked.

Bucky sighed, "Assassins like the Huntresses will fall on their sword if captured alive, while those recruited here are persuaded through collateral not to talk. If they talk, their family and friends will be threatened or killed." He shook his head, "If Hydra and Leviathan don't trust those on trial at all, they will arrange for them to be murdered before they can testify." He nodded, "He's likely the one who is responsible for ordering the murder of those people at city hall."

Steve nodded, "Hm. Is there proof of Briggs' partnership with the Soviets and Hydra?"

Bucky nodded, "If Berman got murdered for investigating Briggs, I figure he should have some evidence on him."

Dugan shrugged, "How did Briggs get in bed with Hydra?"

Steve shook his head, "We'll have to worry about that later. But first, we need to focus on Bridget and Briggs' plans." He looked at Bucky, "what about Bridget? She obviously knew you tipped off that FBI agent hence why she went through all this trouble to set you up, but why didn't she just kill you and completely tie off loose ends?" Steve asked calmly trying to figure out what Hydra and Bridget are planning. He shook his head, "Think about it. She knows that Agent Berman knew about Briggs' relationship with Hydra and knew that you were the source of the leak. Why not kill you when she had the chance since the rest of the country thinks it was you anyway?"

Dugan shook his head, "The Captain has a point. That attack in SHIELD doesn't make any sense. It's like white noise to distract us from something."

Bucky shook his head, "I don't know."

Steve shook his head and remembered what Bridget said to him in the holding block of SHIELD, "Bridget said something about seeing my reign come to an end. I think whatever she's planning involves the two of us."

Dugan looked confused, "What's that supposed to mean? Is she trying to kill you? Get Bucky to kill you since he's the only one who can?"

Bucky looked down, "Sorry," he said sincerely.

Steve shrugged, "Don't worry about it." He turned to Dugan, "It's all vague. She said she intended..."
never to kill me, but that leaves more questions than answers. But whatever is going on, the main focus in her plan is Bucky, and from what I can tell, her end state is to assure Briggs' position is secure while simultaneously removing Buck and me as threats." He sighed and shook his head, "How? I don't know. But she and Briggs are planning something bigger than just killing us entirely, and that's the scary part."

Dugan shook his head, "The more we talk about what's going on, the more confusing it gets. She could've eliminated Berman and Bucky, and Briggs' problem would've been solved." He looked over at Steve, "But she also wants you, she could've also killed you when she had the chance yesterday, but no, she wants you alive. I don't know what she's trying to accomplish with that, but it doesn't make sense at all."

Steve sighed in frustration, "I know. Bridget's plan succeeds with Briggs' position is secure as Attorney General of the United States, so what we need to do is expose Briggs with the evidence from Agent Berman," he said to Bucky. "Bridget's plan weighs heavily on you being a fugitive, so exposing Briggs would cause her to fail, while simultaneously verifying your innocence in the murder. Additionally, SHIELD has some captured Hydra documents that prove that you were brainwashed to be the Winter Soldier, so once we expose Briggs, we can clear your name from treason." He shrugged, "At least in theory." He sighed, "Unfortunately, exposing Briggs doesn't guarantee we capture Bridget, it just sets her back. We have to figure out how to get her too."

Dugan nodded, "So first we find the evidence from Berman and deliver it to the FBI and SHIELD?"

Steve shook his head, "Not the FBI. Only SHIELD, we can't trust the FBI with Briggs influencing their agency." He crossed his arms, "But once we get the evidence to Peggy and Phillips, they can send it straight to Congress and the President."

"Easier said than done," Dugan said. "What about Briggs himself?"

"SHIELD will handle that," Steve responded calmly.

"So where do we start?"

Steve walked over to the hydraulic press and released Bucky's arm, "We find Berman's evidence." Once Bucky's arm was free he rolled his shoulder in a circular motion to stretch the sore muscles.

Dugan sighed and crossed his arms, "Hm. This would've been way easier two weeks ago."

Steve nodded, "What are you thinking?"

"You think we can do this with just the three of us? Is it possible to recruit Peggy's help now?" He asked.

Steve shook his head, "I would ask her, but…"

Dugan finished his sentence, "You're afraid the FBI is watching her and the rest of SHIELD?"

"Exactly. If we contact her now, she'll be in interrogation with the FBI by the afternoon, and I can't let that happen. But if we can contact her secretly then we will, but until then we can't ask her or SHIELD for help until we have the evidence that exposes Briggs," Steve said briskly.

"So, we're on our own?" Steve nodded in response.

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*Time Square, New York City, SHIELD: AEGIS HEADQUARTERS*
Peggy, dressed in a dark blue business suit with dress pants and heels, walked briskly into the quiet sizeable open lobby of SHIELD headquarters. To an outsider looking in, SHIELD didn't look like the lobby of a government intelligence agency and merely looked like another corporate building in the city as SHIELD intended it to look. Peggy showed up to SHIELD a lot earlier than usual and on a Sunday due to yesterday's developing situation with the Winter Soldier and her husband. Peggy, unfortunately, had to leave her two young kids at home again with Kathryn so she can work on her day off to resolve this situation. It's not something she wanted to do on a Sunday, but it was something she had to do. She had to right the wrong, protect the security of the United States from Hydra, and protect her husband. This time, Peggy is the one who has to protect Steve instead of the other way around. She couldn't wait for this situation to end and very much would like to finish it by putting a bullet in Bridget's brain for causing all this trouble.

Peggy quickly walked through the quiet lobby and spotted two men in black suits standing together toward the middle watching the few SHIELD employees and agents coming into work on a Sunday. The two men looked out of place, so she figured they're FBI agents assigned to keep an eye on SHIELD during the Winter Soldier case. Peggy didn't know everyone working in the office, but she could tell those two men didn't work for SHIELD just by how they stood and looked at the SHIELD employees walking by them. She frowned in annoyance at the presence of the FBI as she continued on her way through the lobby to the elevators. Suddenly, she spotted Agent Rick Ramirez and Howard Stark standing in front of the elevators looking in her direction waiting for her dressed in pressed suits. Peggy walked up and greeted them, "What's going on, boys? Not like you two to greet me in the lobby."

Ramirez frowned, "Witwer is here."

"Why?" Peggy asked with a confused look.

"He's questioning Thompson in the medical center," he said with a bothered.

Peggy shook her head, "That's absurd. He literally regained consciousness an hour ago," she said annoyed.

"The FBI..." Ramirez began before Howard cut him off.

"The FBI is spearheading their investigation to find Barnes and Rogers, and we're supposed to be 'supporting' them," Howard said using his hands to form air quotes. He sighed, "But they don't trust us, so it doesn't look like we're doing much in this investigation." He laughed sarcastically, "Oh and they have agents roaming throughout the building to keep an eye on our activities."

Peggy rolled her eyes, "This is ridiculous. I understand the FBI wants to apprehend the Winter Soldier, but they are missing the big picture. They're focusing too much on him and capturing Steve that they're overlooking who's truly behind the murders at City Hall."

Howard shook his head, "Peggy, we argued with them yesterday, and they're dead set on getting Barnes and your husband. There's no changing their minds and especially Briggs'. The FBI is very driven in apprehending those responsible for mass murders." He sighed, "They're just looking at the wrong person."

Peggy walked passed them and pressed the button for the elevator, "The FBI wants us to 'assist' and sit in the back seat. But we all know they don't want our help."

Howard and raised a brow, "And we're going to ignore them..."

Peggy smiled confidently, "Of course," she said as the elevator doors dinged and slid open.
"And that's why there's FBI here," He said with a smile as they stepped into the elevator. He then turned to his left and pressed the button for the medical center in the upper floors.

"Is Phillips here?" Peggy asked as the doors closed.

Howard shrugged, "Left for DC for a meeting with the National Security Council. Briggs and Hoover will be there too." He shook his head, "It's going to be heated. At least that's what he says."

Peggy sighed, "One thing politicians hate more than their political opponents is working on a weekend." She shook her head, "That's the same here, and it's the same in England." Howard and Ramirez chuckled at Peggy's slyly humorous statement.

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**Aegis Medical Center**

In one of the many single occupant medical rooms housing individual patients wounded from yesterday's fight with the Winter Soldier lay Agent Jack Thompson angled up on one of the medical beds talking to two very pushy Agent Witwer and another FBI Agents. Thompson is bruised and cut up from the blast from Bridget's bomb and wore numerous bandages under his hospital gown. Most notably, Thompson wore a bandage wrapped around the top of his head from a head wound he didn't know he had when he was sent head first onto the floor from the concussion of the explosion. The first company he had in his small medical room outside of SHIELD doctors and nurses since he woke up are these two annoying FBI agents. Thompson sighed at the two men standing by his bed, "I told you, I don't remember anything."

Witwer gripped his notepad, "Are you sure," he said doubtfully.

"Look, I got blown up, few of my friends were killed, and Captain Rogers pursued the Winter Soldier. That's all I know."

Witwer nodded, "Fine. Rest up, Agent Thompson. If you got anything to help to capture these two, call me ASAP."

Thompson waved his hand, "Yeah, yeah, yeah," he said annoyed. He rolled his eyes and aid under his breath, "You don't even want SHIELD's help."

Just as Witwer turned around to leave the Medical Center, Peggy stepped in with Howard and Ramirez in tow. Peggy walked over to Thompson's bed and spoke up irritatingly, "What do you think you're doing Agent?" she asked focusing on Witwer.

Witwer responded coolly and unfazed, "Talking to your agent about the whereabouts of the Captain and his friend the Winter Soldier." Peggy stared at him with a cold look bringing back her old ice queen person. The entire medical room could feel the temperature drop with Peggy's stern demeanor toward the FBI agents. Witwer sighed, "Look, my job is to find the Winter Soldier and your husband and arrest them. That's the job. And I have to start somewhere, and as far as I know, will you and Thompson are the only ones were the ones who last saw them." He chuckled sarcastically, "And I know you won't help us, so it only leaves your Agent here."

Peggy spoke up in a harsh tone, "Hoover curled up on Briggs' lap and said SHIELD would support, but I know you boys don't want our help, so leave my people out of it."

Witwer shook his head, "See… that's the worst attitude I ever heard. You know? You have a reputation in the FBI for being arrogant, proud, and works poorly with others who disagree with you." Thompson rolled his eyes behind Witwer's back in annoyance at the FBI agent's attitude.
Unfazed, Peggy responded, "I think you might be talking to the wrong people."

Witwer sighed, "Stay out of this Director. For your sake and your husbands. Your position and reputation are hanging by a very thin thread."

"Are you trying to threaten me, Agent?" Peggy replied coldly.

Witwer gave a cocky smile, "No, Director. Warning you, but then again, I doubt you'll listen." He shook his head, "Your husband should've stayed home and none this would've happened." With that, he turned around and left the medical center with his fellow FBI Agent in tow. Peggy watched with apathetic eyes as the two men walked through the door and out of sight.

Thompson brought Peggy back to reality with a light chuckle, "Nice," he said after witnessing the intense conversation between the two.

Peggy's attitude instantly shifted to her warming self, "you feel any better, Jack?"

"Yeah, considering everything hurts and I got monkeys banging their drums in my head," he said waving his hand.

"You know you don't need to stay in the Medical Center. We can get you to a real hospital for better treatment."

Thompson shook his head, "No way. It's only bumps and bruises. I'm good for duty." He smiled confidently, "I'm staying here and helping find Rogers and the Winter Soldier."

Howard spoke up, "And why do you think we're doing that?"

"Isn't that what we're doing? Take matters in our own hands and do the job the right way ourselves," He said with a grin. He chuckled, "Just like Director Rogers did to clear your name. If she's going around authority, I know it's for a good reason." Peggy smirked at Thompson's statement which is all the response he needed.

Ramirez laughed, "I remember the days when you openly resented the Director for being a woman here." Peggy merely smiled and nodded humorously in agreement with Ramirez causing Thompson to look down sheepishly.

Thompson sighed, "Let's not bring that up…Boys have to grow up eventually."

Peggy chuckled, "Okay, that's enough of that." She stepped closer to Thompson's bed and turned serious, "Aside from monkeys playing drums in your head, what did Witwer ask you and what did you say?"

"HE asked if I knew where the Captain and the Winter Soldier went. I told him I didn't know and I left it there," Thompson replied evenly.

"But you know more?" Peggy was the last to see Steve and Barnes on the helipad on the roof of the building, but Steve never told her where he was going and how to contact him. It was probably for the best that she didn't know since she' watched by the FBI and can have plausible deniability. Peggy also knew that Steve would contact her in the right moment though it ate away at her that she didn't know where her husband is. She was doing her best trying to find a way to help them, but she was flying blind.

Thompson shook his head, "You guys probably know more than I do. I just know that the Winter Soldier didn't shoot those people at City Hall yesterday."
Howard nodded, "Yeah, we're figured that already. Though the FBI doesn't."

"That woman… with the counseling psychologist doctor person," Thompson stuttered snapping his fingers trying to remember who the two in the detention block were yesterday.

"Bridget Regan, previously Dottie Underwood," Peggy responded calmly.

"Her! I partly heard her say that getting to the Winter Soldier was the main focus, and her intention was never to kill your husband," he said plainly to Peggy. Thompson shook his head, "But she said it in a way that there's something bigger intended for him."

"For who? Barnes or Rogers?" Howard asked for clarification.

"For Rogers," Thompson said briefly.

Howard shook his head, "This can mean anything."

"What's the Captain doing? Do you guys know?" Thompson raised a brow, "I feel like you do."

Howard nodded, "He's with Dugan, Barnes, the Winter Soldier, and trying to track down Regan. Where they are and how they're doing, it is a mystery to us."

Peggy remained composed and determined in light of what Thompson just mentioned, "We need to get to Steve and Barnes before the FBI does, and help the two of them find Bridget. If the FBI gets to them first, Bridget will elude capture, and Steve and Barnes will be vulnerable to whatever she has planned for them not to mention us."

Thompson shook his head confused, "wait, wait, wait. I'm confused." He looked at Peggy with confusion, "So we're going to try and find your husband and the former Winter Soldier before the FBI to assure that they have freedom of movement to find and capture Bridget before she can execute whatever is next in her plan?"

"Right," Howard nodded.

"If not then the FBI catches them and they're charged for treason and numerous other crimes, Regan escapes, and she's left to finish what she started?"

Peggy nodded, "Exactly."

"Does the FBI not want to capture Bridget?" Thompson asked curiously.

Howard shook his head, "They're more interested in capturing Barnes and Rogers."

Peggy nodded, "We can continue this in my office. If you're fit, Jack, then I'll talk to the Doctors and get you out of here."

"I'm good to go," Thompson said confidently.

Peggy made a small smile of confidence, "Good."

Just as Peggy was about to leave, Daniel Sousa opened the door and limped into the room, "How's Jack doing?"

Peggy stopped in her tracks surprised, "Daniel?"

Thompson propped himself up with his elbow, "Aren't you supposed to be on your honeymoon and
"consummating your marriage?" he said with a grin.

Sousa shook his head, "We don't leave for our honeymoon till tomorrow." He chuckled, "As for consummation that's none of your business." Everyone laughed in response.

Howard stepped forward and shook Daniel's hand, "Congratulations, Sousa."

"Thanks, Mr. Stark," he replied in kind.

Once Sousa let go of Stark's hand, Peggy stepped forward and embraced Sousa tightly then stepped back with a surprised look, "What are you doing here?"

Daniel frowned, "Heard what was going on over the radio and needed to come in. They've been talking about it all morning. Looks like Steve's in a bit of hot water." He shook his head, "Angie's also pretty worried about you two." Peggy gave a small appreciative smile in response.

Howard leaned against the wall and crossed his arms, "Do you know what we're dealing with?"

"I heard a couple of FBI agents talking about it when I first got here." He shrugged, "I figured you guys would be trying to help Steve."

Ramirez nodded, "You think we shouldn't?"

"I didn't say that. This situation described over the radio sounds very one sided against Steve," Sousa said facing Peggy. "And I know you and Steve well enough to know that Steve wouldn't do something without reason. We just need to trust him and he never gave us a reason not to." He sighed and rubbed his neck, "But, the press, however, were quick to jump on reporting their negative views of Steve. Almost like the FBI wanted them to push a negative narrative." Sousa frowned, "I don't know what the rest of the country thinks though…"

Peggy shook her head, "what are they saying on the radio?" she asked cautiously.

Sousa sighed, "best hear it for yourself."

"Alright then. Let's head to my office and go from there," She said to the group. Peggy looked over at Thompson, "Join us when you can. I'll talk to the doctor to get you out of here." "

Thompson nodded, "Thanks, Peggy."

In the lobby, Agent Witwer walked out of the elevator and was greeted immediately by another FBI Agent in a black suit. "What's the news, Fusco?" Witwer asked while walking straight for the exit.

Agent Fusco turned and walked with Witwer, "We tagged Chief Daniel Sousa of SHIELDs Office of Special Projects entering the building not too long ago."

Witwer stopped and looked at his fellow agent, "Sousa is here? Isn't he supposed to be on his honeymoon or something?"

"Guess he's delaying it," Fusco responded.

Witwer rubbed his chin, "Something's up. Sousa and the Rogers are close, so if he's here, then Director Rogers is definitely planning something behind our back." He shook his head, "SHIELD doesn't look like they're particularly willing to aid us in apprehending Captain Rogers let alone the Winter Soldier."
Fusco shrugged, "Captain Rogers is their poster boy here, and has a lot of loyalty here. Do you think Director Rogers knows where to find him?"

Witwer frowned, "I know she doesn't but I want to say she does." Fusco looked at him with a confused look. "It's just a hunch, but I believe Director Rogers last saw Captain Rogers and let him go but he didn't tell her where he was going so she can have plausible deniability."

Fusco nodded, "So what's next?"

"Same as before. We continue hunting for Captain Rogers and the Winter Soldier. Captain Rogers is a soldier not a spy and is easily recognizable, so he'll stick to less populated areas in the city. Let's canvass the warehouse district and the docks first then work our way East."

"And the Winter Soldier?"

"We have to assume that he and Captain Rogers are together. The Captain seemed pretty adamant on protecting him yesterday, so it isn't wrong to make an educated guess that they're together. If they aren't then, we'll get the Captain to point us in the right direction, but I'm betting that they are."

Fusco shrugged, "If they aren't, I doubt the Captain will play ball with us so easily."

Witwer responded quietly, "He's still a man… he's not invincible. The fact that we're dealing with treason and espionage gives us some power that we couldn't use normally." He nodded and spoke in his normal tone of voice, "Get a team to watch the Director and Stark. We already bugged her office before she got here so if she gets contact with her husband then we'll know."

Fusco nodded, "Got it." He sighed, "Working on the weekends are never fun. First, I get called to investigate the shooting yesterday and now I find myself hunting down two super soldiers."

Witwer smiled, "Life's imperfect." He nodded, "Now get going, time is of the essence."

"Right," Fusco said as he turned and left.

Peggy, Stark, Sousa, and Ramirez opened the door into Peggy's office, and to most of the group's surprise, they saw Agent Mike Li suspiciously looking behind a bookshelf. Ramirez spoke up confused, "Mike? What are you doing?" He then looked at Peggy's desk and saw a small open cardboard box with what seemed like dozens of small flat black devices piled within the box.

Before Li addressed the group, he reached as far as he could behind the bookshelf and grabbed another device stuck to the back of the shelf, "got it." He then turned around and nodded to the group, "I think I got them all, Director."

Peggy smiled, "Thank you, Mike," she said as she made her way to her desk. The group followed her deeper into her office and stopped short of her desk.

Peggy put her purse down on the floor under her desk before she walked over to one of the cabinets to turn on the radio. Howard walked up to the desk and looked into the cardboard box and saw all the small devices within, "Did the FBI seriously just bug your office?" He asked confused.

"mhmm," Peggy hummed in response as she flipped the radio on and began to tune it to the desired station.

Li put the last device in the box, "She called me earlier in the morning about suspicion of the FBI trying to get tabs on her and asked me to check for bugs. And lo and behold, bugs. Lots of them."
He shrugged, "Though I don't think I can do anything if they wire tapped your phones." Peggy just waved, satisfied with Li's work with the bugs.

Ramirez sat down on the chair in front of Peggy's desk, "Jesus. Talk about paranoid."

Peggy turned with a smirk, "me or the FBI?" Ramirez shrugged silently and didn't know how to respond. As soon as Peggy tuned the radio to her desired channel, the speakers started to crack to life, picking up the radio frequency in the city, "Let's see what the morning news has to say about this whole thing," she said curiously with a hint of apprehension in her voice.

As Peggy leaned against her file cabinet to listen to the radio, Sousa took a seat in the chair next to Ramirez in front of the desk while Howard and Li stood silently and listened intently to the broadcast. "World News Today," said the voice through the crackling speakers. "Brought to you by Continental Radio and Television Corporation, makers of Admiral Radio, America's smart set. CBS correspondents are waiting to give you a complete report on today's new and the world's political fronts. But first, here's Nigel Kelly with the morning report." There was a short pause in the radio broadcast as the new newscaster took over the broadcast, "Yesterday, the seizure of a wanted Soviet assassin known as the Winter Soldier also known as former U.S. Army Sergeant James Buchanan Barnes turned deadly yesterday. His initial capture involved numerous injuries involving federal agents, local police, and innocent bystanders along with extensive property damage. Barnes later escaped custody in the same day further injuring more federal agents. Barnes is still at large."

Howard sighed, "Get on with it," he said to the radio. Peggy shook her head in agreement as she listened.

"Captain Steven G. Rogers of SHIELD known popularly as Captain America is also wanted for breaking many federal government regulations while employed in SHIELD including the recently passed Executive Order 9940. The order states he as part of SHIELD will no longer conduct major domestic operations freely without the insight of the National Security Council and the President of the United States. For his actions with interfering with the FBI in their initial capture of Barnes, Captain Rogers broke the official mandate." Peggy looked at Howard with a troubled look but maintained a confident posture by the radio. "Captain Rogers is also wanted for obstruction of justice and is suspected for aiding and abetting a federal fugitive. Public opinion on Captain Rogers seemed to stagger after yesterday's news as some people even used the word 'betrayed' that he would 'stick his neck out' for a traitor and Soviet agent. Captain Rogers' public actions in the Winter Soldier case is added to a long list of previous actions that have done more harm than good in the recent years…"

Peggy sighed and turned off the radio, "I heard enough…"

Sousa nodded, "See? The press are eating it up for the story."

"So, what do we do now?" Howard spoke up.

"We need to find Steve and help him, the how we do it will be the difficult part," Peggy said evenly. "But we can't be caught trying to help Steve…."

New York City Warehouse District

Dugan walked up a flight of metal stairs to the foreman's office overlooking the sparse warehouse floor and immediately stepped in to see Bucky and Steve standing by an old wooden table waiting for him. Dugan smiled, "Got a map," he said briefly holding up a folded city map.

Steve smiled, "Great. Let's get started."
"You ran a little late," Bucky said calmly. An hour and a half ago, Steve sent Dugan to find a city map from a store so they can plan their next move to get Agent Berman's evidence, and also obtain a car for transportation. The task that was thought to be a short seemed to be longer than what Steve and Bucky anticipated.

Dugan shrugged, "Needed to find the right ride."

Steve raised a brow, "better be inconspicuous."

"It is," Dugan said with a smirk.

"Now why do I not believe that," Bucky said with a suspicious look.

Steve knocked on the table, "Alright, we'll cover that later. Let's see the map, Tim." Dugan quickly unfolded the public city map and placed it flat on the table. He then grabbed discarded office items on the dusty floor like staplers and pencil holders and set them on the sheet to flatten it out. Steve let out a deep breath and looked over the map, "Now we got to find Berman's evidence on Briggs. He would have extensive documentation at his residence, but I have a sneaking suspicion he doesn't live in New York."

Bucky shook his head, "his residence is in Bethesda. He was probably going to city hall to follow up on a paper trail. His proximity to Briggs' place of work was one of the factors why I tipped him off."

Steve leaned back and crossed his arms, "Hm. Like any skilled and experienced investigator, he would've carried notes and some critical documentation with him on Briggs so he could connect the pieces together."

Dugan nodded, "Right, but the FBI is heading the investigation, so Berman's possessions would be…"

"The FBI station in Tribeca," Steve said finishing Dugan's sentence and picking up a pencil he found and circling the FBI station in the city.

"Christ, that place is crawling with hundreds of federal agents all looking to either shoot us or throw us in prison," Dugan said in an irritated tone.

Steve smiled, "There's always a way in. If we got into Hydra Headquarters during the war, then we can do this."

Dugan realized something, "If the FBI has his possessions and his evidence, and they searched his body and looked into his actions up to his death, shouldn't they know about Briggs?"

Bucky spoke up, "Not if the FBI team heading the investigation is Hydra too."

Dugan sighed, "Which means…"

"Witwer and his investigation team could be Hydra," Steve said plainly.

"Exactly," Bucky said.

"But the problem is that we don't know if they're all Hydra. There could be only one in a position of influence who's tampering with the evidence," Steve said bringing up a good point.

Dugan shrugged, "I bet its Witwer. The guy rubbed me wrong the whole time." He sighed and crossed his arms, "Why is it that Hydra and Leviathan or whatever keeps popping up. We expose
them for a moment, and they go to ground, then they come back harassing us again." Dugan rolled
his eyes, "And don't say their stupid slogan…"

Bucky shrugged, "They just hate us and are committed to ruling the world by any means necessary."

"Yeah, like ruling the world ever worked out for anyone," Dugan replied.

Steve sighed, "Alright, focus up." He leaned over the map and pointed to their location within the
warehouse district, "We're here, and the FBI station is here. That's about two or three miles." He
started tracing their route to the FBI station on the map, "So we don't know how many FBI agents
are Hydra and Leviathan, there could be as many as a hundred and as few as two. Witwer's team
might very well be the only Hydra influenced group we have to worry about, but there's no way to
be sure." He looked up at the two men, "But we do know that the FBI has in their possession,
Berman's evidence. So, our task will be to get in there and get it from them." He then bent over the
map and traced the route with his finger, "We'll take this route here, head to the docks, take a left and
go down, following the sea, for a mile, hang a left for three blocks, and hang a right and continue
straight for eight blocks. We'll then hang another left and continue straight passed this park and make
an immediate right." He pointed at the FBI station on the map, "The FBI station should be at this
corner. We'll pass it and park around the corner." Steve then pointed to the building across the street
from the FBI building on the sheet, "and use this building as a vantage point to get a look-see at what
we got." He stood up and looked at Bucky and Dugan, "Questions."

Dugan nodded, "let's get to it."

FBI Station Tribeca, New York City, New York

Steve, Bucky, and Dugan peered over the wall on the roof of a tall office building across the street
from the FBI station and observed the FBI security posture and ways to get into their building. The
trio did their best not to expose themselves and to remain undetected while they visually scouted the
FBI station. The twelve-story FBI building occupying much of a city block is adjacent and
surrounded by tall office buildings and busy city streets limiting the trio's options of escape and
evasion if they're caught infiltrating the building. Finding a way to sneak into the station without
getting caught was challenging enough as it is, but getting out and escaping was the biggest problem.
In the urban sprawl of New York, the busy streets and limited access to certain roads made it
extremely hard but not impossible to escape the FBI. The three men needed a good plan to get in and
out successfully. Unfortunately, time wasn't on their side.

Steve peered over the wall and quickly observed that something was strange about the FBI building.
The FBI had many agents posted outside on the busy sidewalk on all sides of their building.
Typically, they wouldn't post agents out on the street for security and relied on internal security to
deal with any extreme situations. This current security posture meant that the FBI suspected that they,
or singularly Bucky, is going to try and attack the FBI. After Bucky's violent rampage through
SHIELD, Steve had a suspicious feeling that the FBI and Police would take extra security
precautions because of him. Steve ducked below the wall and sighed, "Figured that happen."

Dugan nodded, "The FBI sure double security outside. I'd hate to know what's inside."

"One step at a time, Dugan," Steve replied calmly.

Bucky ducked below the wall too and nodded, "They got an open garage on the right side of the
building with two agents keeping guard outside. I think that's our best bet instead of going through
the front door." He sighed, "But I suspect there will be FBI personnel in the garage too."
"I think so too," Steve said in agreement to everything Bucky said. "I'm also betting their evidence lock up is the floor above the garage."

"How do we know for sure?" Dugan asked curiously.

Steve quickly peered over the wall to look down at the agents guarding the garage then squatted down again and addressed the question, "We subdue one of the agents and ask him where it is, and we won't torture him."

"Think he's going to give it up just like that?" Dugan asked with a confused look.

Steve chuckled, "No, when he sees the Winter Soldier he will." Bucky smirked. He sighed, "The plan was to initially infiltrate the building undetected, but I don't think we can do that now…"

Bucky nodded, "What do you have in mind?"

"Little change of plans. We go through the garage and seize the guard's weapons then get the location of evidence lock up from one of them. After that, we have to move fast and get that evidence. The FBI will be onto us and we'll have to be quick on the exit." Steve turned to Bucky, "Can't kill any of them. If we do there's nothing Peggy or SHIELD can do to protect us."

Bucky nodded, "Never planned on it."

Steve turned to Dugan, "you're going to have to stay out here with the car and be ready to pick us up as soon as possible. Be in a position where you can see the garage but remain hidden."

Dugan nodded, "right."

Steve peered over the wall again and suddenly spotted movement on the roof of the FBI building. He ducked, "Dang, the FBI is finally posting over watch on the roof. They must've just posted the extra security outside." He nodded to the door, "Let's get this going. We need to hurry."

"Right behind you," Dugan said in response while Bucky just nodded in acknowledgement.

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A young FBI agent standing guard outside the garage carefully watched the pedestrians walking passed him, keeping on the lookout for the Winter Soldier and even Captain America. The young man didn't look like he's been in the agency very long but did look eager to see action as a field agent in the city. His open attitude made him feel excited about the prospect of being part of capturing the Winter Soldier and a rogue Captain America. The young agent briefly looked to his right to see his partner on the other end of the garage looking away from him when suddenly he felt something sharp poking his back. He heard a raspy voice speak to him quietly but loud enough for him to hear, "don't make a sudden move or I'll snatch your life away," the unknown man said.

The agent's partner turned around and saw his fellow agent nervously staring at him with a man with a newsboy hat sitting low to conceal his face standing behind him. Just as the agent was about to draw his weapon, he felt a firm grip catch his wrist before he could entirely pull his pistol from his holster. The agent turned his head and saw Captain Rogers wearing sunglasses and a newsboy hat, "Captain… what do you want?" He said in a composed voice, while unable to move his hand from his weapon with Steve clenching his wrist.

Steve nodded to Bucky who nodded in return. The crowded sidewalk made it easy for Steve and Bucky to blend in and silently subdue the FBI agents without raising any alarms. "Don't make any sudden movements or loud sounds, do you understand?" The FBI agent quietly nodded in acknowledgement. "Now, slowly let go of your weapon." Steve said to the agent. The agent
complied with what he said and slowly released his hand from the pistol. Steve let go of the man's wrist then quickly took the pistol for himself, "Now, where's your badge and ID?"

The agent gulped nervously, "On my belt to my left." Steve, with his free hand, reached around the agent's waist and unclipped the badge from his belt. "Now do as I say. Walk slowly into the garage and say nothing." During Steve's exchange with his FBI agent, Bucky did the same and also obtaining his respective agent's badge and pistol.

The agent nodded, "Yes, sir." He spoke up in a calmly, "You don't have to do this. Whatever caused you to go rogue we can help you. It's not too late."

Steve frowned, "It's out of my control, I'm sorry." Steve and Bucky then pushed their FBI agents into the garage.

Upon entering the garage, Steve and Bucky noticed a handful of men in blue overalls, likely working in evidence collection or the supply branch for the FBI station, and didn't seem like the FBI had any extra security within the garage. Regardless, it wouldn't take long for the FBI to know that they're there, so speed is paramount. Steve turned to Bucky, "Close the garage." Bucky nodded silently, and without letting go of his FBI agent, hit the controls to the garage for it to close. With a quick glance, Steve could see a tall full chain link cage with a link ceiling where the FBI housed nonlethal serialized equipment and gear for missions such as radio equipment, fuel, batteries, and extra handcuffs. The cage could come in handy, Steve thought.

At the sound of the garage closing, the handful of men in the blue overalls turned toward the garage to see who closed it, and to their surprise saw two big men holding the two FBI agents that were guarding the outside. The men in blue watched nervously, not knowing what might happen next. Steve pushed the FBI agent deeper into the garage, "Gentlemen, I don't have much time, and I promise I won't hurt you but I need you to help me."

One of the garage workers whispered to his friend, "Is that Captain Rogers?"

"Must be," whispered his friend.

The worker came to a sudden realization, "Then that must be the Winter Soldier," he said nervously as he looked at the man holding the other agent next to Steve.

Steve spoke up, "Where's the evidence lockup and what's the case number for the shooting at City Hall?"

The FBI agent shook his head, "I can't tell you that…" The agent said before the garage workers could think up a response. Everyone in the garage remained determined to resist giving up information to Steve because he's officially a criminal, and from where they were standing, looks like he's working with the Winter Soldier. Them seeing Steve with the Winter Soldier formed their perception which in turn formed their reality.

"There's something going on that's beyond your understanding, agent. Help me and it will save everyone," Steve said calmly.

The agent refused, "I can't… you're a criminal and you're working with the Winter Soldier!" He started to try and break free from Steve's grasp on his coat, "You're a traitor."

Steve quickly moved his hand up and grabbed his shoulder and squeezed until it felt like he was about to crush the man's shoulder blade. The agent gasped in pain. Steve frowned, "I'm sorry, but I don't have time for this. Don't make me go through you." He sighed, "Now, I'm asking, please,
where's the evidence lockup and what's the case number for the shooting at City Hall?"

The agent shook his head. "Captain Rogers, as a fellow soldier who fought in the war who understands honor and commitment, you know on my honor, I can't help you. I'm committed to this agency and they tell me I'm supposed to hunt you…"

Steve sighed, "I respect your commitment, but I'm still going to find my way with or without your help." He didn't want to hurt anyone in the FBI and is committed to the non-lethal approach, but he still needed to find the evidence locker and time wasn't on his side. He shook his head, "I'm sorry Agent…"

Before Steve finished his sentence, a young man in blue overalls spoke up, "Wait, sir!"

The agent secured by Bucky spoke up angrily, "Shut your mouth, boy!"

The young man continued to speak defiantly, "Evidence lockup is upstairs. Take the stairs on your right as you leave the garage, not many FBI agents and analyst use the stairs. Once you get to the floor, take a right and go all the way down the hallway and you should see it."

Steve nodded at the young man courteously, "Thank you."

The agent Steve held sighed, "Damn it." He looked over his shoulder defeated, "You going to let us go?"

Steve nodded, "I will and I won't harm any of you, but I can't let you out of the garage without risk of you alerting everyone here." He looked over at the chain link cage, "Everyone inside the cage." As ordered, everyone in the garage turned and walked into the nearby chain link cage with the two subdued FBI agents being last. The two FBI agents were reluctant to go in the cage and desperately wanted to stop Steve and the Winter Soldier, but there was nothing they could do nothing but wait. Before Steve closed the gate, he held out his hand to the two agents, "Before I lock the gate, we need your radios." The two agents sighed and calmly handed their hand-held radios over to Steve and Bucky. Bucky took the radio from the agent and immediately dropped it on the floor and smashed it with his foot. Steve, retaining the radio handed to him to keep tabs on FBI radio traffic, closed and locked the gate, sealing the two agents and the garage workers in the cage. "You won't be here long," Steve said before turning and heading to the door that lead to the inside of the FBI station.

Steve cracked open the door before exiting the garage to get a peak of the hallway to see if the passageway was crowded or obstructed. Upon seeing no immediate movement from his limited visibility through the small opening of the door, he cautiously opened it and checked right and left to find the hallway was mostly empty aside from one woman was walking in the opposite direction of the passageway where Steve and Bucky weren't going. Confident that the coast was clear, Steve quietly signaled Bucky to follow him. The two men snuck out of the garage and hastily but silently made their way to the stairway on their right with Steve keeping a watchful eye on the woman walking away from them. Once they made it to the doors to the stairs, Steve quietly opened one of the doors allowing Bucky to slip through with Steve following close behind. The woman heard the doors at the far end of the hallway open and closed causing her to stop and slightly look over her shoulder…

As instructed by the FBI garage worker, Steve and Bucky made it to the floor above the garage and peeked through the small window in the door to check their immediate surroundings was clear from any FBI personnel. Comfortable with a clear shot to the FBI evidence lockup, it was time to move. Steve nodded to Bucky, "Ready? Let's do this quick."
Bucky nodded, "Right behind you, Steve. Anything on the FBI radio that may seem they know we're here?"

Steve shook his head, "Nothing." He slowly opened the door, "Let's do this, and follow my lead."

Steve walked out of the stairwell calmly with Bucky close behind him, and speed walked down the short hallway to the sealed door with a sign "EVIDENCE" in bold gold letters above the door. As the pair got closer, Steve noticed the door had a peephole, as he predicted, which prompted him to take out the badge of the FBI agent he subdued. Steve then ducked below the peephole and knocked on the door firmly a few times.

Inside the room sat two FBI agents reading at their desks while on duty to oversee the security and the proper procedures of evidence lockup. The evidence lockup didn't have anyone but those two agents so they were pretty lax on their security posture since no one believed anyone would break into the station and steal evidence. The most concerning thing the two agents had to worry about is their fellow agents screwing up the proper evidence procedures. At the sound of a firm knock on the door, one of the agent stood up and made his way to look through the peephole to see only a badge being held in front of the lens. The agent look confused, "who is it?"

"Agent Witwer," said the voice on the other end of the door.

"sheesh, he's back again? The guy is dedicated to catch the Winter Soldier and Captain America," replied his partner reading the newspaper and not paying attention to the door.

The agent unlocked the door and opened it to see Steve and Bucky pointing their pistols at him. The agent put his hand up and started to walk backwards cautiously. The agent's partner lowered his newspaper, "What's going?" he asked in surprise. He stood up just as he saw and recognized Steve and Bucky walking in with their pistol trained at his friend. Before he could do anything, Bucky pointed his pistol at him.

"Keep your hands up and where I can see them," Bucky ordered.

Steve looked at Bucky, "Watch them while I handcuff them." Bucky nodded in response. "Get on the ground, spread your legs, and put your hands behind your back." The two FBI agents did as they were told and laid down on the ground facedown. Steve then proceeded to take out the handcuffs that the agents carried and handcuffed them on the ground.

"Please, Captain. Please don't hurt me." said one of the agent's nervously as Steve handcuffed him. He looked up to see the Winter Solider staring coldly at him which only made him more frightened at the situation.

Steve patted the man's back, "My argument isn't with you," he said briefly before he stood up. "Can you tell me where the evidence for the City Hall shooting is?"

The other agent spoke up with a shaky voice, "it's in locker 875 733." The two agents weren't expecting to be subdued by the fugitives Captain Rogers and the Winter Solider, the two super soldiers.

"Thanks. Now, don't go anywhere," Steve said as he and Bucky holstered their pistols in the back of their pants before taking off down the row of evidence lockers leaving the two frightened FBI agents on the cold floor.

The evidence lockup is a long room with a series of chain-link fence cages that acted like lockers with labeled numbers to house large amounts of physical evidence. Each locker contained an
assortment of shelves holding white cardboard labeled boxes that further organized the evidence. Steve and Bucky rushed down the row of lockers, quickly glancing at the labels until they reach the one they're trying to find. "875 727," Steve said aloud as he promptly rushed by the lockers, noticing all of them were left open. He figured that the evidence lockers are left open during the day and locked up during the night for security, which makes getting Berman's evidence slightly less time-consuming. But for only a few seconds. Time is still a factor since it's just a matter of time until the FBI knows they're inside.

"875 729," Bucky said as he too looked for the locker.

"875 731," He said down the line.

"875 733!" Bucky exclaimed as he passed Steve. He quickly noticed that the locker was the only one that's locked. "It's locked," he said plainly.

"Yeah, it's the only one that is. Which means…"

"The evidence is for 'Need to know basis' so only certain people can access it," Bucky said in a hushed tone.

Steve sighed, "Hydra is trying to control the narrative." He noticed that the locker was only secured by a basic padlock which didn't stand a chance against Steve or Bucky's strength. He turned his pistol over so he was holding the barrel instead of the grip, "We have to hurry."

Before Steve broke the lock, Bucky waved his hand, "Wait, I got it." Bucky turned and punched the lock with his mechanical arm, breaking the shackle of the padlock. The lock fell onto the floor, "Better than risk damaging a pistol we might need," he said with a smirk.

Steve nodded, "Nice." He then opened the gate, and the two of them started searching the evidence boxes for Berman's personal effects, the material that the FBI didn't yet return to his next of kin.

"Look at the labels, they might have a box dedicated to each victim," Bucky said as he searched the racks of boxes.

After a few moments of hasty searching, Steve found the white box with Berman's name written on it, "Got it!" He quickly removed the box from the shelf that read "Case #: 092973, Dates: 04/1949, EVIDENCE: FBI Agent Neil Berman (Deceased), records, photos, personal effects."

Steve kneeled down and placed the box on the floor and removed the top and instantly started searching. "It should look like a journal," Bucky said as he watched patiently. Steve nodded as he removed papers and photos so he could get deeper into the box.

After a few seconds of searching, he found a black, brown leather-bound journal. He slowly brought it out of the box and looked up at Bucky, "found it. I think." He stood up and slowly opened the cover to read Neil Berman's signature on the front page. Steve glanced at his friend, "What are the odds that Hydra removed the implicating pages in here?"

Bucky shook his head, "I don't know. Doesn't look like this book has been touched by the FBI since they picked it up yesterday. Hydra and Leviathan controlled elements might be focusing on Berman's residence to find the implicating evidence on Briggs." Steve flipped through the pages of the journal and quickly scanned each page to find anything that Berman wrote down that implicates Briggs. "Can we use this journal to prove that Briggs is a traitor?"

Steve nodded as he flipped through the pages, "Peggy brought up to me once that as long as we can prove that a document belonged to a federal agent and that the implicating statements were about the
suspect, then it can be used as evidence." He shrugged, "but if we could find more evidence then the better off we'll be." Steve paused as he flipped a group of pages to find a few pages of were torn out. He sighed, "Looks like they got to it first." He shook his head, "Should've known better." Bucky sighed in defeat. Just as Steve closed the journal, giving up, he felt something subtle in the spine of the book. Steve quickly turned the journal on its side and ran his hand up and down the spine to double check if he was right.

Bucky look confused, "What is it?"

"Felt something strange in the spine of his journal," He calmly said as he focused on running his hand up and down the spine of the book. Sure enough, he felt a subtle bump, if you weren't intentionally looking for it and weren't careful, you would miss it. Steve smiled, "Son of a gun left us cookie crumbs." He hastily tore open the spine of the book and saw a long folded strand of microfilm and a small folded piece of paper. "Microfilm…" Steve said in a hushed tone.

Steve took out the microfilm and handed it to Bucky who immediately held it to the light and looked at the tiny images. He could make out the photos, but not in detail, "looks like the strand of photos are of people, likely Briggs, and some unknown individuals, and the rest of the photos are of documents." He gasped, "This is the evidence in photographs…"

Steve took out the note from the spine of the journal and placed the book down in the box. He unfolded the small piece of paper and saw the hand-written note that read, "Go to address: 5281 North Loop Road, Baltimore, Maryland. Room 271 under the floor. Combination: 24-38-01. Physical copies of Evidence on Briggs."

"He knew he got discovered by Hydra and made multiple contingencies with hidden physical copies and the microfilm," Steve quietly said.

Bucky nodded, "Yeah, and he knew someone would be trying to prove Briggs is guilty."

"That someone is you, though he probably didn't realize that the Winter Soldier tipped him off," he said in response. Steve held up the note in his hand, "He hid the physical proof of Briggs' association with Hydra in a safe location as per this note. It might be his residence, it might not be."

Bucky handed Steve the microfilm, "The film, will it be enough to convict Briggs?"

Steve shook his head, "It should be, but at least enough to warrant an investigation, but we nor Berman would settle for just an investigation. We need to cut the head off the snake."

"What's our next step?"

"Time to get Peggy's help. We have to find a way to contact her." Steve nodded toward the exit, "First, let's get out of here." Steve stuffed the microfilm, and the note in his pocket then tried putting the journal back together before packing it up in the box and returning it to its place on the shelf.

As the pair closed the locker, the station wide alarm went off with a deafening ring. Bucky shrugged, "Well, they were bound to be alarmed eventually," he said over the alarms.

Steve smirked, "At least we got what we came for, let's get out of here before they miss us." With that, the two men bolted down the long room of evidence lockers toward the only exit of the room. When Steve and Bucky rounded the corner of the last locker, they were surprised to see Bridget standing by the alarm panel adjacent to the door with a pistol in her hand. Bridget wore a woman's business suit and looked like one of the federal employees in the station which partially explains how she got into the station in the first place.
"Captain Rogers and Sergeant Barnes," Bridget said with a smirk. "Funny running into you here." Steve and Bucky looked at each other with surprised looks, taken completely off-guard by the sudden appearance of Bridget in the FBI station. The two men thought the FBI would be the last place they would find her. Steve and Bucky both remained speechless with astonishment. Bridget picked up on their surprise, "What's the matter? Cat got your tongue?"

Steve spoke up in a stern tone, "Why are you here?"

"I could ask you the same thing, but I already know why you're here. To find evidence from that dead Agent Berman," she said with a smirk.

One of the handcuffed FBI agents on the ground smiled and spoke up confidently to Bridget, "Good work on setting off the alarm! Now un-cuff us and we'll arrest these two traitors," he said over the blaring alarms to a person he didn't know or recognize. The two cuffed FBI agents didn't know what was going on but had relief in the fact that they thought the woman was here to help them.

Bridget stepped forward and stood between the two FBI agents on the ground then pointed her pistol at one of them and shot him in the head. "No!" screamed the last agent. Bridget, without remorse or emotion, pointed her gun at the other man and also shot him in the head.

Just as Steve and Bucky were about to jump Bridget, she raised her pistol at the two men, "Don't make any sudden moves, you two." She then raised a detonator in her other hand, "Wouldn't want me to kill more of them."

Steve gritted his teeth, "Damn you…"

Bridget smiled, "I knew you would be here looking for evidence that my corrupt FBI compatriots might've missed. Though I'm here to make sure they didn't miss anything, I'm also here to set you up." She smirked, "so, whatever you find here, no one will ever believe you because you killed two federal agents… and that's enough for the FBI to go to war with you."

Bucky spoke up angrily, "No one will believe this."

Bridget smiled, "The bigger the lie, the more people will believe it," she said quoting the deceased Nazi mastermind Joseph Goebbels.

Steve clenched his fist, "We're going to stop you."

"I think your missing who my target is," Bridget said with a smirk. She turned around and walked out the door, "You better start running, Captain. Good luck," she said with a mischievous tone, dropping her pistol on the floor as she left.

Steve and Bucky shared a nervous glance with one another before bolting out of the room without a second glance. When they got out of the room, Steve noticed Bridget went to the right and toward an incoming team of federal agents. "Help, help! Captain Rogers and the Winter Soldier are here! They killed two agents! They got guns!" Bridget called out in a fake frantic call to the agents, pointing toward Steve and Bucky.

Bucky looked at Steve, "Steve, let's go!" He yelled as he ran toward the stairwell. Steve didn't miss a beat and quickly followed.

The radio Steve took from one of the FBI agents in the garage came to life with a crackle of someone transmitting, "Captain Rogers and the Winter Soldier spotted heading to the South stairwell!"

Bucky swung open the door to the stairs then vaulted over the railing to the floor below, Steve
followed close behind. "Hope Dugan is nearby!" Steve called out as he landed on his feet behind Bucky. The stairwell door swung open revealing a team of four armed FBI agents. Bucky and Steve blew past them, shoving two of the agents into the door frame and tripping the other two onto the floor.

The alarms continued to ring loudly throughout the FBI station as Steve and Bucky sprinted to the door to the Supply Garage. As Bucky opened the door, Steve spotted two FBI agents running towards them from the opposite end of the hall. Steve shoved Bucky into the garage as the FBI agents aimed and shot their pistols, bullets narrowly missing Steve's head and shoulder. The pair stumbled into the garage, regained their footing, and quickly made a dash to the closed garage door. The garage workers and FBI agents they locked in the supply cage watched them silently as Steve and Bucky made their escape. Neither Steve nor Bucky paid any attention to them because they had more pressing matters to attend to than them.

Steve completely ignored the garage door controls, figuring it would take too long to open the door, proceeded to open the door manually with his hands. He opened it wide enough for Bucky to squat through. Just as Steve bent down to go under, the FBI response team appeared from the doorway and immediately opened fire on him. A bullet grazed him under his armpit, "Ah," Steve gasped in pain as he squatted under the door and immediately closed it behind him. Outside the station, he briefly gripped the burning wound then look at his hand to see bright red blood. "Damn," Steve said irritated.

Bucky looked to his right in anticipation for the FBI to catch them outside, "Where the hell is Dugan."

Almost on cue, Dugan's sporty black Chrysler convertible car skidded to a halt in front of them. "Well, that was subtle! Let's go!" Dugan called out to them. Steve and Bucky didn't need to be told twice and quickly jumped into the car without using the doors. Dugan stepped on the gas and sped away from the FBI station just as a large contingent of FBI agents ran out to try and stop them. The agents didn't fire at them in fear of missing and injuring or killing innocent bystanders crowding the sidewalks and streets.

Steve looked over his shoulder, "That was close. Excellent timing, Tim."

Dugan smirked, "Betting your glad that I got this car."

"Let's not talk about that," Steve said with a small smile then winced with pain as he pressed his hand on his bullet graze wound.

Dugan turned around to check on why Steve grunted, "You okay?"

"Just a graze. Barely clipped me," Steve said waving his bloodied hand before returning it to his wound.

"You get the evidence?" Dugan said as he made a sharp turn down another.

Bucky spoke up, "Kind of, we got microfilm of photographs of all the evidence Berman gathered on Briggs, and an address to pick up the hardcopies if needed to convict."


"Hydra influenced FBI agents tore out the pages long before we got there," Bucky said.

Steve nodded, "But it turns out Berman knew he was caught digging so he made a few contingencies before he was murdered. He hid the microfilm and a note to the hiding place of the in
the spine of his investigation book or journal."

Dugan smirked, "Clever man."

Bucky nodded, "But Bridget was there. She was the one who warned the FBI…"

"After killing two FBI agents and framing us," Steve said angrily.

Dugan shook his head, "What's that supposed to accomplish exactly?"

"Doesn't matter what we find, us being framed for killing two federal agents will overshadow the evidence we have. The FBI will now resort in lethal force to try and apprehend us," Steve said plainly.

"Emphasis on lethal," Bucky responded. "They probably don't want to take me alive at this point."

"We won't let it get to that," Steve said reassuringly.

Dugan spoke up, "So what do we do now?"

"We need to contact Peggy and stop Briggs on our terms with or without federal support." Steve looked at Dugan, "We're completely outside the law on this."

"Just the three of us? What are the odds that Briggs has a private Army waiting for us at his place. He's bound to know we're coming after all this." Dugan shrugged, "Do we even know where he is?"

Bucky spoke up, "I know where he lives and he's always there. His secluded residence in Maryland is the main meeting place for the Red Room assassins and Leviathan and Hydra contacts. No one bats an eye because the FBI detail providing security for him are Hydra agents." He shook his head, "I doubt those FBI agents are even real FBI agents."

"Is there other places he could be?" Dugan asked as he drove the car around another sharp corner.

Bucky nodded, "He has a vacation home in the Hamptons, but he's only there on holidays during the summer months."

Steve nodded, "His residents it is." He sighed, "It's going to have to be the three of us, can't rope the commandos into this and can't get Peggy to divert SHIELD recourses to help us. The government will fry her for it."

"Why can't we ask our team?" Dugan asked curiously.

"I don't want to run the risk of a shootout with the FBI and police, even if many of them could be Hydra and Leviathan. Plus, it might take them too long to mobilize," Steve replied evenly.

Dugan nodded, "Makes sense. Where to? Back to the warehouse?"

Steve shook his head, "Not yet. Find a secluded pay phone. Time to make a call."

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**Time Square, New York City, SHIELD: AEGIS HEADQUARTERS**

**Director Rogers Office**

Peggy sat at her desk reading a report from an overseas agent, trying to distract her mind from worrying about her husband. No matter how much she wanted to help Steve, she didn't know where
to find him or how to help him without bringing the entire FBI to them. With each passing hour, she worried more and more about him and grew more frustrated at her inability to give him aid. Peggy sighed as she ran a hand through her hair while aimlessly reading the report in front of her, not comprehending the words she's reading. She closed the report in irritation and leaned back in her chair and took a deep breath to try and calm herself down. Peggy started to impatiently twirl in her chair side-to-side with a distinct look of frustration on her face.

As she twirled her office chair, a wave of nausea swept over her again causing her to groan uncomfortably. Peggy dreaded morning sickness and hated the constant trips to the bathroom to vomit. Morning sickness combined with the situation her husband is in and people gunning for her job made her incredibly irritable. It's not that she didn't want another child, she just hated the side effects of being pregnant. The morning sickness and the mood swings are a huge downer for her. These frequent trips to the bathroom from morning sickness were driving her absolutely insane. Just as Peggy was stood up to leave for the bathroom to vomit, there was a knock on her door. Peggy sighed, "What is it?"

Sousa opened the door, "Hey, Director."

Peggy fixed her blouse tucked in her dress pants, "Can it wait for a moment, Daniel?"

He shook his head, "I don't think so, it's important. Did you listen to the radio?"

"No, something else about my husband?" Peggy said irritated.

Sousa nodded as he picked up on Peggy's irritation and got straight to the point, "Got reports from the FBI that Captain Rogers and the Winter Soldier broke into the FBI station in downtown and killed two agents. The press is all over it."

"Goodness!" Peggy exclaimed in shock. "What were they doing there? Do you know?"

"Apparently, the two of them broke into the FBI evidence lockup. Their unaware of what they took yet." He shrugged, "There's no way the FBI are willing to take the two of them alive after today. The very least they'll keep Captain Rogers alive, not so much Barnes," Sousa said evenly.

"Bloody," Peggy sighed in frustration. She thought to herself for a moment as she ran a hand through her long brown hair, thinking about what Sousa just told her. She shook her head, "There's no way Steve killed an FBI agent over this. Not even Barnes."

"How can you be sure? They did hospitalize a bunch of them yesterday during the chase, and the FBI seems to think so."

Peggy smiled at Sousa, "Because I know my husband. He knows as much as we do of how delicate this situation is, so I guarantee you that they didn't kill those FBI agents." Sousa was about to speak up when Peggy stopped him by raising her hand, "And I can also assure you it wasn't Barnes. Barnes deserted Hydra and Leviathan and wanted to remain invisible, and he did for a few years, so it wouldn't make sense why he would randomly go and publicly kill five random people." She shrugged, "I don't buy simple crazy, hence, why it makes more and more sense that Barnes is innocent in the shooting." She sighed, "Now, I don't know him as well as Steve, but if Steve trusts him than I do too."

Sousa sighed, "Unfortunately, the FBI lacks the insight as you do. The numerous injuries during the chase yesterday and now this is propelling the FBI to go to war with them." He gave a light chuckle, "It's still amazing that no one was killed yesterday."
Peggy shook her head again, "Yesterday was a mess and many things could've been avoided. But I still guarantee you that Steve nor Barnes killed those FBI agents." She sighed, "They must've known something we don't if they went through all that trouble to break into FBI evidence lockup."

"Think someone set the up?" Sousa said plainly.

"This whole thing is a set up," Peggy said instantly. "We have to look through the deception. Think about it, Daniel. Whoever killed those agents essentially made sure that whatever Steve and Barnes are trying to prove is overshadowed by the murder of two federal agents. The FBI will use lethal force before they get a chance to prove what's going on."

"Did you figure out a way to contact them yet?"

Peggy smirked, "I have a feeling they'll contact us." Suddenly, another wave of nausea washed over Peggy this time more severe.

Sousa smirked, "You seem pretty calm about this whole ordeal, Peggy."

Peggy groaned in discomfort as she placed a hand over her stomach, "Excuse me, Daniel." With that, she rushed out of her office and went straight to the bathroom while leaving Sousa in her office confused.

On the outside, everyone could see Peggy looking composed and at time frustrated with the current situation but inside with each passing hour she was increasingly frightened and worried about what will happen to her husband. Yes, her career might be on the line too, but the life of her husband trumps her passion as a Deputy Director of SHIELD. Steve, husband, and father, is in danger of losing his life from a fight with the FBI and or Hydra, as well as in risk of spending much of his life in federal prison. If Steve got imprisoned, Peggy wouldn't know what to do, but at least he would be alive. But if Steve were killed, she wouldn't be able to handle losing him a second time. Though Peggy seemed composed, she truthfully was increasingly getting worried the longer the situation drags on.

As Sousa waited for Peggy to return, her office phone suddenly started to ring. With Rose, Peggy's secretary, on her day off, the phone would continuously ring, so Sousa decided to answer it for Peggy and take a message for her. He walked up to her desk and picked up the phone, "Good afternoon, sir or ma'am, Chief Sousa SHIELD Office of Special Projects, Director Rogers isn't here at the moment, may I take a message?"

Sousa got a shock of surprise when he heard Steve's voice, "Daniel," he said calmly.

"Captain?" He exclaimed in surprise. Sousa turned around to face the door just as Peggy walked in and signaled her to take the phone.

Peggy rushed to her desk and Sousa handed the phone to her, "Steve, darling?"

"Hey, beautiful."

Peggy walked around her desk and sat down on her chair, "Steve, I heard what happened. Are you alright? Where are you?" She asked calmly, doing her best to stay composed.

"We're okay. I don't have much time and I'm sure the FBI is tapping your phone. We're going to need your help," Steve responded calmly.

Peggy nodded, "Just tell me where you are," she said as a wave of déjà vu washed over her the moment those words left her mouth. Those words were the very same words she said before Steve
disappeared in the war and that moment she swore to do everything in her power to avoid losing him twice.

"We're on the move right now, but meet us at LaGuardia airport, hangar J. We got the evidence on Briggs' association with Hydra and we need to get it to you ASAP," Steve said quickly. He figured that the FBI is listening in on the call and revealed what they found in the hopes of getting the chance to prove themselves to the FBI. It was slim, especially since Hydra and Leviathan infiltrated the FBI, but it was worth a shot.

Peggy was confused, "Wait, darling. You got this evidence in the FBI station?"

"Yeah, it's hard to explain. But the short version is that one of the victims, Neil Berman, the one Hoover said he didn't know anything about is actually an FBI agent. He was secretly investigating Briggs on corruption and treason, and we found his evidence," Steve replied quickly.

"Hoover and Witwer knew about this?" Peggy said with irritation and the realization.

"I don't know if they knew about his investigation, but Bucky says the only people who knew about Berman's inquiries are himself, Berman and the whoever killed him. It's complicated."

Peggy nodded, "But not telling us Neil Berman was an FBI agent probably means they were trying to deal with it internally, and not want us to get involved with their agency. Unfortunately, they needed us to hold Barnes and give them information on him when they thought he killed those people yesterday." She sighed, "The fact they didn't tell us the truth about Berman's identity looks bad, and especially since Berman was investigating treason and corruption then ended up dead."

"The FBI will be hot on our tail and probably on yours too so we need to get moving. I'll see you soon," Steve said quickly.

"We'll be there ASAP, darling," Peggy responded.

Just as Peggy was about to hang up, she heard Steve quickly speak, "Wait. I love you."

Peggy smiled, "I love you too," she said then hung up the phone. She looked at Sousa, "Get Jack, Li, and Ramirez and tell them to grab their gear, we need to move."

Sousa nodded, "On it, boss," he said as he turned and started to limp away.

Peggy opened one of her desk drawers and removed her pistol and SHIELD badge, "One more thing," she called out to Sousa. Sousa paused and looked over his shoulder before leaving. "Get Steve's gear out of lockup and get some weapons for the three of them. I feel like they might need them."

Sousa nodded, "Got it."

Once Sousa left, Peggy picked up the phone and clicked a button to connect her line directly to SHIELD dispatch, "Dispatch, this is Rogers."

The woman manning the switchboard room replied, "How can I help you, Director?"

"Get me the SPU."

"One moment, Director."

After a moment, she heard the line connect and heard Jim over the phone, "Morita," he said briskly.
"Jim, it's Peggy, I know it's a Sunday, but I need you to recall as much of your team now and meet me at LaGuardia Airport, Hangar J. Steve's in trouble," Peggy said quickly.

"We'll be there ASAP," Jim said. Their Captain in trouble is all the reason he needs to get the team rolling but knew that it would take a while for him to recall as many of the team back on a Sunday.

LaGuardia Airport, New York City, New York

Hangar J

The airport was bustling in the mid-afternoon with flights coming and going, and hundreds of passengers gathering in the terminals, waiting for their flights. The mid-afternoon at the airport was probably the worst time for people to arrive since it was so busy. But the busyness of the airport made excellent cover for Steve, Bucky, and Dugan to walk to the hangar. As the trio walked out of their "borrowed" car, the trio felt the spring heat reflect off the pavement which made being outside uncomfortable. It was hard to breathe. The air was dense and smelled of aircraft fuel from the planes taxiing nearby the terminals and hangars. The wide-open layout of the airport offered limited protection from the sun and heat until they reached the hangar.

At one of the doors to the hangar, Bucky forced open the door and walked in followed by Steve and Dugan. Though they found themselves out of the sun and indoors, the heat was still annoying, the presence of aircraft fuel in the air didn't help much. Though uncomfortable, the trio remained determined, vigilant, and focused on the task at hand. The hangar was mainly empty with a wide variety of random crates, carts, and barrels spread out within the building. The immense sliding door of the hangar was wide open, and a silver and red American Airlines Convair-Liner dual engine CV-240 was parked outside with an aircraft passenger stairway up against one of its rear exits.

Steve checked his surroundings as he lead the way through the wide-open hangar toward the plane, "Looks like we found our ride."

"Any sign of Peggy or the FBI?" Dugan asked.

"Not yet. Hopefully, she gets here before they do," Bucky quietly responded.

Suddenly, over two dozen armed FBI agents and local police rounded the corners of the open hangar bay door. The agents rushed into the hangar and quickly stood in a firing line with their pistols and Thompson submachine guns pointed at the trio. The agents and law enforcement kept their distance from Steve and Bucky, fully knowing the danger the two super soldiers pose to them in a fight. As the agents and police got into position, two black squad cars and an FBI prison truck parked to the side of the plane outside of the hanger behind the group of law enforcement.

FBI Agent Witwer, who stood in the middle of the line, spoke up while keeping his .45 caliber pistol trained at Bucky's chest, "Get your hands up and get down on your knees! Do it now!"

Steve looked at Bucky then back at Agent Witwer, "Here me out, Witwer. The psychiatrists' assistant, Bridget Regan, she's behind all of this. She's a foreign agent and part of Hydra."

"Captain, from your previous service to this nation, we're willing to let you go if you give up Barnes. Help us, help you, Captain. If you resist, Hoover won't be very kind to you," Witwer said sternly.

Steve shook his head, "You're after the wrong guy."

"Your judgement is askew," Witwer shot back. "Your old war buddy killed innocent people yesterday."
"And there are an army of assassins in this country who can do more damage than him." Steve pressed, "The Attorney General of the United States who you show blind loyalty to, the honorable Michael Briggs, works for Hydra and is a traitor. He has orchestrated murders, handles the Soviet Red Room Assassins, and likely sold government secrets, I can't let him get away with any of it." He spoke sternly, "And Bridget Regan, she works for him, and the deaths of those people yesterday and your fellow agents today is because of them."

Witwer looked confused, "That's impossible! There's no way Briggs is Hydra nor is he working for the Soviets!"

"Want the evidence? I got it," Steve calmly responded.

Witwer spoke calmly, "We'll take you all in, and we'll talk about it. How's that?"

Steve shook his head, "No, Bridget and Briggs set this up. I can't let them get away with it, and they know we're coming." He sighed, "If we stop and we go with you, Bridget will disappear and Briggs will never face punishment. We'll never catch them."

Witwer shook his head angrily, "God damn it, Captain! I'm done. You're going to turn over Barnes right now and you're going with us!" He lowered his weapon and pointed to the agents to his side, "Because of its either this or we take you down the hard way without the second thought of being polite!"

There was an intense moment of silence between Steve, Bucky, and Dugan, and the armed federal agents and local police. Steve, Bucky, and Dugan quickly glanced around their surroundings for cover in case the shooting starts, in the hopes that they react quick enough to avoid getting shot. They were outnumbered eight to one, and the odds of surviving the first few seconds in a shootout with the law enforcement is extremely slim. But neither Steve, Bucky, nor Dugan was willing to stop now, there was too much at stake, and it's something much more significant than the three of them put together.

Witwer sighed, "I run out of patience, Captain. We're taking you in right now." Bucky and Steve tensed and shared a brief glance with each other as the two of them prepared to resist for as long as possible.

Suddenly the back doors of the FBI prison truck flung open, and a group of eight men with Thompson submachine guns and Browning Automatic Rifles (BAR) poured out of the truck and immediately opened fire at the FBI and police, and the trio. Simultaneously, four more men stepped out of the two FBI squad cars and also started shooting. Steve, Bucky, and Dugan separated and dove to cover behind anything they could find, mainly crates and fuel drums. The sudden surprise of shooting caught the FBI and police completely by surprise, many of them falling down wounded or dead from gunshot wounds to the back. Witwer and his partner, Agent Fusco, quickly ducked and dove for cover behind a tall metal tool box.

Witwer called out over the gun fire, "Who the hell are these guys!"

Fusco ducked his head as bullets snapped by them, "I got no idea!"

Three more police officers fell to the ground, shot in the side and back as they ran for cover. Bodies of wounded and dead FBI and police littered the entrance to the hangar as the unknown heavily armed attackers continued to shoot at anyone who moved. A handful of FBI and police managed to find cover after the initial surprise attack and did their best to return fire. Unfortunately, the law enforcement, now outnumbered, are unable to overcome the fire superiority of their attackers and remained heavily suppressed. Those who tried to pick off the attackers were immediately shot and
killed. The mysterious gunmen now took up the same firing line the FBI and the police did moments earlier and are hell-bent on killing everyone in the hangar.

A police officer slightly exposed himself from his cover to open fire on the advancing shooter but was immediately shot in the chest and fell over. As he fell, he dropped his pistol on the ground, sliding toward the crate where Dugan was taking cover. Dugan saw the pistol lying a few inches from the side of his crate, and made a hasty decision and reached out, exposing his arm, and grabbed the pistol. Dugan fully returned to his cover and smiled, "Thank God," he said to himself.

Witwer yelled over the gun fire, "Everyone stay down!" He looked at Fusco, "We can't let the Captain and the Winter Soldier escape!"

Fusco looked confused, "You want to go after them now? We're pinned down in this fire fight!" he yelled in response.

"It's our job! These guys might be with the Winter Soldier!" Witwer replied frantically.

Fusco looked around for a moment and quickly spotted a glimpse of Bucky's silver arm as Bucky too cover behind a crate riddled by bullet holes. "These ass holes are shooting at them too! I doubt these jerkoffs are with the Winter Soldier," Fusco replied loudly.

"Then who are these guys!" Witwer said as he was about to shoot blindly from cover.

"I have no I…" Fusco began but was cutoff when a bullet snapped through their metal box and into his shoulder. He fell to his side and gripped his bleeding shoulder as blood pooled onto the floor.

"Rus!" Witwer called frantically as he grabbed his partner's coat and dragged him closer to keep him behind the crate.

Fusco groaned, "Shit… this is going to ruin my day," he said as he put pressure on his bleeding shoulder while also leaning into his partner.

Dugan ducked as a round snapped passed his head, "This is definitely Hydra, no doubt about it!"

Bucky looked over at him, "You think?" He yelled sarcastically over the gun fire.

"Really? You're going to be sarcastic now?" Dugan yelled as a spray of .45 ACP peppered his crate nearly turning it into splinters.

Steve, who hid behind a fuel drum, looked over at Bucky who hid behind a crate, "Buck, we need to move! This cover won't last forever!" The gunmen continued to fire at a cyclic rate while slowly moving their firing line forward and suppressing the trio and the remaining FBI agents and police officers.

Buck nodded, "Right behind you!"

Dugan yelled over the deafening gunfire, "We're going to be total bullet sponges, Captain!"

Suddenly, two rounds in rapid succession pierced Dugan's crate and hit him in the shoulder and the left side of his chest. He fell back onto the ground instantly, and blood pooled onto the floor. Steve looked shocked but remained overall calm in the heat of the fight. From first glance, it didn't look like Dugan was moving and Steve assumed the worst, but Steve knew that he had to eliminate the Hydra gunmen first before tending to Dugan and other wounded. Steve and Bucky need to make a move or else everyone here is as good as dead. Though Steve and Bucky are super soldiers, they aren't in any case, bulletproof, but they are much better suited to overcome the gunmen in this one-sided gunfight.
Peggy quickly turned the unmarked SHIELD car into the airport and drove straight down the road to Hangar J as instructed by her husband earlier. Ramirez, who sat in the back with Li, spotted large sums of people running in all directions, clearly running away from the airport. "Something’s going on," he pointed out plainly.

Thompson, who sat in the front passenger seat and had a notable cut on his forehead from yesterday, lowered the hand radio he carried and looked over to Peggy, "There's reports of a shooting. Automatic weapons fire. Officers and federal agents are down. I think the Captain might be in trouble."

"He bloody hell is," Peggy said as she floored the gas pedal and accelerated and dangerous speeds to the hangar. Everyone held onto something as she accelerated down the road to the hangar.

"Hydra must've accompanied the FBI and police teams and plan to eliminate all loose ends," Li said as he held onto the seat in front of him as Peggy dangerously swerved around fleeing people.

Peggy drove onto the sidewalk them slammed on the brakes just as they got to the front of the hangar, "Let's go! I'll grab Steve's shield!" she said as she swung her door open and quickly got out.

Thompson smiled and picked up his submachine that rested between his legs, "Time for us to save the FBI."

Steve slightly leaned to the side of his fuel drum, exposing as little of himself as possible, shot two rounds from his pistol at one of the gunmen and hit him in the leg before returning to cover as a spray of .45ACP snapped passed him and rattled his piece of cover. Bucky did the same, and the two of them managed to shoot three of them together, but the Hydra gunmen maintained their fire superiority over them. Though a few gunmen were killed, it didn't stop more FBI agents and police officers from dying as the gunmen pressed more in-depth into the hangar.

Witwer reloaded his pistol and looked at Fusco who was still bleeding from his shoulder, "How much ammunition did these guys bring?"

Fusco gripped his pistol with his free but bloodied hand, "These guys are overly prepared." He leaned to the side a little and saw that the gunmen were inching closer, "They're getting closer."

Witwer frowned, "how many guys do we have left?" he asked over the deafening gunfire.

"Maybe eight maybe, I don't know," Fusco replied.

Suddenly, one of the back doors to the hangar swung open, and the two FBI agents instantly saw Director Rogers enter while crouching forward with Captain America's shield covering her upper body and the three SHIELD agents following close behind her, using her and the shield as mobile cover.

"I don't believe it. It's Director Rogers," Witwer said surprised.

The gunmen instantly focused their attention on the bright colored shield and immediately focused their fire on Peggy. A large volume of automatic weapons fire snapped and pinged and snapped off of Peggy's shield as she slowly lead her small group of agents deeper into the hangar building. While Peggy slowly made her way blindly forward with the SHIELD protecting her and her agents, Thompson and Ramirez peeked over her shoulders and laid down suppression with their submachine guns, killing a few of the opposing Hydra gunmen. The momentary distraction gave a small window of opportunity for the surviving FBI agents and police to return fire and kill a handful of the gunmen,
taking the initiative from Hydra. The gunmen, suddenly outgunned, started to slowly make a tactical withdrawal while doing their best to suppress the surviving agents and police. This shift in initiative allowed Bucky to bolt from his cover and slide behind the crate where Dugan's body was lying.

Bucky dragged Dugan closer to him, "Dugan!"

Dugan coughed and breathed heavily in pain, "What took you guys so long?"

"I'm not bullet proof, smart ass," Bucky replied in kind. "You alright?"

Dugan coughed up blood but remained calm, "Well, I ain't dead."

As soon as Peggy realized the enemy fire shifted from hitting the shield to returning fire on the FBI and police, she stood up straight and threw the shield as hard as she could, like Steve, to the closest gunmen. The shield nailed a fleeing gunmen in the back of the head, sending him face first into the ground. The shield ricocheted to the wall then bounced back to Peggy's grasp like Steve always done. Simultaneously, Ramirez, Thompson, and Li fanned out and they collectively opened fire with their automatic weapons, killing more of the remaining gunmen. Hydra's smooth tactical withdrawal turned into a frantic retreat as the gunmen swiftly tried to flee.

Steve didn't take his eyes off of Peggy the moment he saw her enter. Peggy rushed up to him with the shield on her arm, "Steve! You okay?" she asked crouching down next to him.

Steve smiled, "You're late."

Peggy smirked, "Nobody's perfect." She handed the shield to him, "Here."

Steve smiled and took the shield, "Thanks." Steve stood up and saw the gunmen were no longer firing at them and were now running straight back to their vehicles. The SHIELD agents and the remaining FBI agents and police continued to shoot at the routing Hydra thugs as they ran away to their cars and trucks in a disorganized manner.

Steve was about to give chase when he saw a pair of rockets sail from the side of the open hangar bay doors and destroy the prison truck and an FBI squad car. The remaining Hydra gunmen, desperate to flee, were immediately gunned down by automatic weapons from the unknown shooters before they could all get into the last car. Steve looked at Peggy with surprise, "Who was that?"

Peggy smiled, "Your commandos. Figured we might need them."

"Yeah, I didn't think we did at first but I'm glad you brought them."

Steve heard Bucky call his name, "Steve! I got Dugan!"

Steve and Peggy quickly made their way to Bucky's position and saw Dugan lying on his back in a pool of blood with Agent Li applying pressure on his wounds, and Thompson and Bucky standing over them. Steve squatted took a knee next to Dugan, "How are you feeling, Tim?"

Before Dugan responded, Li spoke up, "Ramirez went back to the car to get the first aid kit. Clean shots through and through. He's got a sucking chest wound."

Dugan, coughed up more blood, "I'm alright," he said in agony. He coughed again and spoke in a shortness of breath, "We got... to go get him..."

Steve nodded, "Buck and I will take care of it. I promise," he said just as Ramirez arrived with the first aid kid. Steve looked up at Ramirez, "Patch him up and get him to the ER ASAP."
Ramirez opened the first aid kid and took out an occlusive dressing, "We got it from here, Captain. He's in good hands."

Steve stood up, "I know." Peggy briefly gripped his shoulder reassuringly. Steve looked over and saw Agent Witwer helping his partner with his wound. He turned to Peggy, "Give me a moment?" Peggy nodded silently. Steve turned and walked away and headed straight to Agent Witwer. Bucky looked over his shoulder and saw where Steve was headed and stood up and quickly followed.

Witwer pressed a handkerchief into Fusco's shoulder wound in the hopes of stopping the bleeding, "It's only a shoulder wound. You'll be okay."

Fusco chuckled, "Doesn't mean I'll like this." He saw Steve and Bucky approaching them, "Captain Rogers and the Winter Soldier are coming."

Witwer looked up and saw them, "I'll handle it." He stood up and holstered his pistol to signal to the Captain he meant no harm or hostilities. Fusco, however, kept his gun out and gripped it defensively as he watched Witwer walk toward the Captain. Witwer met Steve half way, "Captain," he said evenly.

Steve spoke up suspiciously, "I'll only ask this once. Are you Hydra?"

"What? No! Of course not!"

"Hydra knew exactly where we were, and the only way they could know is through the FBI," Steve said sternly, gripping his shield. "I know the FBI has tapped SHIELD and specifically Peggy, and you're the head of this 'case' so I'm assuming you get everything she says in her office and her phone, don't you?"

Witwer spoke up, "Captain," he said trying to counter him.

Steve pressed, "You've been very critical of her and me and seems like you're taking a personal crusade to downplay Peggy's credibility as a Director just like your boss Hoover. Now, I might be taking this personally, but I had a bad feeling about you from the start. You're in a position where you have access to wiretaps, bugs, and the case evidence, and it turns out Hydra has all the same access." He nodded, "Yes, Buck and I broke into the evidence lockup in the FBI station, but we didn't kill those two agents, Bridget killed them." At this point, Peggy, joined by Thompson, walked up to the group to hear the intense conversation. Steve continued, "We went to Berman's possessions and somebody tampered with his personal items. Someone knew what to look for in Berman's possessions and removed it. Now, who else could have access to that?" Steve smirked, "True, it could be anyone working with you, but Bridget and Hydra have been shadowing us closely since the beginning, and so have you." He shook his head, "For your sake, you better prove that you aren't Hydra."

Witwer raised his hands, "Captain, I'm not Hydra. I'm trying to do my job, do the right thing, and see that it's done."

Peggy crossed her arms, "And the sexist remarks are part of that?" Steve nodded at Peggy's comment while staring daggers at Witwer.

Witwer stood his ground defensively, "Look, Captain, I promise you I'm not Hydra. I wasn't even the investigating agent on the scene after the shooting yesterday morning. I didn't even look at the evidence because my job was to solely find you and the Winter Soldier." He paused at a sudden revelation, "Fusco..." There was a click behind him of a pistol going off safe. Witwer turned around and saw his "friend" pointing a gun at him with his good arm.
Steve took a step forward and Fusco immediately pointed his pistol at his head, "Ah, don't try it, Captain. Even at this range, I can still shoot you before you have a chance to use your shield." He looked at Peggy, "You too, gorgeous, don't move an inch or else I put a six-inch hole in your husband's noggin." Peggy looked at him with a cold ice queen stare.

Peggy looked over at Thompson who had his finger on the trigger of his submachine gun, "Don't try it, Jack," she said quietly.

The remaining FBI agents and police officers all looked at each other with confusion at the sudden turn of events and didn't know who they needed to back. Many of them didn't hear the full conversation, so they stood perplexed at what caused Agent Fusco to point a gun at Witwer suddenly. Ramirez and Li, still patching Dugan, remained oblivious to the current situation taking place a few yards from them.

Witwer raised his hand, "What made you join Hydra?"

"They pay better," Fusco smiled.

Witwer looked at him angrily, "What about that oath we took? Remember that? Protect, serve, and justice."

Fusco laughed, "Don't get holy on me, Witwer. We did some bad stuff in the name of 'justice.' Hydra's ideals just make more sense."

"You're crazy," Witwer said.

"You know, I could've stayed silent, and I could've denied being a Hydra agent within the FBI, but I knew Captain Rogers learned the truth of what happened." Fusco chuckled at Steve, "You're one tenacious son of a bitch, you know that? Unfortunately, I know it's probably too late to tie off all loose ends, and I probably won't be walking out of here, but at least I get the honor of executing the famous Captain America. I can at least give Hydra that." He smiled and put his finger on the trigger, "It's nothing personal, Captain." Steve stared defiantly at Fusco then all of sudden became apparently relaxed. Peggy, too, looked less tense than a few seconds ago.

Just as Fusco was about to turn around, a single gunshot was heard from behind him, his face turning lifeless as he let go of the pistol allowing it to fall to the ground. He then slowly fell face first onto the ground as blood pooled from the center of his back. Steve smiled as he saw Gabe standing about twenty-five yards away with a pistol in his hands, an amazing shot from that distance with a .45 pistol. The SHIELD SPU team stood to Gabe's sides, Jim and Falsworth carrying M1 Bazooka's on their backs, and all of them with a goofy grin across their faces.

Peggy smiled at Steve, "Perfect timing."

Steve chuckled and shook his head, "I am so glad you got them here." Bucky chuckled lightly. Peggy's small decision to bring the commandos might've saved Steve's life and probably many of the remaining police and FBI agents.

The SPU team casually walked up to the group and stopped in front of Steve and Peggy. Jim put his bazooka down on the ground and leaned it up against his leg, "Been busy, Captain?"

Steve chuckled, "Could say that."

Falsworth looked at Bucky with a surprised look across his face, "I'll be damned…"

Though a handful of the commandos briefly encountered the Winter Soldier in the spring of '47, all
of them knew it was Bucky. But the commandos also didn't believe they'd get to have their old friend back again and that they had to try and kill him if the situation presented itself. For many of them, Bucky was as good as dead as he was brainwashed to be a Hydra/Soviet assassin. Steve has been the only one to communicate with Bucky since the war, though only once in five years, and also had the most fights with him as the Winter Soldier, Peggy being the second. The original commandos were, nonetheless, shocked to see Bucky again and not as the Winter Soldier.

Bucky nodded to his former comrades, "Fellas," he said nervously.

Jim chuckled, "last time I saw you… you tried killing me." Bucky shrugged and gave an apologetic look. Jim waved his hand, "So… are you uh, fixed? Clean? Not going to kill us?"

Bucky made a small smile, "I got a long way to go to fix what happened to me and what I've done. But, I'm not the Winter Soldier anymore." He shrugged, "It's not much, but it's all I have. My sins will always follow me and I'll strive for forgiveness but it won't replace those I've taken."

Gabe smiled, "And that's enough for me." He stepped forward and hugged his old friend, "Welcome, brother." Bucky smiled as he felt welcome again.

"If the Captain welcome you then we welcome you back too!" Jim replied.

Jacques cheered, "You're coming over for a cook out!"

Bucky smiled in surprise, "You speak good English, now."

Jim patted Bucky's back, "He learned over the course of five years, in the good 'ol U.S. of A." The other commandos such as Sam Sawyer, Pinkerton, Juniper, John Terselic, and Wheatley just watched with curiosity and surprise at the original Howling Commandos quickly welcoming a former foe. Trust is earned, not given, so they'll be wary around him for the immediate future. Steve and Peggy stood by each other and smiled at the welcoming sight of the original Howling Commandos fully reunited again.

Witwer turned to Steve and broke the moment, "What's next?"

Steve turned serious again and reached into his pocket and removed the microfilm and note from Berman's journal and handed it to him, "Check this out. I got this from Agent Berman's journal, everything you need, everything that ties Briggs to Hydra is here. This is why Bridget framed Barnes. The note is the location of the physical hard copies of the evidence on Briggs' association with Hydra." He looked at Buck and his SPU team, interrupting the reunion, "Any of you boys want to join us in cutting another head off Hydra?" Steve asked with a confident smirk.

Jim nodded, "Hell yes."

"Wouldn't miss it, Captain," Gabe replied with a smile. The SPU team volunteered without hesitation and with their usual enthusiasm. With more firepower and numbers, Steve and Bucky are prepared for anything when they finally confront Briggs. The group then turned and started for the plane.

Witwer turned around, "Captain, wait." Steve stopped and faced the FBI agent. "How do you know you can trust me with this?"

Steve smiled and looked at Peggy then at Witwer, "I don't. That's what trust is."

Witwer was about to say something else but decided against it because everything he knew changed. His standing orders to arrest Steve and Barnes altered the moment Hydra attacked them, and Fusco turned out to be a traitor. He had no other choice but to let Steve and Barnes walk and finish the job.
they initially set out to accomplish. Witwer tucked the note and microfilm safely in his pocket and started to think of what to do next with the information he was given.

Peggy called out to her husband as she ran to meet up, "Darling, wait a moment!"

Steve smiled, "Thought I was going to leave without saying anything?" He said wrapping his free arm around her.

"Of course not," Peggy said with a small smile as she leaned into him. "Going to get Briggs and Bridget?"

"That's the plan. We have to go now because Briggs has to know we're coming so he might be getting ready to disappear. With Hydra operatives in the states, we might never find him."

"I understand. We'll get the tower to clear you for takeoff, and we'll notify National Airport in DC of your flight. We'll make sure to keep your names out of it," Peggy responded calmly. She smiled, "I'll have Witwer show us the evidence you gave him, and we'll also prove to him Bucky's innocence. Get the FBI and SHIELD on the same page. After that, we'll grab a team of SHIELD agents and loyal FBI agents and meet you in Maryland at Briggs' residence."

Steve smiled, "That's the extraordinary woman I married. Couldn't have asked for anyone better."

Peggy tugged on Steve's wrinkled shirt, "Before you go. If you're going to fight, then you need a uniform."

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After quickly changing into his combat "stars and stripes" uniform that Peggy brought along in her car from SHIELD, Steve returned to the hangar with his helmet on, shield hung high on his back, and Peggy by his side. As the two walked back into the hangar, the paramedics and police response units arrived to help the wounded and secure the airport from further threats. As Steve walked calmly and confidently toward Bucky and the commandos, the FBI and police remnants watched the couple curiously. Bucky waited by the tail of the plane, stood with a recently acquired Browning automatic rifle on his shoulder and a cartridge belt around his hip.

Steve stopped just short of Bucky then turned to his wife, "Time to go."

Peggy nodded. "I'm assuming Barnes can pilot?" she asked calmly.

Steve nodded, "His Soviet training is paying off in our favor," he said jokingly.

Peggy gave a small smile, "Okay, darling." There was a short pause between the two of them as they held each other on the tarmac of the airport. Peggy then broke the silence and spoke in a hushed voice, "once before, I kissed you before boarding a plane, and you almost didn't come back."

Steve took Peggy's hands, "I'm coming back." he said reassuringly.

Peggy nodded, "You better," she said with a small smile. "Go get him," she said as she leaned forward on her toes and kissed him.

After a few seconds, Steve broke the kiss and took a step back, "I love you." He then turned around patted Bucky on the shoulder, and the two of them went to quickly inspect the plane before takeoff as the heavily armed commandos climbed up the aircraft passenger stairway to board the plane. Peggy watched her husband leave as she rubbed her growing baby bump under her blouse.
After a brief inspection, Steve and Bucky walked up the stairway to board the plane and get ready to depart for DC then onto Maryland to confront and apprehend Briggs. As Steve boarded the plane with Bucky, he turned to look at Peggy and gave her a small smile and wave. Peggy responded equally and gave him a little loving wave before he disappeared into the aircraft with Bucky. Peggy turned around and looked at Agent Witwer, "Come with us."

Witwer nodded, "Right behind you, Director," he replied calmly. He was still feeling surprised from the ambush with Hydra and the sudden revelation of Fusco, his fellow agent, working for them. Witwer also didn't know how to react to the evidence Captain Rogers handed him, and he didn't fully grasp the weight that the evidence presented. He couldn't believe someone with Briggs' position in the judicial branch of the federal government has been an enemy agent for over four years. Witwer felt betrayed when Captain Rogers told him of Briggs' true loyalties which means he's been played the past few days. Witwer had to take everything with a grain of salt until he saw the evidence himself.

Suddenly, the Convair-Liner CV-240's engines roared to life as the twin props quickly revved up to speed. A large gust of wind from the dual engines of the plane blew over everyone standing by the hangar. The temperature began to rise from the aircraft exhaust, and the sound of the roaring engines was almost deafening. The CV-240 slowly began to roll forward toward the airport taxiway.

Peggy looked over at Thompson, "Jack!" She yelled over the roar of the airplane. Thomson looked over at Peggy which showed that he heard her. "Get to the air traffic control and tell them that plane is ours!" she yelled while pointing to Steve's and Bucky's plane slowly making its way down the tarmac to the taxiway.

Thompson nodded, "On it!" he yelled in response as he ran off.

"Now, Agent, let's head back to SHIELD and see what my husband brought us," Peggy said as she walked back into the hangar.

Back in the hangar, Ramirez ran up to Peggy with bloodied hands, "Director, Dugan is on his way to the hospital. He had a wound in the shoulder and a chest wound both through and through. Other than that, I think he's going to be fine."

Peggy nodded, "Thank you, Ramirez." She looked over at Witwer, "We need to get this going so we can mobilize to apprehend Briggs and any other Hydra personnel."

"Right," Witwer responded.

Maryland

At a luxurious mansion in the thick forests of Maryland, Attorney General of the United States Michael Briggs paced in his vast and spacious living room. His estate designed in neoclassical architecture based off the old Italian villas is complete with tall archways, columns, marble and tile floors, but also decorated in classical furniture and décor. The living room sofas, chairs, lamps, and tables all resembled the classical style with their curvy designs and elegant accents. One could feel relaxed and at ease in this beautiful atmosphere in the living room, but Briggs felt anything but comfortable. As he walked back and forth nervously, Bridget Regan, now dressed in a vibrant red women's business suit with dress pants, sat calmly on the couch with her leg crossed over the other.

Bridget sighed, "Relax, your honor," she said sarcastically using his title.

Briggs stopped and raised his voice, "You said you'd handle this! You said it would be clean, and
you could terminate the Winter Soldier at the same time!" he expressed frantically. "You assured me you could get that nosy FBI agent without a problem. You promised me that!" he yelled pointing his finger at her.

Bridget smirked as she played with nails calmly, "Will you relax. Everything is going to be okay," she said not looking up at Briggs.

"How? How is any of this okay?" He angrily asked. "The Winter Soldier and now Captain America are alive and gunning for me! For me! I lost control over SHIELD and now the FBI! Everyone is coming for me, I can't stop them!" Bridget didn't respond right away as she continued to fiddle with her nails.

Bridget chuckled, "As I said. It's going okay. It'll work out in the end" She finally looked up at Briggs, "The FBI were looking at the shooter not the target. Besides, aren't you confident that your FBI assets took care of the evidence?" She asked fully knowing the truth to the question.

"Yeah, they got everything from him that they could find," Briggs said calmly. "But why couldn't you make that agent disappear like all the other people you killed?"

Bridget stood up and smiled, "I knew you were equally incompetent as you are stupid," she said with a chuckle. She slowly walked around the couch, running her hand over the smooth curves, "See I knew from the beginning that you would try and micromanage my plan."

"What?" Briggs asked confused as he eyed Bridget slowly making her way to him.

Bridget flicked a lamp shade as she got closer to Briggs, "And our advisors knew you were embezzling money and abusing your power as a handler for Leviathan," she said beginning to talk about her true intentions.

Briggs took a step back nervously as she got uncomfortably close to him. "Wh-What are you doing?" he asked in a frightened tone.

Bridget smiled as she reached into her pockets and took out a pair of leather gloves, "This is probably the only part that's left in the original plan." She started to put the gloves on with a grin that deeply frightened Briggs.

"You…You're going to kill me?"

"Well, yes of course. If you weren't so careless with our money and your position in your government, you wouldn't be in this problem in the first place." After Bridget put her gloves on she reached back into her pocket and took out a knife, "It's simple, your honor. We lost confidence in your abilities and it looks like the FBI was losing confidence in you too."

Briggs raised his hands in a futile attempt to defuse the situation, "Bridget, please we can talk this out. The hole has been plugged, his investigation never gained traction."

Bridget glided the knife over her hand slowly, "My dear, there's nothing that you can say to convince me otherwise. But I can assure you, the hole isn't plugged. Where do you think the FBI agent got the information of your corruption and ties to the Soviet Union? Why do you think his investigation was so quiet? Who else knows in detail of your employment with us?"


Bridget smiled, "Yes, the Winter Soldier has information on all of us, and especially you. I figure he unanimously tipped off that nosy agent and he started digging up records on you and started to
follow your sloppy paper trail. But that why you asked me to handle it." She paused, "But little did you know that we were watching you too."

Briggs shook his head, "Wait then why help me and my reputation if you're just going to kill me? I don't understand."

Bridget laughed, "The plan was to make you a martyr. An unfortunate victim of two deranged super soldiers on the loose following a ghost, which is me. The goal, my dear, was to have the country turn its back on the Captain and have the nation hunt the Winter Soldier down and force him to disappear forever. At the end of the day when the dust settles, everyone would just write off Captain Rogers, he'll drop his shield and leave, and the Winter Soldier has no place to call home while he runs from everyone, and that's when Hydra will take care of him from there."

"But," Briggs said.

"But, Captain Rogers and the Winter Soldier have found their proof to implicate you because apparently, your lackeys in the FBI weren't thorough. Even though you were so easily trusting in your incompetent FBI assets to clear your name." She chuckled, "So, I killed those two FBI agents and framed them for their murder, so the proof the Captain and the Winter Soldier had against you meant nothing because the FBI and the government would only see that the pair of them murdered two federal agents. The FBI would've hunted them down relentlessly, but you messed it up again. You ruined the plan by sending a strike team to write everyone off at the airport, and now you're in this problem where the FBI is sympathetic to Captain Rogers." Bridget pointed at him, "You ruined so many parts of my plan, but don't worry. You were always going to end up dead. Because of you, I'm going to have to be more direct, and I won't have to worry about you interfering this time."

Briggs stood in shock. Bridget smiled, "There's no running from this, now."

Briggs turned around frantically and made a break for the front door, but just as he was about to bolt out of the living room, two of his bodyguards stepped in front of him. He stopped in shock with a look of fear plastered across his face. Bridget smiled, "Remember, your bodyguards are with me."

She nodded to the two guards, "Boys, bring him to the couch. We're going to continue our little chat."

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**Tech Lab**

Back at the SHIELD Aegis headquarters, Peggy, Witwer, Thompson, Ramirez, and Li joined in the Tech Lab with Sousa and Stark to go over the evidence provided by Steve and Bucky at the airport. Sousa sat at one of the many microfilm readers in the lab with the group looking over his shoulder as he carefully loaded the microfilm onto the reader. As he fed the thin film on the roll and placed part of the strand between the two horizontal glass plates, he nodded, "Alright, we're almost set." He took the reader's handle and gently pushed the glass under the camera and turned on the reader. The first image to appear is Briggs sitting at a table in a restaurant of sorts with three other men in suits.

Witwer spoke up, "There's Briggs but I don't recognize the others."

"The man sitting to his left, we know is Leviathan agent Filip Pavel," Thompson responded. "This photograph proves he has some association with the Soviets and Hydra."

Peggy nodded, "but the photograph alone won't mean much since the original photographer is lying in the FBI morgue." She placed a hand on Sousa's shoulder, "keeping going." Sousa turned the small handle to spin the reel to the next picture in the film. It was another photograph with Briggs talking to
the same three men from the previous picture. "Next," Peggy said calmly. Sousa continued, passing another picture of the same people, then the next photo displayed Briggs sitting with four women in a different restaurant. Three of the women's faces were evident in the picture, but one sat at an angle where they could only see her ear and cheeks.

Howard spoke up, "I'm guessing this picture isn't significant because he's popular with the ladies, right?" Peggy smirked and shook her head. "These cats have to be Red Room Assassins."

Li nodded, "But we can't prove it."

"Do you know their names?" Witwer asked calmly.

Thompson shook his head, "No, we're unable to identify any of them save for Bridget Regan since she had a face-to-face run in with us a few years ago. Many of the assassins keep extremely low profiles and they can blend anywhere." He sighed, "We just know they exist."

Sousa looked up at Peggy, "Continue?" Peggy didn't respond as she cocked her head to the side and stared at the picture intently, particularly the woman who had her face hidden. After a long moment, Sousa spoke up, "Director?"

Peggy nodded and pointed to the woman who had her head turned in the photo, "That's Bridget," she said confidently.

Ramirez looked at her confused, "How can you tell?"

Howard nodded, "Yeah, I had relations with her when I thought her name was Ida." Witwer looked at him suspiciously. "Hey, look, she tricked me and framed for treason. If it wasn't for Peggy, I would've been executed and the Soviets would have all my toys." Thompson nodded in response to Howard's statement.

Peggy looked at the group of men around her, "I can recognize those cheek bones. Trust me, it's her."

"I had close contact with her, I don't see how you can recognize her just by looking at her cheek," Howard said confused.

Peggy shook her head, "I don't sleep with dozens of women daily, Howard. So, I have a better chance of recognizing her than you do." Howard just nodded and shrugged. Peggy looked at Sousa, "I can guarantee you that's Bridget."

Sousa smirked, "We come worked with you long enough to know that you're never wrong."

Peggy nodded, "Alright, what's next." Sousa displayed the next image and it was a photograph of a document with multiple lines underlined. "Now we're getting somewhere."

For the next hour, the group sifted through the remaining photos in the microfilm which all consisted of documents gathered by Agent Berman on Briggs' corruption and relationship with Hydra and Leviathan. The extensive documentation undoubtedly proves that Briggs has been in league with Hydra and Leviathan, but one of the documents, showing to be the most valuable piece of evidence, are pages of a ledger detailing assassination targets with assigned assassin names, and a collection of financial accounts Briggs shouldn't have access or needed. Though only a few pages of Briggs ledger were on the microfilm, the two pages are enough to prove Briggs of treason. Unfortunately, Briggs' association with Hydra doesn't prove that Barnes didn't kill those people yesterday. To anybody else, Barnes was still the one who murdered those people yesterday. The agents of SHIELD and Witwer, who was starting to come around to the idea, knew of Barnes' innocence in
the murder. Additionally, there is no mention of Bridget Regan in the documents and not even in the ledger, that they can see. Bridget was invisible.

Peggy nodded, "These pages of Briggs' ledger is our best bet to charge him for treason."

Ramirez nodded, "Is this evidence valid in court?" he asked looking at Witwer.

Witwer shrugged, "I don't see why not? We did find in Briggs' possession after his murder and was no way found illegally by hypothetical super soldiers." Everyone smiled at him and chuckled in response.

Thompson patted him on the back, "I like this guy."

"Let's not get ahead of ourselves," Peggy said with a tongue in cheek comment. She patted Sousa on the shoulder, "Is there a way we can make physical copies from the microfilm?"

Sousa nodded, "Yeah, but it'll take some time though."

"Do it. In the meantime, we can send a team to the address on the note to retrieve the original copies of the evidence Berman left behind. Just for insurance." Peggy looked to Thompson, "Jack, grab Li, and head to this address. I'll make a call and get you a SHIELD flight to depart LaGuardia in an hour," she said handing Thompson a piece of paper with the address written on it.

Thompson nodded, "We'll get it done."

Witwer spoke up in a confused tone, "Director, why would the Captain go all this trouble and suddenly trust me with this?"

Howard smiled, "I think he knows your heart is in the right place. Though you're a little rough on the edges."

"The Captain is going through all this trouble just to track down Briggs and Regan, and prove Barnes' innocence in the murders. But Barnes is still wanted for treason and espionage," Witwer said perplexed.

Peggy spoke up and responded, "Regan already managed to trick the FBI into believing the Winter Soldier is responsible for the shooting at City Hall. She then got into SHIELD and brainwashed the Winter Soldier and broke him out. Bridget went through all this trouble just to put him into a frame."

She crossed her arms, "Now, I mentioned yesterday that SHIELD has physical documentation captured from Hydra that proves Barnes was captured and brainwashed by both Hydra and the Soviets to be the Winter Soldier. SHIELD knows Barnes was, essentially programmed, to be arguably probably their best asset."

Witwer nodded, "Go on."

"Now from documents we captured from Hydra, we know that Barnes trained nonstop for over two years. Now, what does training like that do?"

"Muscle memory, do the action without wasting time to think," Witwer quickly responded.

Peggy nodded, "exactly, it also makes people who aren't necessarily smart seem smart by beating tactical awareness into them. Now, 99% of the evidence on Barnes is based on witness testimony and a convenient Soviet made weapon." She started to walk around the lab as the group watched her curiously, "Barnes could've killed those people at city hall but someone who's been trained nonstop to be a covert assassin wouldn't have gotten caught. His escape would've been assured without
people even knowing he was there. After the SSR incursion in Poland in 1946 where we learned about the Winter Soldier…"

Thompson sighed, "wasn't that a party…"

Peggy continued, "Before we knew it was Barnes, we suspected that the Winter Soldier has been responsible for numerous assassinations and acts of sabotage. But the SSR and soon after SHIELD could never find him or track him down because there was no trail. All we had at that time was suspicion that it was him."

Witwer looked at her confused, "What are you saying, Director? We got that he was a Soviet assassin, but what are you getting at?"

"She's connecting the dots. Giving you beyond reasonable doubt of Barnes' innocence and what happened to him," Ramirez said.

Peggy nodded, "Any single piece of evidence, I'd buy. But all of it? Soviet weapon, witness testimonies, the dead woman in the office with very particular injuries. It doesn't make sense. He'd be that sloppy if he wanted to get caught. If he wanted to get away with it, he likely would have. See, this frame was custom made for Barnes to blame for killing those four-random people."

Witwer nodded, "Director, there were five people total. Wait…. No…" He had a look of realization, "those people were killed to cover one specific target. FBI Agent Berman… he was always the intended victim."

Peggy nodded, "At the airport, Steve mentioned Agent Berman's notebook and proof on Briggs."

Witwer ran a hand through his hair with a look of surprise on his face, "That's why the Captain went to such lengths to pursue Regan."

Peggy nodded, "Exactly." Witwer stared at the page of Briggs' ledger displayed on the microfilm reader. He still had a look of astonishment on his face. Everything Director Rogers said made complete sense to him and started to believe in Barnes' innocence in the murders fully. He didn't know what to think or feel about Barnes brainwashed, but that isn't his primary concern in the present circumstance.

"If Briggs is corrupt and working for Hydra that means there are people in your agency who are Hydra too, hence why Steve didn't go to the FBI and went around you in the first place. He needed, at the time, to keep it internal to get the job done," Peggy responded calmly.

"What about you though?"

Peggy smiled, "My husband knows your people were watching me. Still are I'm sure."

Howard crossed his arms, "It always seems like somebody is always chasing Steve. This is the second time the government would be chasing him." Peggy nodded sadly. The first time in the summer of '47, Steve caught a Hydra insider plot within the recently activated SHIELD and was hunted down by the federal government as he tried stopping Hydra and exposing the truth.

Witwer nodded, "Is there a way to prove that Barnes didn't kill those people yesterday."

"No, we can't prove it. We need Briggs," Peggy responded.

Witwer sighed, "Unfortunately, that means Barnes' innocence is just a theory unless we have Briggs to prove it." He shook his head, "It doesn't matter if I believe all of this, no one else will unless we
can get proof."

Peggy looked at Sousa, "Do your best to print those images."

"You got it," Sousa replied turning back to the microfilm reader.

"Jack, get going. I'll make the call now."

Thompson looked at Mike Li, "Let's go," Li nodded and followed Jack out the lab.

Ramirez spoke up, "What do we do?"

Peggy smiled, "We're going to Maryland too. I'll get Briggs' address then we'll meet up with Steve at the residence. We'll go in heavy in case the area isn't secure, so grab a team of agents. I'll also call Phillips to get additional support."

"Got it, Director," Ramirez said as he turned to leave the lab.

"You're coming with us to get him," Peggy said to Witwer. "Getting a team of loyal FBI agents wouldn't hurt."

Witwer nodded, "I'll take care of it."

Just before Witwer turned to leave, Peggy grabbed his arm with a strong grip that clearly surprised him, "My husband is trusting you which means we're trusting you. Don't prove him wrong."

Witwer nodded, "I won't, I promise."

Maryland, Attorney General of the United States, Michael Briggs Residence

After a short hour-long flight and a brief drive into the rolling hills and thick forests of Maryland, Bucky, Steve, and the SPU team were nearing Briggs' high-end estate tucked away in the woods. It was early evening by the time the group left their vehicles, courteously provided by the Tempest SHIELD regional headquarters in DC, and the group has been walking silently through the woods for over two hours. Bucky lead Steve and the SPU team quietly through the thick trees, making little to no noise as they stepped through the brush. The only sound that could be heard is the breeze blowing through the tall trees and the trees creaking gently side-to-side. The group figured more gunmen would protect Briggs, and they knew he's trying to flee, so they needed to approach Briggs' home without detection.

As the group quietly walked through the forest, Bucky signaled to them to stop as he spotted Briggs' large estate through the break in the tree line and took a knee. Steve gripped his shield as he quietly walked up to him, "This it?"

Bucky nodded, "Yeah, but something doesn't feel right."

Steve took a moment to visually scan the house through cover and concealment of the trees, "I don't see any guards. Not outside at least."

"That's exactly the problem. There's no guards outside," Bucky said calmly.

Steve noted that the interior lights of the mansion were on, "Someone's home at least." He patted Bucky on the shoulder, "Hold here really quick." Bucky nodded silently. Steve turned around and quietly walked back to Jim who was taking cover behind a tree. "Jim, grab three, circle around back
and go through the back door. Have the rest form a perimeter and set up a cordon. No one gets in or out. I'll be with Buck and we'll go through the front door. Wait for my signal."

Jim nodded, "Got it." Steve turned and walked back to Bucky's side as Jim gave instructions to the rest of the team. In a low roar, Jim called out to his team, "Falsworth, Gabe, Wheatley, with me. We're going through the back door. The rest of you form a perimeter around the house and cordon off the building." The team gave him silent hand signals to confirm his instructions.

Steve kneeled down next to Bucky, "Ready to make entrance." Bucky nodded silently in response. Steve chuckled, "Remember those times you tried sneaking into your girlfriend's house in high school?"

Bucky chuckled, "You mean every Friday evening after you blew all your money in the movies?" He grinned at Steve, "What was her name again?"

Steve smiled, "Her name was Judith. You called her Judy."

"She probably gotten married and has a least two kids by now," Bucky said with a smile.

Steve smiled at his best friend as he patted Bucky on the back, "Welcome back, Buck." He turned around and signaled the team to get into the respective positions.

Steve and Bucky charged out of the tree line and sprinted straight to the front door of the house, located between two tall white pillars and decorative plants. Simultaneously, Jim and his group of the team rushed out of the tree line and quickly went around back of the house. When his group got to the back, they quietly climbed onto the elevated patio to reach the back door.

Steve stood by the door with Bucky standing opposite of him. He pressed his throat microphone that's attached to his radio on his belt, "Let me know when you're in position, Jim."

Jim and his team stacked up tight against a wall next to a large window, fully intending to go through a window since wide windows surrounded the door. "We're in position," he said over the radio.

"Go now," Steve said as he kicked down the door and made entry with his shield up to cover most of his face and body. Bucky quickly followed with his BAR over Steve's shoulder.

At the same time as Steve kicked down the door, Jim broke the window with the butt of his submachine gun then immediately clearing the jagged edges of glass still hanging on the frame before Gabe, Falsworth, and Wheatley charged inside. The four commandos quickly poured into the window and found themselves in a luxurious living room but were instantly surprised at what they saw. Jim lowered his weapon and looked at Gabe, "Clear this room and the kitchen." Gabe nodded and did what he was told. Jim wiped the sweat off his brow, "Captain!"

Steve was by the wide staircase at the front of the house when he heard his name in the living room. He lowered his shield and made his way to the sound of Jim's call. "What is it?" Steve said as he walked into the living room. He instantly stopped in his tracks when he saw it.

Jim pointed at Briggs who was sitting on the couch in a pool of blood with his throat deeply cut from end-to-end, "I found Briggs."

Steve walked around the couch and got a good look at the body. He sighed, "Dang."

Bucky stood by Steve, "Bridget did this."

"No doubt," Steve said evenly. "A loose end she needed to silence. Especially since their plans failed
Bucky nodded, "I don't think Bridget planned that attack on us at the airport. I think Briggs jumped the gun."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, Briggs figured out we were getting close to exposing the truth and instead of trusting Bridget, he took matters in his own hands and tried writing us off and Agent Witwer, so it would look like we died in a shootout. Bury everything right there," Bucky said calmly.

Steve nodded, "And that threw off Bridget's plans of framing us and making the nation turn its back on us."

"Exactly. Bridget must've killed him to cover her tracks which means she disappeared and she won't be found for a long time," Bucky said in a frustrated tone.

Wheatley walked into the living room, "Captain, house is clear. First floor is clear, and Gabe reports that the second floor is clear. No one else is home."

Steve nodded, "We're heading back to the airport to meet Peggy. I'll call SHIELD HQ to relay a message to them when they land and to get a team here. For now, let's fan out search the house for anything that can further prove Briggs' association with the Soviets and Hydra."

Jim nodded, "Right."

Steve looked at Bucky, "What are the odds that Bridget is trying to frame his murder on us."

Bucky shook his head, "No, she knows after that shootout in the airport, the FBI would look into what happened and who were the gunmen. It would prove Hydra influence in the past few days."

Gabe walked into the living room, "Captain."

"What do you got, Gabe?" Steve asked.

Gabe sighed, "Briggs' office has been ransacked. His safe is broken into and literally, every piece of furniture has been destroyed along with many floor boards." He shrugged, "Hydra was very thorough."

Steve sighed, "Well I guess we might not find anything here. Unless there's some place else Briggs hid any of his documents in this huge house." He shook his head, "But I doubt we can find anything ourselves. This house can rival Starks. I'll get a SHIELD investigation team down here."

"So, what's next," Gabe said calmly.

Steve sighed, "We're heading out." Gabe nodded and started to make his way to grab his fellow commandos still searching the house. Steve walked to the telephone on an end table by one of the couches. He picked up the handset and spoke to the operator, "Operator, get me SHIELD Tempest."

"One moment, please," the Operator said on the phone.

After a moment, the line reconnected to SHIELD Regional headquarters in DC, "SHIELD Regional Headquarters, Tempest," a woman said over the phone.

"Rogers, Steven G. SPU." Steve replied.
By the time Steve, Bucky, and his team returned to the airport it was already sunset. The sky was dimming with the sun dipping slowly behind the horizon, but the daylight continued to linger. The sun draped it's ruby-red color over the Western sky as the East slowly darkened and together painted a beautiful atmosphere in the heavens. The evening colors gave Steve a sense of serenity like the feeling he felt the previous evening and felt a strange feeling of relaxation after a hard few days. Though the task isn't entirely over yet, he feels closer to getting home. As the two SPU cars pulled onto the tarmac toward the specified hangar, Steve and Bucky could see two black four-engine SHIELD Lockheed Constellation planes parked in front of one of the hangars. As the cars neared, they could make out a large group of people and cars waiting by the aircraft as if they were expecting Steve, Bucky, and the rest of the team. The two vehicles swung wide and quickly pulled up in front of the group. Steve was the first to step out of the car and immediately saw FBI Director Hoover surrounded by a handful of his agents. Standing opposite of Hoover is Peggy, Stark, Phillips, Agent Ramirez, Sousa, Agent Witwer, and a team of SHIELD agents.

Steve walked toward the group as Bucky and the rest of his team stepped out of the cars. "The fact no one is pointing their guns at us means we've come to some sort of understanding," Steve said as he approached the large group in front of him.

Hoover shook his head, "You aren't out of the woods yet, Captain." Steve showed no emotion to the comment and offered no response as he stopped in between the respective FBI and SHIELD groups.

Phillips stepped toward Steve, "We can discuss the executive order issue later, but this current situation is a SHIELD matter."

"With respect, Director. Your Captain broke multiple laws, the executive order he violated is just one I'm inclined to mention," Hoover coldly said.

"If it wasn't for Captain Rogers, his team, and even Barnes, you would eventually find your ass along with other innocent people in the ground," Phillips retorted.

Hoover pointed at Steve, "He's a criminal now." He then pointed at Barnes who was making his way toward them with the SPU team, "And he's a traitor and a foreign agent! I am well within my rights to arrest them." He looked at Phillips and Peggy, "I may even be within my rights to arrest all of you for collusion."

Peggy sighed, "Stop it! We're not here for this! We're here because of Hydra and Briggs' association with the terrorist organization," she said in her best authoritarian speaking voice.

Hoover sighed, "Fine." He looked at Steve, "So, Captain, where's the Attorney General?"

Steve shook his head, "He's dead."

"What?" Hoover and Phillips said in surprise.

Peggy spoke up surprised, "What happened?"

"He was murdered long before we got there. We have a feeling it was Bridget Regan," Steve replied. Bucky and the SPU team walked up to the group and stood by Steve, and joined in the conversation.

Hoover shook his head, "That's a stretch to prove, Captain. Do you expect me to believe that neither of you killed him to cover your own asses?" he said in an accusatory tone. "The Attorney General of the United States is dead, and the last ones who went to see him are two super soldiers. One of them being a foreign agent."
Peggy spoke up angrily, "Watch it, Hoover."

Hoover shook his head, "How I see it, Captain. You have no proof to support your position. Again, you have gone rogue, aided and abetted a foreign agent, and broke numerous laws." He turned to Peggy and Phillips, "You're wasting my Sunday evening." He then looked back at Steve, "You and Barnes are under arrest," he said not willing to give neither Steve or Bucky a chance. He looked at Witwer, "Agent Witwer, see to it."

Witwer shook his head, "No."

"What do you mean, no, Agent? I gave you an order," Hoover demanded.

Witwer spoke up, "With respect sir, you don't understand any part of what happened today. Everything changed."

Peggy stepped forward and shoved a file folder into Hoover's chest, "What you're looking for is in here." The file she handed him contained a printed copy of the photos and documents in the microfilm.

Hoover gave Peggy the stink eye then took a moment to look through the file. He quickly skimmed the photos and documents in the file and was surprised to see the incriminating evidence on Briggs. He was speechless. Howard smiled, "Silence is your response."

Phillips spoke up, "Director Rogers dispatched a team of agents to recover the original copies of the evidence she just handed you. The evidence you hold was recovered from FBI Agent Berman which proves Captain Rogers and Barnes position of Briggs' association with Hydra and the Soviets as well as multiple acts of subversion and assassinations."

Hoover close the file, "This still doesn't prove Barnes is innocent from the murders yesterday and acting as a Soviet assassin for the past five years."

Steve responded, "No, Briggs, Bridget, and the other Red Room Assassins were the only ones who knew. Unfortunately, none of them are willing to say anything on his behalf."

Hoover sighed in resignation and shook his head, "You can't be making this up…"

Peggy smiled victoriously, "No we're not."

He looked at Barnes who stood silently by Steve. "What do we do with Barnes?"

Phillips spoke up, "We have physical documentation of Barnes' condition. He was captured by Hydra and brainwashed to be their assassin. He was performing acts of assassination and espionage against his own free will and against his knowledge, so to speak."

"But what do we do with him?"

Steve looked at Bucky with concern of what's going to happen next. Phillips again defended his position, "Let SHIELD take him in. We'll work with him and reintegrate him back to society. He won't be a threat to us anymore, I can promise you that."

"You expect me to let him walk freely?" Hoover responded. Barnes stood calmly by Steve as the two directors talked about his future.

"No. I expect you not to interfere with SHIELD handling Barnes," Phillips retorted.
Hoover sighed, "I don't like it." He shook his head, "But I guess I don't have much of a choice in the matter. Your agency has all the cards, now, Chester."

Steve smiled at Bucky and patted him on the back, happy that Bucky will be free from running from the US government. Steve knew it wouldn't be a seamless transition for Bucky, but at least he has one less thing to worry. It's one less group trying to hunt down Bucky, at least for now as long as the US government doesn't demand anything severe from him. Hoover continued, "We're going to need to find someone to blame for the past few days."

Steve nodded, "Tell the truth. A Soviet and Hydra Assassin murdered those people along with numerous federal agents."

"That might cause a lot of civil unrest, Captain, but we'll figure it out." Hoover responded calmly.

Steve nodded, "I'll leave it up to you. I'm just a soldier. I just kick down doors and shoot things," he said with a comfortable smile. Peggy gave her husband a hearty grin.

Howard spoke up, "Is that everything? Until our agents come back from retrieving the original copies of the evidence."

Hoover nodded, "At least for now. I'll work closely with Phillips and..." He looked at Peggy, "And Rogers, to get a true account of what happened." He let out a breath, "I need this cleared off my desk." Hoover signaled his agents to load up in the cars, but before he turned and left, he looked at Steve, "Captain, Barnes maybe lucky, but unfortunately, you aren't off the hook. I'll be seeing you later." He then walked off toward his car.

Steve smirked as he watched Hoover walk away with his entourage of FBI agents. Falsworth produced the V-sign with his fingers, the UK version of the middle finger, at the FBI director. All members of the SPU held the same feeling as Falsworth did, but didn't show it in front of everyone. It was surprising to see Falsworth do it because it was something expected of Dugan. The FBI director and the FBI, in general, were not very popular with the SHIELD Special Purpose Unit commando team.

Bucky stuck out his hand, "Thanks for everything."

Steve shook his friend's hand, "I'm with you 'till the end of the line, pal."

Bucky gave a small smile, "It's going to take a while for me to return. The stuff Hydra put in my head is still there." He chuckled, "I can't trust my own mind."

Steve nodded, "It'll take time. Trust me, you'll make it. SHIELD will do everything it can to help you through it all."

Peggy walked up to her husband and gave him a big hug which Steve happily reciprocated. Peggy held onto him tightly and buried her face in his neck, "Thank God you're back."

Steve kissed her shoulder, "I told you I would."

Peggy leaned back and kissed his lips briefly, "I know." She started to tear up, which she blamed on the hormones, "I'm just glad you're back. Been a long few days."

Steve chuckled, "Don't; I know it." He kissed her again, a little longer this time.

Peggy broke the kiss then greeted Bucky, "Sergeant Barnes, I know it's been a while, but," she began holding her hand out to shake Bucky's.
Bucky looked at Steve with a friendly grin, "Is she serious?" He looked back at Peggy, "Come here. I remember you." He stepped forward and hugged Peggy which surprised her initially. After a moment, the two broke the hug, and Bucky smiled at her, "Steve doesn't shut up about you." He laughed, "I'm glad you found each other and got married." At that moment, it almost didn't seem like any trace of the Winter Soldier was in his system, but that's because the Winter Soldier is programmed in his sub consciousness. It'll take some time for Bucky to get over the things Hydra did to his mind.

Peggy smiled, "It's a long story we need to tell you about that." She smiled and rubbed her belly, "but we're also having kids."

Bucky looked at her with surprise, "You…You're pregnant? You're starting a family?"

Jim turned around at the news, "Wait, what?"

Peggy grinned, "third child."

Jacques pushed through the rest of the commando team, "Madame? You're pregnant again?"

Peggy nodded happily, "Yes, I'm pregnant. Again." Jacques put a hand on his forehead and pretended to fall over onto Gabe who caught him.

Steve wrapped his arm around his wife, "One more to the family."

Jim smiled, "Congratulations, Pegg!" he called out happily as the commandos gathered around the couple and offered their congratulations. Phillips, Sousa, and Ramirez too offered their happy congratulations. Peggy's sudden pregnancy announcement came as a shock to all of them but it was happy news after a long past couple of days.

Bucky looked at Steve, "We need to sit down and seriously catch up. You got kids I don't know about."

Steve patted his friend on the back, "I would've earlier if I could've found you sooner."

Bucky shook his head, "Now we got some time."

Peggy looked up at her husband, "Ready to go home?"

"What about Thompson and his agents?" Steve asked.

Peggy smiled, "They got their own flight waiting for them. They should be back later tonight with the original copies of the evidence."

Phillips came up to the couple and nodded, "Congratulations on another baby, Peggy."

"Thank you," Peggy said with a warm smile.

He looked at Steve, "Another job well-done, at least in my book. But I'm sorry you're going to have to face the music about breaking that executive order issued by the President," Phillips said sadly.

Steve nodded, "I know, Director."

"If it was up to me, I'd give you a medal for stopping Hydra again, exposing Briggs, and bringing in a valued asset. But that's just me," Phillips said with his characteristic confident smile. He patted both of the Rogers on the shoulder, "I'll keep you two posted about the legal developments."
Peggy smiled, "Thank you, Director."

Phillips smiled warmly, "Isn't it time for you two to be heading home? Your kids haven't seen you the past few days." Steve nodded with a smile. "Bring everyone home, Captain. You have my leave." Steve nodded.

"One last thing, Peggy. I'll be in DC so you'll be in charge of overseeing Barnes' reintegration."

Peggy nodded, "I'll take care of it, sir."

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**LaGuardia Airport, New York City, New York**

The sky was pitch black by the time the SHIELD four-engine Lockheed Constellation landed at LaGuardia airport in New York. The midnight sky looked blacker than usual since the bright airport lights polluted the sky, blocking any sight of the starry sky. The aircraft slowly taxied down the tarmac and eventually stopped outside Hangar Q, the farthest aircraft hangar from the main terminal and the most secluded from the flight line. Hangar Q is a military and SHIELD aircraft hangar only, and is one of the biggest structures at the airport, and is run by SHIELD's own flight line crew. The flight line crew pushed the aircraft stairway up to the plan which allowed the flight crew in the plane to open the door for the passengers to disembark.

Steve was the first to step out, shield on his back and his helmet clipped to his belt, he breathed a sigh of relief, "Can't wait to go home," he said with a smile.

Peggy kissed his cheek, "Me either. Can't wait to cuddle with my two babies, and you." Steve chuckled and walked down the steps followed by Peggy, Bucky, Sousa, and the rest.

Steve stepped onto the tarmac and turned to wait for Peggy. Once Peggy joined him, he wrapped an arm around her and began to walk away from the plane. The couple stopped again and faced the plane to watch the commandos slowly disembark with all their weapons and equipment. Steve looked down and sighed, "I got to go help him."

Peggy chuckled, "I know."

But before Steve left Peggy's side, Jim called out to him, "Don't even think about it, Captain! We got this. It's going to take a while to lock up all this gear back at headquarters." He waved, "Go be with your family. You deserve it."

Steve smiled, "Thanks, fellas." He looked at Bucky who was helping pack up the gear by the plane, "Buck, need a lift?"

Bucky shook his head, "I'll be fine. I'll help these guys with this."

Steve nodded then and turned to walk away with Peggy. Peggy looked up at her husband, "We're going to have to take a SHIELD car back. My car is back at headquarters, but we can pick it up tomorrow morning."

Steve kissed her hair, "Sounds good to me."

Suddenly, Steve flinched back as a gunshot echoed in the airport. Since LaGuardia airport didn't usually operate flights at night, it was quiet enough for the shot to be heard by everyone. Before Peggy can react, another gunshot echoed, and Steve flinched again then fell onto his back. He gasped and coughed up blood as the two gunshot wounds in a tight group in his chest oozed with blood. Peggy instantly fell onto her knees, "Steve! No!" She frantically put her hands on his chest.
and immediately applied pressure to the bleeding wounds. Blood continued to pour out of his chest and soak his "Stars and stripes" uniform and pool on the tarmac. Peggy desperately put pressure on Steve's wounds but his warm blood continued to ooze out and stain her hands.

Bucky reacted quickly, "Sniper!" He yelled as he picked up a Thompson Submachine gun and aimed it in the direction of where he heard the shot, standing alone and exposed as Sousa, Ramirez, and the commandos took cover. The commandos took cover behind whatever they could find and scanned their immediate surroundings for the shooter, but the lights from the hangar shining on them obstructed their vision so they could barely make out anyone behind the lights.

Sousa spoke up, "Any idea where he is?"

Bucky scanned with his Thompson submachine gun, "It's a 'she'…" He knew exactly who took the shot and vowed to find her whatever the cost. He lowered his weapon, "And she's gone," he said briskly. Bucky then rushed over to Steve and Peggy followed by Sousa and the rest of the team.

Steve groaned in pain and barely could say anything. Peggy took off her suit jacket and pressed it to Steve's chest to try and stop the bleeding, "Darling, stay with me. Please stay with me," she said with tears in her eyes. Steve was making rapid and shallow breaths as blood continued to ooze through Peggy's jacket and hands. Every ounce of strength in her faded away as fear of losing him again overcame her. She was soon surrounded by Bucky, Ramirez, and the rest of the SPU team.

As Sousa limped up to Steve and Peggy, he turned and called out to the flight line crew, "Call an ambulance, now!"

One of the workers holding a radio called back, "We just called one, sir!"

Sousa pushed his way to Peggy, "Ambulance is on its way, Peg."

Peggy didn't acknowledge what he said and was focused on her dying husband, "Steve, please. You're going to be okay."

Gabe tapped Peggy on the shoulder and kneeled down beside her with an individual first aid kit, "Excuse me." Peggy moved to the side and scooted forward and cupped Steve's head and laid it on her lap.

Steve gritted his teeth, "Peggy, I never wanted this to happen…" he said in agony as Gabe applied a bandage to replace Peggy's suit jacket.

"I know. It isn't your fault," Peggy said quickly.

"I'm sorry," Steve said weakly.

Tears rolled down Peggy's cheek, "There's nothing to be sorry about, Steve. Just hold on!" Steve continued to breathe rapid shallow breaths. She cradled him on her lap, "Steve, you can't go. You have to stay…" Steve gasped then his breaths slowed. "You have to stay," she said almost begging.

"Peggy..." Steve said weakly.

"I'm here," Peggy replied with tears rolling down her cheek. Steve opened his mouth but said nothing as his breathing slowed and his pulse lowered. "Steve! Darling! Don't you dare! Don't you dare go!" Peggy yelled desperately. She could tell Steve was fading and was fading fast.

Bucky's heart pumped rapidly as he stared angrily at what happened to Steve. The commandos didn't know what else to do but watch helplessly since Gabe was doing everything in his power to give
their Captain tactical field care until an ambulance arrives. Steve may be a super soldier, but he's still human. Bucky turned around and left without saying a word.

**Bellevue Hospital Center, New York, New York**

A radio played a lively tune of Big Band music in a hospital room while Peggy sat in an armchair playing with her daughter on her lap. Her son sat in a chair next to her playing with his own toy but stayed within arm's reach of her. The warm morning sun peered through the window by Steve’s bed where he rested after surgery that past Sunday evening. It's been a few days since Steve been shot and went to the emergency room, and Peggy has taken the past few days off to be with her husband in the hospital and her two children. Steve arrived at the hospital in a coma and had remained comatose since the doctors removed the two bullets from his chest. The two gunshots to the chest would've easily killed an ordinary man, but he wasn't ordinary.

Peggy bounced her daughter on her lap as she happily played with her young daughter. She stopped for a moment to look at her unconscious husband laying on the bed and frowned at the sight. Steve looked peaceful, almost like he was sleeping. Peggy prayed for him to wake up, but she knew she had to be patient for him to recover. She looked over her shoulder to the window that showed the corridor and the patient care center and saw doctors and nurses in white quickly going about their day. Peggy also saw the armed SHIELD guards she assigned patrolling the corridor and standing guard outside the hospital room to protect Steve. It almost looked like there were as many SHIELD guards as there were nurses and doctors. There was no way, Peggy was taking any chances for anyone to make a second attempt on her husband's life.

Sarah whacked her toy against her mother's lap and reached up to touch her mother's face, "mama," she said quietly which brought Peggy back to reality. Peggy smiled and kissed her daughter on the cheek and whispered happy things to her.

The lively Big Band song was replaced by the slower song titled "The Day After Forever," performed by Bing Crosby. The unique voice of Crosby filled the room which brought a smile to Peggy's face. The song brought a lot of pleasant memories to her as she remembered her first unofficial dance with Steve in his old apartment in Brooklyn. The slow and steady song made a perfect learning song to dance. Peggy couldn't help but smile as she got lost in the memory while playing with her daughter on her lap. She remembered how she taught him and how good he was at dancing, almost like it was natural to him. Peggy kissed her daughter on the head and wished to dance with her husband again.

Steve slowly opened his eyes and heard a familiar song. When he opened his eyes, he found himself momentarily blinded by the sun shining through the window. As his eyes focused he found himself staring out a window to an adjacent office building across the street. He looked out the window confused then slowly turned his head to look the other way and saw Peggy sitting on a chair playing with their two children. Dehydrated, he did his best to speak. "Sorry I'm late," he said weakly.

Peggy's eyes shot up and looked at Steve as a wide smile appeared on her face…

To Be Continued…

I assure you this isn't the end!

Civil War reference, Jack Reacher References, The Winter Soldier References
Chapter 31 Lay Down Your Burdens

I don't own Captain America

"This is the NBC newsroom Morning Report with Keith Davis."

"Congress held an emergency congressional hearing today with SHIELD Director Chester Phillips to discuss the growing scandal of the recently deceased Attorney General of the United States Michael Briggs over his discovered association with the Neo-Hydra terror group and the Soviet Union. Attorney General Briggs was found dead in his home in Maryland on Sunday after allegedly committing suicide. Numerous other high-ranking political officials and federal employees also face criminal charges for treason after being discovered to have fed information to Soviet and Hydra assassins who targeted many American citizens. FBI Assistant Director Scott Allen of the FBI Station in New York City was also arrested Monday for obstruction of justice in the murders of Gloria Fischer, Anthony Greer, Julia Davis, Ashley Coleman, and FBI Agent Neil Berman, and treason for conspiring and associating with the Soviet Union and the Neo-Hydra terror group. The source behind the exposure of many federal employees association with the Soviets and Hydra is Captain Steven Rogers of SHIELD and the Winter Soldier also known as former US Army Sergeant James Buchanan Barnes."

"It's also been reported that Captain Rogers was shot by an unknown assassin after exposing Briggs' association with Hydra and is currently hospitalized. Mystery surrounds the whereabouts of James Barnes after aiding to expose Briggs. FBI has since relinquished control of finding Barnes to SHIELD. Barnes has also been proven innocent in the murders on Saturday and was pardoned for his charges of espionage and assassinations for the Soviet Union. SHIELD reportedly obtained information of the Soviets and Neo-Hydra Terror Group brain washing him to commit acts of terror and espionage unwillingly. Further report later in the hour."

"But in a stunning turn of events, the following Supreme Court hearing condemned Captain Rogers for the chaos of the past few days after he disobeyed an Executive Order issued by the President. Executive Order 9940, states Captain Rogers, as employed by SHIELD, will no longer conduct major domestic operations freely without the insight of the National Security Council and the President of the United States. To add to the statement, Chief Justice Fred Vinson had this to say: 'Though Captain Rogers has served this country dutifully for over six years, his recent actions stemming from the SHIELD Incident in 1947 and the recent development have led many to question his judgment and actions. Captain Rogers has proved that he can't be controlled and seemingly can do whatever he pleases without repercussion. Captain Rogers cannot live without conflict and acts as a self-imposed vigilante, so IF he wishes to continue to serve as Captain America, he must abide by the strict rules and regulations of his service and abilities via oversight of the federal government to protect the American citizens and the innocent people around the world.'"

"SHIELD Director Phillips defended Captain Rogers profusely in both hearings. Because of Captain Rogers' service to the nation, the Supreme Court unanimously agreed on granting him amnesty from Federal Prison as long as he agrees to follow Government oversight..."

April 1949

Bellevue Hospital Center, New York City, New York
Peggy, in a nice blue business suit with matching skirt and white blouse under her coat, turned off the radio and sighed in frustration as she looked out of Steve’s hospital window to the street below. She, unfortunately, expected this sort of backlash from the government, but she didn't think it would be to this extent with the involvement of the Supreme Court. Peggy knew Steve didn’t like the idea of the government placing strict centralized control over him and SHIELD for that matter because he feared that it would make him and the agency more reactive than proactive in facing threats. During the war, the Army used decentralized command and control which allowed Steve to complete the mission the way he saw fit as long as it fell in line with the command purpose. Both of them knew the recent Executive Order was enacted because of him, and Steve felt guilty for putting Peggy and the agency in a compromising position with the government. If the government is worried about Steve breaking the moral edge, then they don’t know him enough to judge him. Peggy knew that Steve felt guilty for the past few days when he endangered her job, and the fact that he cares so much for her career and wellness over his own personal health speaks volumes of his character. Steve had to make an unpopular decision a few days ago, save his friend who he knew was innocent of the murders or follow the misinformed government at the time. He chose his friend, proved his innocence, and again exposed Hydra and Soviet agent in the US federal government all the while doing his best to protect people. Though many people now seem to view Steve as a vigilante, and as time passed the line of right and wrong grayed, he never once strayed from being guided by his incorruptible moral compass.

Peggy fiddled with her necklace as she continued to stare out the window. She sighed if only people could see Steve as she did. People only see him as Captain America, a hero, but when he does something unpopular or does something, they don’t perceive him to do they are quick to judge and turn their back on him. There has been a wave of negative press recently since the situation a few days ago with everyone citing his previous "rogue" and "vigilante" actions such as Paris, West Virginia, and his raids on suspected Hydra cells in the East Coast. Steve, as a super soldier, was a product of a government project to fight the war, with the war over and no clear enemy to fight it almost seemed like the government wanted to put a leash on him to prevent him from going against their ideas and agenda. How Peggy saw it is that people and the government for years put Steve on a pedestal, especially during the war. The problem was that people could only see one side at a time, and rarely in depth. It produces extremes of Steve as a valiant hero or, the new perception, of the downtrodden, unpopular vigilante. Through all the recent negative press, there are still many supporters of his throughout the country.

Peggy crossed her arms over her chest as she thought to herself, unaware that Steve finally woke up. Steve opened his eyes and saw his wife staring out the window lost in thought, "Hey," he said tiredly. Steve has been in the hospital for three days now since he been shot and woke up from his coma only yesterday. His body was recovering quickly, no surprise since he’s superhuman, but his body still needed time to recover since he was shot dangerously close to his heart. His two chest wounds surprisingly closed naturally already, but the nurses still covered him with thin, clean bandages that wrapped around his chest and back under his hospital gown just in case. The healing factor of the serum expedited his recovery which explains his sealed gunshot wounds.

Peggy quickly turned around and instantly smiled at her husband, "Good morning, darling." She walked over to his bed and leaned down and kissed him on the lips. "Sleep well?" she asked while she ran a hand through his messy hair.

Steve shrugged, "I did, considering," he said looking down at his body.

"I know. The Nurse said you’re healing quickly, no surprise considering your fast healing and regenerating abilities. The Doctors were surprised to see your bullet wounds were closing by your first day in the hospital. But they recommend that you'll need to be here for a few more days and possibly need at most a month to fully recover still. I doubt it though. I think you can go home in a
few days. Might even get some physical therapy," Peggy kissed him on the head.

Steve chuckled, "Great, physical therapy," he said sarcastically.

Peggy chuckled, "You got shot in the chest. Twice. That'll kill most people." She suddenly frowned, "I was so scared I was going to lose you again."

Steve nodded, "I know. I was too. I'm sorry," he said as he took her hand in his.

Peggy gently smiled, "It wasn't your fault, Steve. There's nothing to be sorry about. I promise." She chuckled, "But you got to stop having these near-death experiences, Steve. You'll be the death of me."

Steve chuckled, "I always thought you would be the death of me. I guess the two of us are just too stubborn."

"Maybe," Peggy said with a smile.

"Are you okay though?" Steve asked with concern.

Peggy chuckled and rubbed his forehead gently with her thumb, "I'm okay. You're here, you're with me, and there's no place I'd rather be." She kissed him gently again. She stood up and rubbed her belly, "And the growing baby is okay too."

Steve smiled, "No kids today?"

Peggy shook her head, "At home with Katharyn." She frowned, "I do have to go to work today."

Steve nodded in understanding, "It's okay, I understand. Duty calls." He sighed, "I do miss Sarah and Michael, almost feels like it's been forever since I held them and saw them." He chuckled, "Miss them terribly."

Peggy chuckled, "I know the feeling, love. Believe me, they miss their daddy too."

Steve smiled up at her, "I love you."

"And I love you," Peggy responded and kissed him again.

"Do you guys need a moment alone?" said a familiar voice at the door.

Peggy and Steve looked at the door and saw Dugan standing in a collared shirt and dress pants with his arm in a sling and a thick bandage clearly under his shirt covering the left side of his chest. Peggy smiled, "Good morning, Timothy."

Steve chuckled, "Hey there, Dugan."

Dugan walked in and smiled, "I swear every time I see you two you're always snogging each other. At least I know your relationship is on a good foundation." The couple just laughed and didn't disagree.

"How are you feeling?" Steve asked trying to sit up in bed, Peggy instantly helping him sit up.

Dugan shrugged, "You know, I've been better. I'm healing slowly of course, and physical therapy is on the docket next for me." He chuckled, "Looks like I won't be at work for a while."

Steve laughed, "Noted."
"How about you, Captain?"

Steve shrugged, "Healing." He looked up at Peggy, "Apparently surprising the nurses and doctors with my healing abilities," he said with a goofy grin.

Peggy rolled her eyes, "This does not give you an excuse to be stupid, darling. You may be super human and can heal fast but you're still human. You got shot in the chest twice, endangering your heart and lungs, so the doctors are a little wary of your health."

Steve frowned and looked at Dugan, "So, I'm right there with you."

Suddenly the group heard a nurse calling Dugan's name, "Mr. Dugan? Mr. Dugan?" she called out throughout the halls.

Dugan sighed, "Dang it."

Peggy laughed, "Not supposed to be out yet?"

"Nope. Heard the Captain woke up yesterday and wanted to get out. I'm going nuts in there."

The nurse peered into the room and saw Dugan. She sighed and put her hands on her hips, "Mr. Dugan, you can't be walking around on the floor like that." She signaled him to come with her, "Please, return to your room." She quickly addressed Peggy and Steve, "Sorry for the intrusion."

Steve waved, "It's not a problem," he said in response. Peggy just smiled at Dugan and the nurse.

Dugan sighed, "See you guys around," he said as he turned and left with the nurse.

Steve chuckled, "Good 'ol Dugan." He looked up at his wife, "So I'm assuming Director Phillips knows what's going on?"

Peggy nodded, "He does, and he sends his best and hopes you get well soon." She sighed, "He's staying in DC for hearings." Steve nodded and figured that there would be political backlash for his actions earlier in the weekend. Peggy pulled up a chair and sat down next to Steve's bed, " Darling, there's more to it."

"Yeah?" Steve asked raising a brow.

Peggy placed a hand on Steve's shoulder, "The Supreme Court got involved and said if you want to continue to serve as Captain America, you have to follow the regulations and strict oversight from the federal government." She shook her head, "They thought about sending you to prison but decided against it because of your previous service to the country as long as you agree to follow the regulations and oversight." She frowned, "Congress and the Supreme Court are against you. This is a big deal for us and SHIELD. It's all over the news."

Steve gripped her hand on his chest, "Is anyone gunning for your job?"

Peggy shook her head, "No, not that I'm aware of." After what she just told him, the first thing Steve said was concern over her career. This is the Steve people rarely see, the caring man she married.

"At least you're in the clear. I hope." He sighed, "I expected backlash, but I guess I didn't expect this amount of blowback from what I did," Steve said softly.

"People only saw the damage caused and not what you did for the greater good. It's from all the things last weekend and all the other previous situations, we were in. If only people knew you the
way I do," Peggy said with a small smile quoting a phrase Steve always told her. She kissed his cheek, "Phillips and I did our best to protect you, but it's out of our hands now."

Steve nodded, "It's okay, hon. We'll take this in stride."

"This is a serious situation, Steve. They might've threatened you with prison, but they might demand more from you," Peggy said with a worried tone.

"I know. Politicians and their agendas. I didn't agree with the Executive Order since I first heard it, but I don't know what else I can do." He sighed, "If there's a situation that arises that I need to go, and the National Security Council doesn't want me to than I don't know what I'll do."

Peggy rubbed his chest gently, "I know you'll do your best, Steve." She smiled, "Whatever happens, I'm not going to lose you again. Last weekend was too close." She shook her head, "Won't lose you to federal prison either."

Steve smiled, "You're my hero."

Peggy stood up and kissed his lips, "You've always been mine in more ways than one."

"I'm sure everything will be okay," Steve replied reassuringly. "Peggy."

"Yes, my darling?"

"Is Bucky okay?" Steve asked, needing to address the whereabouts of his friend.

Peggy shook his head, "He went missing again."

"What?" Steve said confused.

Peggy sighed, "After you got shot he disappeared. We assume he went after the shooter which we believe is Bridget Regan. We're looking for the both of them, but you know how it goes."

Steve nodded, "Yeah, that makes sense. Things didn't seem to go according to plan for her."

Peggy frowned, "Yeah, and there's one other thing, Darling." Steve looked at her in question. She stood up from her seat and walked over to the other chair by the door and bent down to pick up a paper bag on the floor. Steve looked at her confused as she walked back to his side and took her original seat. Peggy reached into the bag and slowly pulled out Steve's, severely bloodstained and torn, stars and stripes top, "The doctor's had to cut your blouse off to get to your wounds. Sorry."

Steve chuckled, "I can't say I blame them. Well, I'm sure I can ask Howard to repair it. He is the one who made it for me."

"He'd probably rather make a new and better one, knowing him," Peggy said with a smile as she put the bag back on the floor. She nodded to another paper bag on the chair by the door, "I also brought you a change of clothes, so you don't need to walk around this horrible hospital gown when you get discharged or when you start physical therapy."

Steve smiled, "Thanks. You thought of everything." He looked around the room for a moment, "Out of curiosity, what did you do with my shield?"

"It's in the car," Peggy replied with a smile.

Suddenly, a SHIELD Agent knocked on the door bringing the couple out of their sweet conversation, "Director."
Peggy turned and looked at the agent at the door, "What is it?"

"We got a lead on Bridget Regan, she's been spotted at the Williamsburgh Savings Banks in Brooklyn. Agent Thompson is leading teams there now," he said calmly.

Peggy nodded, "Okay, thank you. I'll be at the office in a moment."

The agent nodded, "Yes, Ma'am," he said as he walked off.

Peggy looked back at her husband, "Have to go now, darling. Will you be, okay?"

Steve nodded, "I'll be fine, go."

"You won't be here long. Just be patient." She stood up and kissed her husband on the lips, "I'll see you soon, darling."

"No doubt," Steve replied as he watched his wife walk out.

It's now early afternoon, and Steve has been sitting in his angled medical bed with only a book and a radio playing music to keep him company with the occasional nurse coming in to check on him. Dugan would come to visit any chance he'd get against the orders of his attending nurses. Being cooked up in his hospital room had negative impacts on his psyche. Steve couldn't blame him. He was feeling restless himself. The two of them both got shot in the chest which required a hospital stay, much to their disapproval, but Steve had rapid healing going for him while Dugan didn't. Steve hated hospitals especially since he spent a considerable amount of time in one, the same hospital he's in now in fact, after he was recovered from the ice after crashing the Valkyrie during the war. He couldn't wait to go home and be with his family once again, but right now, in the short term, he couldn't wait to see Peggy come to visit him whenever she takes a break from work.

Steve closed the book on his lap and groaned in discomfort as he adjusted himself in his bed, his healing gunshot wounds still giving an unpleasant sensation when he moved too quickly. The gunshot wounds were closed, but for the past few days they've been sore, and the doctors would probably ask him to stay at least a few more days in the hospital before he can leave for home. His protective system of regeneration and healing from the serum cut his recovery time considerably than those in average health with the same chest wounds who would typically need weeks in the hospital and months maybe a year to fully recover.

Steve groaned as he slowly rolled his left shoulder to stretch the sore and healing muscles in his chest and shoulder. He suddenly saw a figure standing in the doorway in the corner of his eye. He turned and saw three men standing at the door dressed in fancy suits and recognized one of them to be FBI Agent Witwer. "Gentlemen, can I help you with something?" Steve asked courteously.

Witwer nodded, "Good to see you again, Captain. But not ideal circumstances still."

Steve nodded, "Hope you're recovering from the fight last weekend. Who's your friends?"

One of the men spoke up in a strong voice, a middle-aged man with greying hair, "Captain Rogers, I'm Tom Clark, new Attorney General of the United States, here to discuss legal matters about your actions and status as an operative within SHIELD."

The other man carrying a briefcase, slightly younger than the Attorney General, spoke up, "I'm Edward Green, SHIELD Attorney, I'm here as your counselor, Captain, in case there are any legal situations you need help with today."
Steve sighed, "So what am I being questioned for this time? Thought the Supreme Court granted me amnesty."

The three men entered the hospital room and closed the door behind them to have some privacy in the busy hospital. Witwer spoke first, "Well, Captain, the Supreme Court did grant you amnesty but they're still uneasy about you past actions."

Clark nodded, "The Supreme Court wants insurance that you won't go rogue and act upon your own accord. They want to make sure you'll conform to the commands of SHIELD leadership and the commands of the National Security Council. They understand that following SHIELD leadership isn't the problem, but the problem is staying in line with the National Security Council and directive." He crossed his arms and leaned back, "Executive Order 9940 which was supposed to assure you won't conduct operations freely without restriction seemed too weak for Congress, but it was a good start in their view."

Steve sighed, "What are you getting at?" Witwer frowned and shook his head in sympathy at what Steve is going through.

Clark looked over at Green which prompted him to open up his briefcase and remove a thick document from within and handed it over to Clark. Clark then stepped forward and handed it to Steve, "Congress unanimously passed the Enhanced Individuals Regulation Act which regulates the activities of enhanced individuals, specifically those who work for government agencies such as SHIELD. The government, mainly SHIELD in conjunction with the Council, will monitor situations in which to facilitate the abilities and deployment of enhanced individuals such as yourself. A situation must meet some requirements or meet some criteria before you're allowed to use the full measure of your abilities and gain legal authorization to continue to use your abilities to fight. As of now this regulation pertains only to you and Barnes, if SHIELD can find him," Clark said calmly in summary. Barnes may have been proven innocent for the murders and granted amnesty from any counts for espionage and assassinations while brainwashed as a Soviet Agent, but many people in the government were uneasy about the idea. SHIELD's eagerness to prove his innocence and hinting at the idea of recruiting him into the agency didn't sit well with Congress which was another reason why they passed the EIR Act. Additionally, Steve's reckless and rogue behavior in the recent years have made the government increasingly wary of his abilities and the danger he can pose if left unchecked.

Steve sighed and sifted through the thick and heavily detailed document, "And you want me to, what? Agree?"

Witwer nodded, "They want you to understand and conform with it." He shook his head, "There's no debate to it, you either follow it or you don't and face the full measure of the Department of Justice." He too sighed, "I'm sorry, Captain. This is the hand you've been dealt."

Steve closed the Act on his lap and looked up at the three men, "I understand I'm the product of a government project, but this sounds like its stripping me of the freedom of action and expression. We already have enough civil rights issues in this country, I don't think we need to add to it," he replied calmly.

Clark sighed, "Captain, the rights of society at large, from danger and harm, is what's most important. Wouldn't you agree? Protect the people you gave your oath to protect." Steve sighed and remained silent. Clark wasn't wrong that protecting the American people as a whole was most important, but Steve was worried that he wouldn't be able to stop or prevent threats with his hands tied behind his back from the EIR Act. The need for oversight concerned him because he was afraid it would prevent him from doing his job. Steve didn't know what to do…
Peggy walked into the Ops Center and immediately saw everyone working hard at their assigned tasks, "What's the situation in Brooklyn?" she asked as she walked toward the center of the room to the map board.

One of the analysts' sitting at a desk nearby a radio responded to her, "Agent Thompson just checked in. He's three minutes out from the bank. Police officers in the bank reported Regan but we don't have contact with them anymore."

"That's not a good sign. How many did Thompson bring with him?" Peggy asked as she turned around and walked over to the analyst.

"Twelve including Agents Ramirez and Li."

Peggy nodded, "Good. Get the SPU team on standby just in case. Can't take any chances with Regan."

"Yes, Director," the analyst said as he picked up the phone at his desk.

Peggy turned to another analyst, "Tom, anything on the NYPD in the area?"

Tom shook his head, "The police are leaving this up to us, Director."

"That's good. We'll call for them if we need their assistance," Peggy said as she crossed her arms.

Suddenly a radio transmission came on over the speakers in the Ops Center. It was Thompson checking in, "This is Team 1, we're on site. We got people fleeing in every direction from the bank. It looks like Regan is trying to rob it."

Peggy picked up the handset on the desk by the analyst, "Thompson, this is Rogers."

"Director," Thompson replied on the radio.

Peggy spoke up concerned for her subordinates, "You know how dangerous Regan and her fellow assassins are, so be careful in there; this whole thing could be a trap and she might not be alone this time."

"Got it, boss," Thompson replied.

"And if you have any doubt that she's a threat to you, your team, or innocent people in the bank, you're clear to eliminate her and any of her associates. Do you understand? She does not get away this time." Peggy said in a cold tone.

"With pleasure Director," Thompson said with an obvious grin being heard on the radio. Peggy lowered the handset and put it down on the desk and waited patiently for what's to happen next. Her goal of catching Bridget or Dottie has always been personal since their confrontation during the Stark Case, but since Steve got shot, Peggy has a rejuvenated burning urge to either catch her or bury her. Attempting to harm her husband and her family is an easy way to see yourself staring down a barrel of her gun.

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**Williamsburgh Savings Banks, Brooklyn, New York City**
Agent Jack Thompson and the majority of his team parked their SHIELD cars in a wide arc in front of the central bank entrance. The rest of his team blocked off the other side and back entrances to prevent Bridget and any of her associates from escaping. The domed building of the Williamsburgh Savings Bank built in the mid-19th-century designed with the neoclassical type of architecture complete with arches and interior marble and columns. The building, like many other buildings in the city such as the New York City Public library, was designed with the "purity" of the arts of Rome. The bank’s exterior wasn’t complicated with only two front entrances, two back entrances, and two on each side. The interior, however, wasn’t sophisticated either but the unknown number of innocent bystanders and bad guys in the bank might make things complicated if a shooting occurs.

Thompson opened the trunk of his car and removed a M1928A1 Thompson submachine gun with a 100-round drum magazine, "I'm bringing Li, Ramirez, and Walker with me. The rest of you maintain the perimeter around the bank. No one gets in or out, pass the word."

A nearby agent taking up position behind his car nodded, "On it, boss." All the agents got their additional weapons out with the majority carrying Thompson submachine guns and only a few wielding shotguns, quickly got into position to lock down the bank from the outside. Ramirez, Li, and Walker all had the submachine gun with the 100-round drum and formed up by Thompson's car to prepare to make entry into the bank.

Thompson looked at his group, "Everyone ready?"

Li nodded, "Ready." Ramirez and Walker nodded in reply.

"Now, we don't know how many people are in the bank nor how many of those Leviathan psychos are with Regan in there so be careful. We want Regan alive, but if she poses a threat to you, kill her," Thompson said as his last-minute brief to his team.

Ramirez smiled, "With pleasure."

Thompson cocked his submachine gun, "Let's go." Just as he was about to run across the street, the main bank entrance door open and out came four men in nice suits with their hands up.

One of the SHIELD agents called out to Thompson, "Jack!" he called as the four men walked into the middle of the street toward the SHIELD cars.

Thompson raised his submachine at the four men walking toward them, the rest of his team did the same, "Stop right there!" he yelled at the men. The four men complied calmly and stood side by side to each other, facing the line of SHIELD agents taking cover behind their cars. "Get down on your knees, hands behind your head, interlace your fingers, and cross your ankles!" The four men again complied without hesitation.

Li spoke up quietly to Thompson, "What the hell is going on?"

Thompson shrugged, "I don't know." He called out to the four men, "Where's Bridget Regan!"

One of the men spoke up calmly, "She isn't here," he said confirming to Thompson that they're Leviathan and Hydra personnel.

"No kidding," Ramirez said under his breath.

Thompson glanced at his team, "Something doesn't feel right. We didn't even go into the bank yet, and they're already surrendering. They had every advantage in there."

Walked shrugged, "It's a trap."
Thompson looked at Li, "Mike, get on the radio and call HQ." Li nodded and walked around Thompson and opened the front passenger door of the SHIELD car to get to the radio.

Li grabbed the handset and pressed down on the transmit button, "Headquarters, this is team 1."

A male voice replied on the radio, "Go ahead, Team 1."

"Four Leviathan and Hydra operatives surrendered, no sign of Bridget Regan. We're extracting information now," Li said calmly on the radio.

Suddenly one of the four men spoke up, "Would you to like to know where she is?"

Thompson trained his submachine gun at the man who spoke, "We're listening," he said cautiously. The man didn't reply as he started to slowly lower one of his arms to his coat pocket. "Stop moving!" Thompson commanded.

The man didn't listen, "So you want to know where Bridget is, do you?" He put his hand in his pocket and smiled, "She's going where mama bear isn't."

Thompson looked confused, "What the hell?" Suddenly it dawned on him, "Wait..." He looked at Li, "She's heading to their house! Relay that to Peggy now! She's heading to the Rogers' house!"

Li quickly pressed the transmit button, "Bridget is heading to the Director's house!"

Suddenly the man removed his hand from his pocket and held out a detonator, "Hail Hydra," he said softly.

"Shit," Thompson whispered as he quickly ducked for cover, dragging Ramirez down to the ground just as a sudden and massive explosion erupted, shaking the entire block...

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Time Square, New York City, SHIELD: AEGIS HEADQUARTERS

Operations Center

The moment Peggy heard those words from Li's radio transmission threw her for a loop. Her heart skipped a beat as fear for her two children sunk deeper into her soul. The thought of a Soviet and Hydra assassin coming for her family has always been present in her mind, but it's another thing for it actually to happen. It's one of her biggest fears, and now it's reality. She promised herself, her husband, and her two children that her work wouldn't come back to haunt them, but now she fears the worst. Understandably so.

Peggy quickly did her best to compose herself as an analyst spoke up frantically to her, "Director, we just lost contact with Team 1!"

Peggy nodded and spoke quickly, "Get a second team of agents to the bank. Divert the SPU to my residence now!"

Tom nodded, "On it, Director."

Peggy looked over at a young woman serving as a SHIELD analyst by her, "Call the Guardian Angels around my house and have them report in." Guardian Angel is a designation of a SHIELD team that secretly watches over and protects valued assets or personnel from any threats. Teams usually consist of 2-4 agents and are rotated 24hours at a time. In this case, the Guardian Angel team
assigned to watch over the Rogers family is four agents. The Guardian Angel team assigned to protect the Rogers was first implemented after Peggy and Steve got married, though the first two agents assigned to the detail were rookies. Peggy and Phillips increased the security after the situation with the Winter Soldier attempted hit in 1947.

"Yes, Director," the young woman replied and quickly got on the radio to call the Guardian Angel team.

Peggy turned to another analyst, "Call the hospital and get a SHIELD agent to notify my husband on what's happening." The analyst nodded, and did exactly as he was told.

The analyst assigned to call the Guardian Angel team looked up at Peggy, "Director, the Guardian Angel team responded, and they report nothing out of the ordinary. They're moving in to get your family out now to the safehouse nearby."

Peggy nodded, "Good," she said but didn't relax yet. Her family isn't out of the woods yet. She turned and started to make her way out of the Ops Center, "I'm heading that way now, I'll have a radio so call me if there are any developments." Peggy needed to get home or the very least meet the Guardian Angel team at the safehouse with her two babies. She wouldn't feel secure until she has Michael and Sarah safe in her arms again.

Tom replied to Peggy for the Ops Center staff, "we'll keep you posted, Director."

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**Bellevue Hospital Center, New York City, New York**

"It's law now, Captain. Can't be changed unless you make a move to change it through the Democratic process," Clark said to Steve. "If you wish to continue to serve as Captain America in SHIELD then this is the price." The group of men been discussing and debating the legitimacy of the Enhanced Individuals Regulation Act for quite some time now.

Steve wasn't making any progress with his point of view and to be honest; he was wasting his time. Clark was right since the Act is law, Steve can't change it unless he goes through the proper channels. The Act in itself would make him less effective as a soldier and as an asset for SHIELD, but he knew he could do little to change the law. The chaos Steve was involved within the past few years brought an increasingly divided public opinion on him and SHIELD with many still viewing him as a hero and others viewing him as a dangerous vigilante or worse, a living rogue weapon. The SHIELD Incident in '47 and the recent situation with Barnes did little to shorten the division, hence the creation of the EIR Act. Steve thought long and hard about what he would do next. Maybe it's time for him to stop fighting and finally settle down. Find his small measure of peace after his commitment and service to his country. It's looking like it might be that time for him to turn in his shield, besides, he always said he would settle down with Peggy eventually. Better now than later. Steve's biggest present concern is leaving a job unfinished, Bridget and Hydra is still out there, and they needed to be stopped. Steve is torn at what his future actions would be.

Steve sighed, "I hear you, sir." He shook his head, "I don't like it, but it's not like I have a choice in the matter.

Clark sighed, "I'm sorry it had to come to this Captain. The law is only here to provide proper legal authority and oversight, so you don't run off and detonate another nuclear device in pursuit of Hydra without authorization," he said citing the SHIELD incident in West Virginia a few years ago.

Steve chuckled, "Like everyone keeps telling me," he said sarcastically. Many government officials like to bring up the nuclear incident in West Virginia, but it wasn't public knowledge of the atomic
explosion in the Shenandoah Mountains with the government quickly covering it up with a fabricated story about a rare East Coast earthquake. Not many people outside certain agencies of the government knew about the truth and that's exactly what the government wanted.

"Well, it's not perfect, Captain. Shoot, laws always change and get altered so time will tell."

Steve nodded, "That's what I'm afraid of. What if there's a situation where I need to go somewhere in a hurry and lives rest on my shoulders, and I don't have time to wait for a council to tell me to go?"

Witwer looked at the new Attorney General with a knowing look that agreed with Steve's point.

Clark sighed, "Captain, with this law in place, authorization can take up to one phone call for authorization for you to go."

"I don't know, sometimes those seconds can be precious. Trust me, I know," Steve said with experience in his voice.

Suddenly a SHIELD agent barged into Steve's hospital room, "Captain!"

Steve quickly looked at the agent, "What is it?"

"It's your family. Bridget Regan is heading to your house as we speak, we don't know what she's planning, but we aren't taking any chances. The Guardian Angel team is relocating your family to a safehouse," the agent said quickly.

Steve shot up in his bed, "And Peggy?"

"The Director is heading in the same direction."

Steve slowly swung his legs off the bed and gradually stood up, making sure he could walk since he's been immobilized for the past three days. When he felt confident in his strength to walk he looked up at the agent, "Notify SHIELD I'm heading home."

Tom Clark spoke up, "What do you plan to do, Captain?"

Steve turned around, "Protect my family." He sighed, "Shield agents may be relocating my family, but I need to be there for Peggy and my two kids to make sure they're okay. You can at least let me do that."

Clark couldn't argue with Steve if he were in that position he would do anything to protect his family too and to make sure they're all alright. But he still had a job to do, "Go, Captain. Protect your family and yourself if you need to, but for your sake leave the apprehension of Regan to the SHIELD agents." Steve sighed and nodded. "Remember, you're technically supposed to be hospitalized and do not have the explicit authority from the Council and SHIELD to apprehend her."

Steve sighed, "I understand." He looked to the paper bag of clothes that Peggy left for him on the chair, "Now, if you'll excuse me. I need to get dressed."

Clark, Witwer, and Green left Steve's hospital room together, closing the door behind them as they went. As the trio walked down the hall, passing by nurses and doctors making their rounds throughout the hospital, Clark looked at Witwer, "Agent Witwer," he said calmly.

"Yes, your honor?" Witwer responded.

"What do you know about the Captain other than the war stories?" Clark asked evenly.
"Sir?" Witwer he asked confused.

Clark stopped and turned to the FBI agent, "What I'm getting at is that he's a war hero and he's been made for war, and he has no war to fight. So, he keeps trying to make one."

Witwer knows where this line of thought is going since he too made the same accusation about the Captain last week when he was hunting him and Barnes. He understood Clark's point, but he also could see the Captain's. Last week, Witwer realized that Captain Rogers was acting on sound judgment and initiative to prevent a Hydra and Leviathan mission. Though Captain Rogers may have let his personal friendship with Barnes get in the way, he was right to act on the information the former assassin provided to stop Hydra and Leviathan. Though the case ended with a handful of arrests of corruption and treason, there was still a dead end with no information on the whereabouts of Regan and other assassins like her in the country. But one of the main consequences of last week's situation is Rogers operating outside the law again, hence the quick development of the Enhanced Individuals Regulation Act. Last week's situation was the final draw for many people on the actions of Captain Rogers.

Witwer spoke up in Steve's defense, "Sir, with respect. He's never wrong."

Clark shook his head, "It's not about him being right or wrong. If he keeps finding a war to fight and keeps working outside the law, and he leaves behind a catastrophe of destruction and death, in the end no one will care if he was right or wrong." He sighed, "I support him too, but the government is also right. He needs oversight to protect society at large, from danger and harm."

"I understand, sir," Witwer conceded. "What do you need from me?"

"Get a team of FBI agents to assist SHIELD, and make sure Rogers doesn't do anything crazy," Clark said calmly. Witwer nodded quietly and left ahead of the Attorney General of the United States and the SHIELD lawyer.

Back in Steve's hospital room, Steve got dressed quickly in civilian attire consisting of a collared shirt, pants, and dress shoes. It wasn't a painless affair since his healing chest wounds were still sore and gave him sharp pains, but he was short of time, so he sucked up the pain. As he was about to leave the room, Dugan stopped by at the door, "I'm coming with you," he said calmly.

"Won't the nurses and doctors get mad at you for that?" Steve asked as he walked passed him to a pair of SHIELD agents waiting outside his room.

"This won't be the first time I left medical before I was fully healed, Captain," Dugan replied referring to the time he went AWOL from the first aid station after being wounded to rejoin the commandos at the front during the war.

Steve stopped and turned around, "This is different," he said placing a hand over his aching and throbbing wounds.

Dugan interrupted him, "I love your family too, and if Bridget is going after them then I feel like you can use the extra hand." He smirked, "Besides, it's her fault I'm here in the first place."

Steve chuckled and nodded to the exit, "Let's go." He turned to one of the waiting SHIELD agents, "Are you driving an agency car?"

The agent took out the keys from his pocket, "Yes, sir," he said as he handed the keys to Steve.

"Thanks."
The other agent spoke up, "Captain, do you need us with you? We've been tasked to head to the bank for recovery of Team 1."

"We'll be alright," Steve said calmly as he walked by them.

"Good luck, sir," said the first agent.

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**Steve & Margaret Rogers Residence, Scarsdale NY**

At the Rogers residence, it seems like it's just another average weekday. The sun is shining, music is playing on the radio, and the two Rogers toddlers are preparing for their lunch with Kathryn. It looked like a regular day in the quiet Scarsdale neighborhood for the two toddlers and their caring babysitter. Kathryn, in a dark green swing dress, walked around the kitchen table with two plates of food in her hands for Michael and Sarah who are sitting in their respective high chairs. "Now, who's ready for lunch," Kathryn said with a smile as she placed the two plates down on the high chairs. The two toddlers smiled and babbled happily as they dove into their food. The two one-year-old twins knew how to feed themselves and use utensils, but since they're toddlers, it was hardly a clean operation.

Kathryn stood by the table and watched with a smile on her face as both Sarah and Michael enjoyed their meal. Being babysitter wasn't exactly her primary job, but she enjoyed it. Besides, the Rogers paid her exceptionally well for her services. Kathryn chuckled as she watched Sarah smear fruit juice all over his face. She laughed, "Come here, big girl," she said as she took a napkin off the toddlers high chair to clean his face. "God, you're so much messier than your brother. I see why your mother says you're like your father," she said with a smile. Once she was done cleaning Sarah's face, she noticed Michael making a mess on his high chair. Kathryn rolled her eyes, "I guess you want some love too, huh?" she said humorously.

Just as Kathryn was about to clean up Michael, she heard a firm knock on the door. Kathryn paused and looked in the direction of the door then looked at her purse on the counter for a moment before finally leaving to answer the door. As she walked to the door, another series of firm knocks echoed throughout the house. Once Kathryn got to the front door she cautiously opened it and saw four men in black suits staring at her. She spoke up smoothly, "Can I help you, gentlemen?"

The lead man spoke up, "Sorry to bother you, but have you seen my dog around here?"

"A retriever?" Kathryn responded evenly.

"No, it's a shepherd," the man replied. After a slight pause, the man spoke up again, "Agent Ottis, we have a situation."

"Come in," Kathryn said opening the door for the four men to walk in. Once the men entered the house, Kathryn closed the door and locked it behind them. "What's going on?"

Another man spoke up, "Bridget Regan and possibly an unknown team of assailants are on their way here. She's targeting the Rogers' kids."

Kathryn turned around and headed to the kitchen where she left the two twins, "Then we better move to the safe house ASAP. How much time do we have?"

"Unknown. It's safe to assume that she'll be here in a few minutes," said the lead man as he followed Kathryn.

Kathryn walked to her purse on the counter and pulled out a 9mm Walther PPK from her bag.
checked to see if it was loaded, had a chambered round, and on safe before sliding it back into her purse. She then slung her bag over her shoulder and walked around the table to pick up one of the twins. "Can you grab Sarah?" she said to the lead agent.

The agent nodded, "Not a problem." Before he picked up the Rogers' daughter, he turned to his team in the living room, "Get the car started. We'll be right out."

One of the agents nodded, "Got it." He turned and opened the door. But just as he swung the door open a volley of automatic weapons fire ripped through his upper body and the body of the agent standing beside him. The two men fell back onto the floor and bled uncontrollably onto the wood surface. The weapon in question produced a very characteristic sound like a "burp" which meant it was from a Soviet made PPSH-41 submachine gun.

The lead agent barely got Sarah out of her high chair when the shooting started. He gently but hastily placed the toddler back down in her seat and turned to Kathryn, "Get the kids behind cover!" he yelled as he ran to the living room to rejoin the last standing SHIELD agent.

Kathryn complied and removed Michael from his high chair and quickly rushed to the kitchen wall and gently placed him on the floor before heading back to get Sarah. Just as she got Sarah out of her high chair, another loud burst from the Soviet submachine gun echoed through the house. The sudden loud noise caused extreme discomfort in Sarah and Michael causing them to cry uncontrollably. Kathryn put the crying Sarah down next to her brother and stood beside them to protect them as gunfire started to escalate. Stopping the two twins from crying wasn't her priority at the moment as she got her pistol out from her purse.

The two remaining SHIELD agents fired their pistols through the living window in the direction of the enemy gunfire. The two men ducked behind the couch closest to the window as another spray of 7.62x25mm Tokarev rounds ripped through the living room. One of the SHIELD agents peaked his head up to shoot back but was quickly silenced when he was instantly shot in the head. The SHIELD agent's lifeless body fell over limp by the lead agent. The lead agent yelled as he reloaded his pistol, "Kathryn, we got three men down! Need your help up here!" He suddenly heard movement to his right and he looked up in surprise to see a smiling woman with long raven black hair wearing a suit pointing her Soviet submachine gun at him. "Shit…" He said under his breath as he was shot in the head.

Sarah and Michael continued to cry from the loudness and chaos that suddenly ensued around them. Kathryn left the twins and edged her way toward the corner of the kitchen wall and peeked around to see Bridget turning to the kitchen toward the sound of the crying toddlers. As far as Kathryn knew Regan was acting alone, but she knew how dangerous the Red Room Assassin is by herself. She quickly leaned around the corner and fired three shots from her pistol, but Regan's reaction time was fast and barely dodged the gunshots.

Bridget brought up her Soviet submachine gun and fired a burst at the corner where Kathryn hid. The wall and moldings splintered and fragmented as the rounds impacted. Suddenly, Kathryn heard a click of the submachine guns bolt locking to the rear signaling that it was out of ammunition giving her a window to shoot back. She again leaned out of cover and attempted to acquire Bridget in her sights to shoot her, but didn't initially see her. Kathryn figured Bridget was taking cover to reload, but she couldn't tell where. Suddenly she heard movement behind her causing her to whip around and saw Bridget aiming at her from the hallway adjacent to the eat-in kitchen that leads directly to the front door. Hastily and blindly, Kathryn fired two shots forcing Bridget to duck behind the corner of the wall. Both Sarah and Michael continued to cry in the midst of the action, confused to what's happening around them. They didn't understand nor comprehend the danger that surrounds them.
Kathryn needed to distance herself from the twins to keep the wolf at bay. She put her pistol away in her bag and charged at Bridget to engage her in hand-to-hand combat, a reckless move but a move that guaranteed Bridget always being her vision. Just as Bridget peered around the corner again to open fire, Kathryn grabbed the hot barrel of her submachine gun and yanked the gun out of her hand and punched her in the nose. Bridget stumbled back, surprised at the sudden punch to her face. She then quickly smiled and composed herself and got ready for a fight. Kathryn charged her and attempted to strike her numerous times, but Bridget easily countered and blocked each strike with deadly efficiency. Bridget ducked below a swing and struck Kathryn in the ribs then immediately wrapped her arms around Kathryn's neck and brought her down to knee her in the stomach numerous times.

Kathryn got out of Bridget's grasp and elbowed her in the side of the face causing Bridget to stumble back. Kathryn coughed in pain, feeling many of her ribs on one side were probably broken.

Bridget chuckled, "Well, I had enough of this." She took out a small knife from her pocket and lunged and swung at Kathryn. Kathryn managed to dodge and block a few of Bridget's quick strikes, but one of Bridget's knife thrusts cut her bag off her shoulder sending it to the floor with a thud. Immediately after, Bridget swung again, and Kathryn brought her arms up to protect her upper body and got stabbed in the forearm with the knife. Bridget, unable to get the knife out of Kathryn's arm, kicked her in the stomach sending the young woman tumbling back onto the floor.

Kathryn groaned in pain, "Come on," she said in annoyance. She quickly stood up defiantly and painfully removed the knife from her arm while gritting her teeth to fight the pain, then tossed the chipped and bloodied knife down on the floor.

Bridget cocked her head to the side and smiled in response, "Did Peggy train you?"

"No," Kathryn said angrily.

"Funny, you do fight like her. Tenacious and motivated," she said evenly.

Kathryn shook her head, "What are you waiting for?"

Bridget smiled, "Be careful what you wish for," she said with a light chuckle. She charged at Kathryn, but she was suddenly yanked down to the ground by her hair. She fell onto her back with a loud thud and suddenly saw Barnes looking down at her. Bridget quickly rolled to the side just as Bucky punched down with his mechanical fist into the floor. The force of his punch went straight through the wood flooring and into the concrete foundation of the house.

"Barnes?" Kathryn exclaimed in surprise. Almost every SHIELD agent knew who Barnes is and what he looks like from the countless reports being passed about him.

Bridget quickly stood up and squared up with Barnes. The two lunged toward one another and exchanged blows with both of them landing strikes and blocking others. Though Bridget wasn't enhanced like Barnes, she was still capable of nearly matching his speed because of her experience and years of training. Her constant training since she was a kid in the Red Room Assassin Program gave her the agility, speed, and strength of an Olympic athlete. She may not be as strong as Bucky, but she could nearly match him in speed which gave her just enough of an edge.

Bucky swung at her with his mechanical arm, but Bridget ducked beneath his strike and struck his ribs, like Kathryn. She then took his wrists and threw him to the ground, forcing him into an arm bar. Kathryn rejoined the fight and struck Bridget in the ribs and kicked her in the side of the knee forcing her to stumble back and cringe in pain. Bucky rolled over and quickly got up to face Bridget again. Kathryn stood by Bucky as the two stood in a face-off against Bridget, Kathryn not worrying about
where Barnes was all this time and only focusing on the fight at hand. Blood slowly oozed out of the deep knife wound in her forearm, but she put the pain aside and prepared for another bounce with Bridget.

Bridget took a quick moment to mentally calculate her strategy of killing Barnes and Kathryn in order to complete her objective of dealing with Peggy's and Steve's children. She knew she could fight Barnes and Kathryn individually, but the odds of success of fighting them together are very slim. Bridget did, however, had a plan to level the playing field but she only had one shot. Sarah and Michael's cries from earlier turned into shallow whimpers since the loud deafening sound of gunfire disappeared. As the three stood silently, Bucky eyed Bridget carefully, knowing that she was carefully planning her next move that would ultimately finish the fight one way or the other.

Just as Bridget was about to make her move, the sound of police sirens nearing filled everyone's ears. Barnes relaxed, looking like she's withdrawing from the fight, "Well it's been fun."

Bridget spoke up, "You aren't going anywhere."

"That's where you're wrong, sweetie," Bridget said as she instantly whipped out a pistol she had tucked in her waistline and immediately fired at Barnes before making her escape out the broken living room window. Bucky barely anticipated her move and narrowly blocked the gunshot with his mechanical arm with the pistol round pinging off the metal surface of his forearm.

Kathryn dove back over the tipped over couch to her purse on the floor then reached in her bag and got her pistol. She then rolled to her side and fired two quick shots at Bridget as the woman turned to jump through the broken window, hitting her in the right shoulder and to the left of her stomach but the assassin continued to flee without hindrance. Kathryn shook her head, "Damn it," as she heard a car screech on the street and drive away.

Bucky stared out the window as he saw multiple police cars zoom passed the house in pursuit of Bridget. He turned around and walked over to Kathryn who was lying on her side with blood pooling out of her arm wound. "You okay?" he asked politely as he offered a hand to help her up.

Kathryn dropped her gun and took Bucky's hand with her uninjured arm, "I'll live," she said in pain as the adrenaline started to wear off. As she stood up she saw through the open door a large contingent of police cars park in front of the house. Suddenly, Sarah and Michael started to cry loudly again causing Kathryn to turn in the direction of their cries. Kathryn sighed, "I'll be right back," she said as went to attend to the Rogers' twins.

Bucky looked back at her, "You should probably wrap that wound up first." Kathryn turned around and gave a small smirk before heading back to the kitchen to check on Sarah and Michael.

Peggy, followed by a column of black SHIELD cars, drove her car hastily toward her house and saw the police perimeter surrounding her home. Seeing the police lights and cars made her assume the worst. Her heart sank deeper into her stomach as she feared that the Guardian Angel team couldn't get her family out in time and her precious babies fell victim to Bridget Regan. Peggy didn't know what to do if she lost Sarah and Michael, it would completely destroy her, and she knew it would destroy Steve too.

Peggy parked her car outside the police perimeter then hastily ran toward her house. The SHIELD agents and the SPU team in the following column of cars, parked behind her and disembarked to follow her. Just as Peggy passed the perimeter a police officer stopped her, "Ma'am, you can't go in there."
Peggy looked angrily at the officer, "Director Rogers, SHIELD. Let me through," she said in irritation.

The police officer nodded, "My mistake, Ma'am," he said as he stepped to the side. Peggy brushed passed him and ran into her house.

Another police officer called out to the others, "Hey, we got SHIELD agents here!"

Peggy entered her house and was immediately shocked to see the carnage. Broken glass everywhere, dead SHIELD agents, blood on the floor, broken furniture, splintered walls, bullet holes, and that was just at first glance. Peggy gasped in shock. "Sarah? Michael?" She called out in desperation, hoping to hear their tiny voices somewhere, but heard nothing. Peggy slowly walked in and still didn't hear any response from her two toddlers. "Kathryn? Are you here?" she asked at the edge of her sanity. She quietly prayed to God that her two children were safe and sound.

Suddenly Peggy heard Kathryn's voice in the kitchen, "Sorry, we're in here! We're alright!"

Peggy's heart skipped a beat when she heard Kathryn's voice and what she just said. She sighed in relief and put a hand on her chest and felt her heart racing twenty times its normal rate. Peggy quickly made her way into the kitchen and saw her two toddlers on their high chairs eating a small snack while Kathryn was getting her arm bandaged by a police officer. Peggy covered her mouth with her hands as tears filled her eyes and she nearly fell onto her knees in relief. The past 45-minutes were the longest in her life as she broke every speed law to get back home from the city. Peggy then quickly rushed over to her two toddlers and embraced and kissed each one repeatedly as tears of joy fell from her eyes. "Mama, is here, my darlings. Mama is here," she said shakily. Peggy squatted between the two high chairs and couldn't stop kissing and hugging her two toddlers as the twins happily reciprocated their mother's touch. Peggy kissed Michael on the head, "I'm sorry, I'm so sorry, darlings. This is my fault," she said as she pressed her lips to Michael's hair. Peggy turned to Sarah and nuzzled her hair, "I was so scared that I lost you both." She kissed her cheek, "Mama won't let this happen again. I promise."

Kathryn didn't dare interrupt Peggy hugging and kissing Sarah and Michael. She couldn't imagine the feeling she's going through right now. After a moment, Peggy stopped and wiped her tears from her eyes and let her two little ones continue eating their snack. She looked up at the babysitter, "Kathryn, how…"

Kathryn smiled, "Um, Director, first look behind you," she said pointing behind Peggy.

Peggy turned around and saw Barnes standing quietly against a wall with a police officer standing nearby. "Barnes?" she said confused.

The police officer nodded at her, "We understand your agency is looking for him?"

Peggy nodded at the officer, "It's okay, officer. I can handle him from here."

"Are you sure, Ma'am?" the officer asked confused.

Peggy nodded, "Positive."

The officer nodded, "Yes, Ma'am," he said as he walked away.

Peggy stood up and faced Barnes, "Barnes, what are you…"

Bucky smiled, "I went to hunt for Bridget after Steve got shot. I've been tracking her for the past few days until I lost her earlier in the morning. I almost didn't realize she was coming here. Was almost
too late," he replied calmly.

Peggy looked shocked and didn't know what to say, "Barnes, I… Thank you for…” She was actually speechless.

Barnes shrugged and nodded to Kathryn, "Don't thank me. I would've failed protecting your family if it wasn't for her."

"Her?" Peggy asked in confusion as she turned back around to look at Kathryn.

Kathryn nodded at the police officer wrapping her arm, "I'm good now, thank you." The officer nodded then stood up and walked away. Kathryn sighed, "I must confess, Director. I'm actually SHIELD Agent Kathryn Ottis."

"What? You're a SHIELD agent?" Peggy asked in shock.

Kathryn nodded, "I was assigned by Director Phillips to watch over you, the Captain, and especially Sarah and Michael. It was strictly need-to-know." She frowned, "I'm sorry, Director. I really didn't want to lie to you about my profession, but you needed to have the image that you hired a regular babysitter. I hope you aren't too upset at this revelation."

Peggy shook her head with a small smile on her face, "No, of course not."

Bucky spoke up, "She unknowingly bought me time to help. If it wasn't for her I'd be too late."

Peggy smiled, "So, Phillips…"

"He told me what you were looking for in a babysitter and the type of person. I knew how to answer your questions and how to act to get you to hire me," Kathryn said with a smirk.

"You know? Because of you and those agents, my family is safe, and that's something I can never repay you or their loved ones," Peggy said genuinely. She felt terrible that those four SHIELD agents died protecting her family, but there was nothing she could've done to protect them. The only thing she can do now for them is takedown Bridget for good. Peggy frowned, "Though I can never repay those agents who died protecting my family, I can, however, do something for you. I know you'd probably rather be doing field work instead of babysitting my children…"

Kathryn smiled, "I mean, yes, I do want to work in the field, but this very situation we're in is the reason why I'm here, Director."

Sarah finished her food and started to hit the high chair with her hands causing Peggy to pick up her daughter, "Mama's got you, darling. It's okay." She kissed her cheek, "You eat enough?"

Sarah smiled, "Mama," she said loudly as she hugged Peggy's face earning a laugh from her mother.

Kathryn stood up and rubbed her wounded arm, "Our lunch was interrupted by gunfire from Bridget."

Peggy smiled, "Kathryn, any place, anywhere, you choose what you want to do and go. It's the least I can do."

Kathryn smiled, "thank you, Director. I'll keep that in mind."

Peggy turned around to Bucky, "And for you, are you willing to come into SHIELD?"

Barnes nodded, "When we find Bridget."
Peggy frowned, "She's still out there and we'll find her, and we'll catch her. Better now rather than later."

Suddenly they heard Steve's voice from the front door, "Peggy!" he called out with worry in his voice.

Peggy instantly turned to the direction of her husband's voice, "We're in here!"

Steve rushed into the kitchen and sighed loudly in relief at the sight of his two children safe and sound with Peggy. "Oh my God," he said as he leaned back against the wall, rubbing his wounded chest as his heart pumped rapidly from the emotional rollercoaster he experienced on the way home. Without addressing or acknowledging anyone else in the room, Steve walked up and embraced Peggy and his daughter. His two kids and his wife are the only ones who concerned him presently, and both Bucky and Kathryn understood that. He kissed Sarah on the head and Peggy on the cheek, "I'm so glad," he said only finding those three words to say. "I'm so glad," he said again as he kissed his daughter again. Steve then turned to Michael in the high chair and kissed his son on the head too, "Daddy's home. I'm so glad all of you are okay," he said softly.

Peggy smiled at her husband, "Thanks to Barnes and Kathryn."

Steve picked up his son from the high chair and kissed him on the cheek. "Bucky?" he asked confused as he turned around and finally spotted his friend smirking at him. "What?" He asked in surprise. He then turned to Kathryn, "You…" Steve, again, couldn't find the words.

Peggy chuckled, "Long story short, darling. Kathryn is actually a SHIELD agent planted by Phillips, and protected our family until Barnes arrived."

Steve smiled at Kathryn, "Kathryn, I… I don't know what to say other than thank you. If there's anything, anything you need, please don't hesitate," he said emphasizing his words.

Kathryn smiled, "Thanks is plenty enough, Captain. Besides, it's my job."

Steve chuckled, "Great at babysitting and great at fighting. That's a potent mix." He then turned to Bucky, "Buck, thank you. Really, thank you so much. I was… I was scared. I feared…" he said in a serious tone, again unable to turn his feelings to words.

Bucky nodded, "I know, Steve. You don't need to thank me."

Steve then turned to his wife, "I came as fast I can."

Peggy nodded with a small smile, "I know," she said in a hushed tone as she walked up to Steve and leaned into him, wrapping an arm around his torso.

"You've been tracking her?" Steve asked curiously.

"I have, but she still got away after the fight."

Peggy shook her head angrily, "We're going to find her." There was no way Peggy was going to let this slide. She promised herself to put Bridget in the ground for what she did to her family.

Steve sighed, "It was only a matter of time before Hydra and Leviathan made a pass at our family. I hate to say it but, I think we need to move, and probably have better security for our family."

"I know, and I agree. I just don't want to think about all that right now," Peggy replied.
Bucky spoke up evenly, "shame, I actually like this house you two have."

Peggy rolled her eyes in response. Steve shrugged, "Looks like we're moving."

Suddenly Dugan, with his arm still in a sling, came into the kitchen with an officer by his side, "Director, Captain," he said addressing the Rogers.

Peggy looked at him confused, "Timothy?" She asked in surprise to seeing him out of the hospital.

Dugan nodded, "Glad to see the family is intact, but we got some news."

The police officer spoke up, "We're in pursuit of the assailant, she's heading east to Mamaroneck. We believe she's trying to get to the local harbor."

Peggy let go of her husband and looked up at him, "We need to get her. We can't let her get away this time."

Steve nodded, "There won't be a next time." He turned and put his son down in the high chair, "Coming with me? I know you're a month pregnant, but figure you want to take her out yourself."

Peggy nodded, "You don't need to ask. I'm coming with you." She turned around and put her daughter back down in the high chair next to Michael.

Kathryn spoke up, "I'll stay behind and keep an eye out on the kids. I'm the only one outside of you two who can care for them. The right way," she said looking in Dugan's direction.

Dugan looked confused, "Why is she looking at me when she said that?"

"No reason," Kathryn said with a grin.

Peggy nodded, "Right. Timothy, get the commandos in here and protect the house. I don't want another Hydra-Leviathan attack on my home or family."

Dugan didn't protest, "We got your family covered, Peg," he said as he turned to leave.

Steve looked over at Bucky, "Care to join us?"

Bucky smiled, "Wouldn't miss it for the world."

The officer nodded, "Once you're ready, tune into our radio frequency so we can update you on her path."

Peggy nodded, "Got it. Thank you, officer." The officer smiled confidently at her in response.

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**Harbor**

**East Basin, Mamaroneck**

It's now late afternoon, and a wounded Bridget limped across the parking lot toward the wooden docks with one of her hands putting pressure on the gunshot wound in her side as blood dripped off her stained clothes. She made it to the harbor unopposed since she lost the pursuing police thirty minutes ago when she dumped her car in a park and led the police in a wild goose chase before hijacking another car to reach the harbor. Her adrenaline was wearing off, and blood loss set in causing her to pale, weaken, and feel cold. Bridget needed to commandeer a boat and get out of the area, and fast because even though she's a chameleon and can disappear into crowds, everyone was
out looking for her. Her gunshot wound in the shoulder and bloodied and bruised look raised a lot of questions if she tried fading into the background of the town. The immediate area around her was still too hot with police and federal agents hunting for her, so she decided to cut her losses and escape altogether.

Bridget left a blood trail as blood fell down her body and dripped from her fingers to the pavement while she limped her way to the docks. The harbor looked serene with the water so calm that it almost seemed like the boats were on a gigantic mirror. The sun was warm, and the cool harbor breeze gave a welcoming sensation, but Bridget ignored it as she pushed herself to the nearest boat tied to the nearest dock. She couldn't afford any delay. As Bridget stepped onto the wooden dock she heard a series of car doors close behind her. She turned around and saw Captain Rogers, Peggy, and Barnes.

Peggy spoke up and gripped a pistol in her hand, "Give it up, Bridget. It's over."

Bridget laughed weakly, "No, it's not." Suddenly, she heard a cacophony of police sirens blaring in the distance and figured Peggy radioed her position when she got to the docks.

Steve called out to her, "Everyone is here, Regan! S.H.I.E.L.D., FBI, local police…"

"I'm surprised to see you without your shield, Captain," Bridget called back.

"Don't need it," Steve replied. Peggy looked at Steve with a surprised look, finally realizing he didn't have his shield which is surprising given the situation.

Peggy refocused on Bridget, "Drop the it now, Bridget!"

Bridget smiled, "Tell me, Captain. God's righteous man, pretending to live without war, do you really think you can live without it?" She chuckled, "Who else would you be without war?" Steve took a step forward defiantly causing Bridget to reach behind her back and remove a pistol tucked in her waistline and pointed it at him. "Nah-ah, I'd be careful if I were you, Captain." She was feeling incredibly weak from blood loss so holding the gun trained at Steve took considerable effort causing her to shake uncontrollably.

Peggy pointed her gun at Bridget, "Drop it!" She repeated. As the situation continued to escalate, the many sounds of police sirens got louder and louder, but the source of the sirens are yet to be seen. "Drop it now, Bridget. I won't repeat myself," she said demandingly. Peggy looked at her husband, "Darling, I think it's best you let me handle this one."

Steve shook his head, "I would but, she wants me here."

Bucky looked to Steve and whispered, "Captain, what's the plan now?"

"Same as before. We get her," Steve said quietly.

Bridget smiled and looked at Peggy, "Dearest, Peggy, what are the odds of me pulling the trigger before any of you can shoot me?"

"Better than you think," Peggy replied confidently.

"Willing to put your husband's life in that?"

Before Peggy responded, Steve spoke up, "She would, and I expect nothing less because the job
comes first." Peggy looked at Steve with concern and sensed that he was planning something.

"She's a very calm and calculated woman, I give her that," Bridget replied calmly.

Steve nodded, "She would undoubtedly kill you and from the looks of things, you're losing a considerable amount of blood meaning you don't much time either way…"

"What are you getting at? Are you going to save me now?" Bridget replied calmly.

Steve spoke calmly, "I know what your intentions were, Bridget. Get the country to turn its back on Barnes and me, and get us labeled as 'Yesterday's Hero.' Unfortunately, you succeeded in part of that endeavor, but at the end of the day you lose, and you will always lose. My family is safe, I still have my freedom, and Barnes is here and isn't wanted by SHIELD other than to cure him of what Hydra did. " He took another step forward, "Your attempt to kill my family to get to Peggy and me proves that Hydra and Leviathan are desperate to get rid of us." He clenched his fists, "I'd be justified to put you into the ground and bury you…but that's not the right thing to do is it?"

Bridget rolled her eyes, "Enough with this righteousness attitude. This won't stop what's going to happen."

"No, but we won't kill you if we don't have to. We're going to take you because keeping you alive will be the bigger punishment than death," Steve said sternly.

"You think you're invincible, Captain? Think you're immortal?" Bridget began tauntingly.

"No," Steve replied. Bridget chuckled and fired two un-aimed shots and one of them hit Steve in the shoulder causing him to stumble back a few steps but refused to fall. Peggy didn't hesitate and fired a pair of rounds in reply and in turn hitting Bridget in her other shoulder with both shots. The Soviet agent fell on her side and screamed in pain.

Peggy rushed to her husband's side, "Steve!" she called with worry in her voice. "Goodness," she said in shock as she put her free hand to put pressure on his shoulder wound. Steve groaned in pain as blood stained his shirt and started to pour down his body.

"I'm okay, trust me," Steve said gritting his teeth. Bucky looked at his friend calmly then back at Bridget's body with cold eyes, knowing she isn't dead.

Bridget chuckled and looked back up at Steve, "There's more where that came from," she said weakly.

Steve clenched his fists and stared into her eyes, "I can do this all day," he said as his blood dripped on the ground.

"Damn you and Peggy," Bridget replied as she attempted pointed her gun back at Steve. She then focused at Peggy just as Peggy fired her gun again and hitting her in the leg. Peggy didn't hesitate and fired a pair of rounds in reply and in turn hitting Bridget in her other shoulder with both shots. The Soviet agent fell on her side and screamed in pain.

Steve sighed in relief and pain, thankful that the situation with Bridget is finally over. Peggy came to his side and immediately attended to her husband's fresh wound, "God, Steve, are you okay?" she asked in concern but keeping internally strong.

Steve chuckled, "Yeah, I'll live."
Peggy shook her head, "You need to stop getting shot." She sighed, "what did I say about near-death experiences?"

Steve laughed but caused him pain, "Last one I promise…and technically I'm not near death, not yet at least."

Peggy shook her head, "You're so bloody stubborn." Steve smiled and nodded. "Do you want to sit?" Peggy asked as she applied pressure to his shoulder.

"No, I'll be okay," Steve replied calmly as he grunted in pain from Peggy's hands pushing into his shoulder. The couple suddenly heard the sirens getting louder and cars pulling into the parking lot which signaled to her that SHIELD, FBI, and law enforcement finally arrived. Peggy briefly looked over to the parking lot to see SHIELD and FBI agents getting out of their cars and rushing toward them. She then turned to Bucky still pinning Bridget on the ground with his boot, "Barnes, you got her?"

Bucky smiled, "Oh I got her," he said over Bridget's groans. She was much paler from extreme blood loss, but there's a chance she might live if she can get medical care quickly enough.

Steve looked at Peggy, "Peggy?" he asked softly.

Peggy looked up at her husband, "Yes, my darling?"

"I think I'm done being Captain America."

"What?" She replied in surprise.

"I'm done," Steve said.

Peggy looked at him with surprise, "Darling, maybe it's not the best time to think about it."

Steve shook his head, "No, I've been thinking about it for a while." He sighed, "We finally got Bridget, and I think it's time to end it here."

"Where is this coming from, Steve?" Peggy asked.

"No more fighting. No more war." He sighed, "I've been fighting all my life, Peggy; whether it be sickness, bad guys, Nazi's, Hydra, you name it, I want...I want to go home," Steve said softly. "To finally find some small measure of peace and settle down."

Peggy smiled at her husband and kissed his cheek, "And I'll be there with you. Always." She wanted to ask what happens if SHIELD needed him again, but she knew he would return for that short time that's required of him.

Steve looked at his wife adoringly, "SHIELD has you leading them, and I believe that'll be more than enough. People don't need someone with a shield kicking down doors anymore, but they need you. Many people won't admit it, but the country is safer with you leading SHIELD." Peggy smiled lovingly at her husband in response. He looked over at Bucky who was joined by FBI and SHIELD agents to take away Bridget, "And I'm sure Bucky could use a job too. Though I'm sure, he'll need some convincing."

Peggy chuckled, "Since I've known you, you've always been a smooth talker." Steve couldn't laugh and instead groaned in pain as his wound continued to bleed. "Hospital?" Steve nodded quietly in response. Peggy wrapped an arm around his body and her other hand continued to put pressure on his shoulder wound as the couple made their way to the car. As the couple walked toward the car,
Peggy looked up at Steve, "the simple life sounds amazing, darling. Though I'm the Director of an intelligence agency life won't be as simple, but I'm sure we can make it work."

Steve chuckled, "We always do." He smiled, "you know… watching our family grow and seeing our kids get older, I think that's the greatest task I'll ever undertake."

Peggy rolled her eyes, "You're always so dramatic, Steve." She smiled up at him playfully, "But you have a way with words."

Suddenly the couple spotted Agent Witwer and Thompson calmly walking up to them. The two agents stopped in front of the couple with Witwer greeting the two of them first, "Shit, Captain. You alright? Can't catch a break huh?" Steve just shrugged in response.

Thompson, who had a couple scrapes and bruises on his face from the explosion earlier in the day, greeted the couple, "Another suicide mission for Captain America?" he said with a smile.

Peggy chuckled, "Not yet if we can get him to the hospital." She nodded at Thompson, "Glad you're okay, Jack."

Thompson sighed, "Yeah, took a few casualties from the bomb, but Li and Ramirez are okay." He nodded toward Bridget, "Wonder why you two even kept her alive."

Peggy sighed, "Need her alive because she's the only Red Room Assassin we caught that we can try and get information from. Though hopefully she doesn't bleed out any time soon."

Witwer smiled at Peggy, "In any case, we're glad to say your family is okay and, we're happy that you finally got her."

Peggy nodded, "SHIELD has jurisdiction on this one, Witwer."

Witwer rose his hands, "I know, I know." He shrugged, "I'm actually here to help SHIELD apprehend her, and unfortunately assure that Captain America over here doesn't get involved as per the new Attorney General of the United States and the Enhanced Individual Regulation Act."

Peggy sighed, "I know the Act. But, the government won't need to worry about my husband anymore."

"And why's that?"

Steve smiled, "I'm retiring as Captain America."

Witwer and Thompson looked at each other with surprise. Thompson was the first to speak up, "Wow, that's surprising to say the least."

Witwer agreed, "That's an understatement. We in the FBI, and me personally, never thought you would want to put the shield down, Captain."

Steve nodded, "Can't punch everything." He groaned in pain as a burst of pain shot through his gunshot wound. His gunshot wounds didn't appear urgent but better safe than sorry to get him back to the hospital as soon as possible.

Thompson spoke up, "What are you going to do?"

Steve smiled, "Watch my children grow up and get a more peaceful job." Thompson nodded and smiled at him in understanding.
Witwer sighed, "I'm sorry, Captain. I was wrong about you and now the politicians forced you to…"

Steve gritted his teeth in pain as he adjusted his posture, "No, this is my choice. I gave almost everything for this country…"

"You gave everything, Steve," Peggy interrupted. In her mind, Steve did give everything for his country. He dedicated his body to the SSR and the United States and sacrificed his life to stop Schmidt and the Valkyrie during the war. In all accounts, Steve did give everything, and he was lucky to come back.

Steve shook his head as he looked at Peggy with a small smile, "Not everything." He looked back at Thompson and Witwer and smiled, "it's time to move on. Focus on family and some peace."

Witwer spoke up, "There's always someone to fight, and you know someone is going to fill the gap for Bridget. Hydra, Leviathan, and the Soviets are still acting against us and have plenty of those Red Room Assassins in the country."

Steve smiled, "Yeah, but you don't need me to fight them. You don't need a kid from Brooklyn with a shield." He nodded to Peggy and Thompson, "You need people like Peggy, Li, and Thompson who have the fortitude, the strong mental aptitude, and the tools to outplay and counter them." Peggy and Thompson smiled in response.

Peggy gripped Steve's side, "I got to get my husband to the hospital, we can talk more about this later." She looked at Thompson, "Jack, see to it that medics patch up Bridget and get her back to the hospital. Twenty-four-hour security around her at all times."

Thompson nodded, "Yes, Director." He looked passed the couple and saw Barnes hovering over the team of SHIELD and FBI agents doing field care on Bridget. "What about Barnes?"

Peggy nodded, "tell him I'll meet him at the SHIELD HQ later, and we'll talk."

Thompson nodded again, "You got it." With that Peggy helped Steve walk away to the car while both Thompson and Witwer watched them curiously. Thompson sighed, "There goes a genuine good man. End of a hero," he said to no one in particular.

Witwer patted him on the shoulder, "He'll always be a hero, Jack. No one will ever take that away from him." He smiled, "I was wrong about him, and many politicians are too. He saw wrongs and tried to fix it, and he saw evil, and he destroyed it. The important thing is that this country knows what he has done and the sacrifices he made, and that's enough for him in the end."

Thompson nodded, "Yeah. People will never know how much he's truly done though."

"Yeah, but they'll always know Captain Rogers is a hero to them," Witwer replied quietly.

"You know, if you get bored at the FBI, you can always apply at SHIELD. You aren't half bad after all," Thompson said with a grin as he walked off to supervise the apprehension and medical treatment of Bridget leaving Witwer to contemplate what he just said.

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**Three Days later**

**Time Square, New York City, SHIELD: AEGIS HEADQUARTERS**

**SPU Team Room**
Steve opened his locker in the SPU team room for the first time in a week and a half, and it's for the last time. He has recently discharged from the hospital, and thanks to his rapid regenerating capabilities his wounds are completely closed and have made a speedy recovery. His two chest wounds fully healed, and his shoulder wound also recovered, but feels a little sore and will likely be painless in a few days' time. Thanks to the super soldier serum, his healing is considerably faster than the average human. Bullet wounds begin mending in hours and are fully healed in a day or two, but his recent gunshot wounds proximity to his heart made the nurses and doctors have him stay in the hospital longer than needed just in case.

Steve's shield was by his locker as he removed his personal belongings and placed them in a cardboard box on the bench behind him. The box contained all the items he kept at SHIELD and consisted of some hygiene items, a small towel, a pair of folded clothes, and a stack of books he enjoyed reading. As Steve removed the last few books from the top shelf of his locker to put in his box, Bucky appeared around the corner of his locker. Steve looked up briefly and smiled at his friend, "Hey, Buck," he said as put the books neatly in the box.

Bucky leaned on Steve's locker, "You're really quitting as Captain America," he said as a statement more than a question.

Steve chuckled as he turned to the door of his locker to remove the photos of Peggy and his family taped to the inside of the door. "Yeah, I'm out. Time to move on from this," Steve said as he removed a photo of Peggy smiling happily while holding both Michael and Sarah in her arms on the couch.

Bucky nodded, "If this is because of the Act the Government passed, I'm sure there's a way to have them give you more leeway to do your job."

Steve took a moment to gaze at the photo in his hand before continuing to peel off the rest, "No, it's not that. But that did give me a good push to turn in the shield." He turned to Bucky and smiled, "I want to do this, Buck. I got a family to raise, and it feels good to have a real family again. Outside the one I have from the Army and SHIELD, I mean." He chuckled, "You know I've been fighting all my life in some way. It's time settle down. Family, stability… peace."

Bucky smiled, "I believe you."

Steve got the last photo off his locker and placed them in the box. He turned to his friend, "Hey, now that you're a free man, you should stop by and have dinner with the family. We'll love to have you." He shrugged, "I mean after we figure out where we'll move next."

Bucky chuckled, "I'll consider it."

"It'll be fun, Buck. I promise."

Bucky shrugged, "I still got a long way before I'm free, Steve."

"What do you mean?" Steve asked curiously.

Bucky shook his head, "I can't trust my own head. What Hydra put in me is still there and I've done bad things."

Steve closed his locker then walked up to his friend and patted his shoulder, "We all have, Buck. That stuff you did wasn't you. But forgiveness starts with forgiving yourself." Bucky nodded quietly. Steve smiled, "Forgiveness is making a conscious decision to live in the present even if the past still hurts." Bucky remained silent and didn't know what to say. Steve nodded, "You'll get there. I know
As Steve turned to his box, Bucky spoke up, "the SHIELD doctors, scientists, and Stark are working with me to help me. To cure me from this."

"That's good," Steve said as he reorganized his box.

"They even offered me a job."

Steve chuckled and faced his friend, "What did you say?"

"I said I'd think about it. I might want to find some peace too," Bucky replied calmly.

"I don't blame you, Buck. We all seek some small measure of peace, and you deserve it more than most." Steve picked up his shield and walked up to Bucky, "But if you want to stay in SHIELD."

He held up his shield to Bucky, "There's only two people in the building who can use this shield to its potential and one of them is married to me."

Bucky slowly took the shield, "You're giving me your shield?"

Steve nodded, "If you want to work in SHIELD then you'll need this. But in the end, it's up to you."

He chuckled, "Besides, I don't own the shield, the government does."

Bucky gripped the vibranium shield and looked down and saw his reflection in the shining surface.

He sighed when he saw how much he's changed in the past few years worn in the corner of his eyes.

Hydra and Leviathan are the cause of much of his pain and the pain of thousands of other people.

But even though Bucky hated Hydra and the Soviets, he still didn't know what to do, but time will tell. He gripped the shield and looked back up at Steve, "I'll consider it."

Steve nodded at Bucky, "You're a good man, Buck. You'll find the right answer."

Suddenly Phillips walked into the locker room with a white envelope in his hand, "Rogers, there you are."

"Director," Steve greeted courteously.

Phillips smiled and handed Steve the envelope, "Just wanted to show you appreciation for all your work." Steve opened the envelope and when he removed the paper inside he was surprised at what he saw. "Consider this a going away present." He smiled, "Also reparations for all the trouble you and Peggy been through the past few weeks."

Steve chuckled and put the paper back in the envelope, "Thank you," he said with a nod. "Thank you," he repeated as he shook Phillips' hand.

Phillips smiled and shook his head, "Still can't wrap my head around your resignation." Steve laughed in response. "You aren't planning on getting fat, are you?"

Steve shook his head with a grin, "I'm planning to settle down, not rot. My kids will keep me active I'm sure."

"Fair enough."

Steve shook Phillips' hand again, "If you need me, you know where to find me."

"Deal," Phillips said with a happy smile. Steve grinned then turned around and placed the envelope in the box before picking it up off the bench, and making his way out of the team room with Phillips
Steve, Bucky, and Phillips exited the elevator to the lobby and quickly saw Peggy standing with Michael in her arms with a stroller her at her side next to Kathryn who carried Sarah, the commandos, Howard Stark, Thompson, Ramirez, Li, and a handful of other agents. Peggy was in pleasant conversation with the group around her with the sounds of laughter echoing in the spacious SHIELD lobby. Steve walked up to the group and smiled, "What's going on?"

Peggy turned to her husband, "Some of these ladies and gentlemen of SHIELD wanted to see you off before you go."

Michael babbled, "Dada," he called out upon seeing his father which earned him a kiss on the cheek from Peggy.

Dugan, who still had his arm in a sling, grinned, "Couldn't let you go without saying goodbye!" Everyone nodded in agreement.

Steve laughed, "You know, I'm still going to be in the area."

Falsworth nodded, "Yes, but not as a SHIELD operative anymore. A civilian. We won't see you as much, now."

Peggy chuckled, "You boys can always come visit us."

Li spoke up, "We can too?" he asked with a grin.

"I don't know about that," Peggy said with a smile.

Steve nodded at Peggy, "I got everything."

"Ready to go home?" Peggy asked.

"Ready." With that Peggy gently put Michael in the stroller while Kathryn did the same with Sarah.

Kathryn smiled at Peggy, "If you ever need a babysitter, you can always call me. You know where I work."

Peggy laughed, "I appreciate it, Kathryn. But, I'm sure your skills as an agent will come in handy somewhere else." Kathryn smiled happily at her boss.

Howard nodded at Steve with a grin, "Steve, if you and Peg need a new home. I got a place for you, and we'll make sure Hydra doesn't come knocking."

Steve smirked and waved his hand "Ah, Howard, you've done a lot for us already. We don't want you keep spending money on us. We're square."

Howard smiled, "Well think about it. It's one of my more… humbler properties that I rarely visit. Little bigger than you house now and about the same distance from the city. It's got a nice view and we can keep it off SHIELD's files." He looked over at the commandos, "I'm sure your team of commandos can help move."

Gabe rolled his eyes and crossed his arms, "Yeah, ask us to do the grunt work."

Steve nodded at Howard, "Thanks, Howard. I uh… got a lot to think about. But I'll keep that in mind," he said as he took a step back.
Dugan knew time was up, so he stepped toward Steve and smiled, "Guess this is it."

"Yes, it is," Steve replied.

Dugan grinned at Steve for a moment before bringing him in for a tight hug with his good arm, "take care of yourself, Captain."

Steve let go of Dugan, "You too." He then turned to Falsworth who embraced him too.

"Have a nice life, Rogers," Falsworth said softly.

Steve turned to Gabe and embraced in a friendly hug too. Gabe smiled, "Thanks for taking care of us, Captain. And being good to me..."

Steve let go of Gabe, "You're a good man, Gabe." He laughed, "But you guys tend to need some help from time-to-time. Stay out of trouble."

Jim laughed, "I guarantee you we won't," he said as he too hugged the Captain.

Steve finally turned to Jacques and hugged his French friend, "Au Revoir, Jacques."

Jacques let go of the Captain and nodded, "Merci, my Captain."

Steve embraced and shook the hands of the rest of the commandos and the other SHIELD agents to say final goodbyes. He will miss being with the commandos, the banter, and camaraderie they formed together. The commandos and SHIELD have also been a family to him, but his priority now is the family with Peggy raising their two children and soon to be third. After he said his last goodbyes, Steve turned with a smile to Peggy and took her hand in his then began to make his way to the exit with Peggy pushing the stroller with her free hand. As Steve and Peggy walked away, Steve briefly looked over his shoulder and saw Dugan leaning back with his uninjured arm up in the air screaming, "Woo!" Peggy also turned around just as the group of commandos and agents cheered, clapped, hooped, and hollered as they exited. Soon the entire lobby joined the applause and was quickly filled with cheers and claps as Steve and Peggy exited the building.

Steve smiled the widest smile as he gripped Peggy's hand and turned back toward the door, off to start another chapter in his life.

Hospital

Bridget lay awake in her hospital bed, wrapped in numerous bandages and an IV in her arm in the Critical Care Unit of a hospital. Her hands were locked inside metal braces so she couldn't use her fingers and her wrists were handcuffed to the side of the bed to prevent her from escaping. The extra precautions with her fingers were due to Peggy's directive to assure she won't be able to slip out of the handcuffs or use her fingers in the attempt to escape. In addition to her hand braces and handcuffs, she's surrounded by two SHIELD agents with numerous other agents patrolling the hospital halls.

Bridget turned to the door when she heard it open, revealing the new Attorney General of the United States, Tom C. Clark, escorted by a team of two FBI agents. Bridget looked away and sighed in slight annoyance upon seeing his form. Clark walked up to her bed and nodded, "You're going to be put away for the rest of your life, Bridget, and no one will care." Bridget gave a cold look as she continued to stare up at the ceiling, refusing to look at him. "You're SHIELD's baby now, and they have a special place for terrorists, assassins, and enemy agents. It would be compared to your Gulag's." Clark smiled, "But in my opinion this is worse, and it's all legal." He crossed his arms, "So
how does it feel? Putting in all that time and effort to get to Captain Rogers and Barnes, and for us to turn our backs on him, but in the end to see it fail?” He smiled, "trying to go after the Rogers family… that took some fortitude, but you failed even that. Your goal failed so spectacularly."

Bridget slowly turned to look Clark dead in the eyes, "Did it?" she asked calmly as a wide smile slowly grew across her face

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**Captain America will Return**

**Civil War Comic ideas: Enhanced Individuals Regulation Act based off the Registration Acts in the comics.**

**It will Continue!**

**Hope You Enjoyed! Thanks for Reading!**
A few months after Steve left SHIELD, he and Peggy finally decided to move to a new home, this time keeping the address off of official SHIELD files for privacy and added security to avoid a similar situation from before when Bridget nearly destroyed their family. The Rogers thought about taking Howard’s offer but decided against it because the house he had in mind was a little large and too luxurious for their taste. The property was "humbler" for Howard's standards but still too extravagant for the Rogers. The family also didn't want to leave Scarsdale because it genuinely felt like home to them, has good schools, and it was a decent distance from the city. Though its much safer if they relocated to a whole other town, the Rogers, mostly Peggy, figured withholding the address from SHIELD files and having additional rotating Guardian Angel teams would be enough. So, the Rogers family stayed in Scarsdale and only moved to another neighborhood.

The Rogers new home is slightly larger than their old house in addition to having bigger front and backyards. The properties along the neighborhood were more spaced which produced more privacy for each resident. The house is also more modern compared to their old home and had five full bedrooms, four full baths, and a partial bathroom on the first floor. Along with the two bigger yards, tall cypress trees surrounded the house, and a tall wood fence enclosed the backyard for added privacy around their home. Both yards also had a couple of crape myrtle trees planted in both yards for décor giving the house a brighter color on the outside. The Rogers new white and black trimmed two-story house is complete with a basement, a driveway, and an attached two car garage. Left of the garage are small steps up to the front covered porch and the front door. Passed the front door is the foyer which contained the stairs to the second floor, three passageways either to the living room on the left, the kitchen directly ahead, and garage, bathroom, and closet on the right. Left of the foyer is the living room complete with a fireplace. Continuing from the living room is the dining room with a large table to sit many guests for special occasions such as holidays and gatherings. To the right of the room is the spacious kitchen with a kitchen table for family dinners, and a back door to the patio deck and backyard. To the Right of the kitchen is the large family room complete with another fireplace. On the second floor, to the back of the house is the master bedroom with adjacent master bathroom and walk-in closet. Toward the front of the house on the left is a bedroom with a full bath. To the right of the stairs is a small hallway that splits off to lead to the three-bedrooms, one on each end of the house, and one located between the two. The bedroom to the back of the hallway has its own bathroom, and the two other bedrooms share a full bath.

When the Rogers finally finished moving into their new home, they began to settle in nicely all the while buying more furniture to fill their home as well as prepare for their new baby. Steve, being an avid fan of movies, purchased a television set shortly after moving in much to Peggy's dismay. She eventually warmed up to the idea and thoroughly enjoyed a few programs on their new TV, finding that watching the news was more interesting than merely listening to it on the radio. For the following months after Steve's "retirement" the Rogers family lived in relative peace and stability in their new neighborhood. Peggy continued her career as Deputy Director of SHIELD while Steve returned to school under the GI Bill attending a number of business, personnel management classes, as well as keeping up with his talent for art at the university. The family also got along well with their neighbors and sometimes had get-togethers, especially with the Rawlings family across the street and the Johnson couple a few houses down.

Since Peggy found out her babysitter was a SHIELD agent, she needed to find a new sitter.
Unfortunately, she didn't think anyone could compare to Kathryn. Kathryn, though she enjoyed her time with the two Rogers twins, she accepted the first field assignment from Peggy without hesitation. After a handful of interviews and a month passed, Steve and Peggy, mostly Peggy, selected the new babysitter named April Perez, a kind and youthful Filipino-American who lived with her parents nearby. She, of course, went through a strict security check before being hired as a babysitter for the Rogers. Sarah and Michael initially looked troubled after being introduced to their new sitter since they were so used to Kathryn, but after the first day, the twins took an instant liking to her. From then on, like Kathryn, April was welcomed into the family.

The months following Steve's retirement from SHIELD, Bucky has been undergoing daily psych sessions with a multitude of SHIELD doctors and specialists to help him break free from the brainwashing committed by Hydra and the Soviets. During this time, Peggy and Phillips oversaw his reintegration into regular life by providing him with an apartment in the city and money which consisted of mostly back pay the US government owed him for his time in the Army. By September, after months of daily psych session, the doctors reported progress that Bucky is slowly overcoming the effects of the brainwashing and limited him to once a week meeting. Bucky, however, still fearful of the demons he carries happily continued the sessions by volunteering to go twice a week instead of once a week with a SHIELD psychiatrist. At the end of his daily prescribed psych sessions, Bucky took up the job in SHIELD under the condition that he would not participate in assassination missions and will only deploy to protect people. Peggy understood and assigned him to serve alongside the SPU and his old teammates again under the charge of Sergeant Timothy Dugan, who took over after Steve left.

November 26, 1949

Steve & Margaret Rogers Residence, Scarsdale NY

It's another beautiful autumn midmorning in the Rogers house and Peggy, now nine months pregnant just finished getting dressed into a red-orange long-sleeve maternity dress in the bathroom. Peggy recently took maternity leave once she passed her seventh month of pregnancy, leaving Daniel Sousa as acting Deputy Director in her absence, and enjoyed some time off with her family. Being the responsible leader and dedicated individual, she is, Peggy regularly checked in with Sousa either by phone or in person to keep tabs on current SHIELD operations and the security environment. Peggy may be on leave, but that doesn't mean she isn't responsible for her job. After Peggy's first pregnancy, she spearheaded the policy for maternity leave in SHIELD for mothers of newborns or newly adopted children. Stark and Phillips agreed with the system and by the beginning of 1948, SHIELD became the first government agency to provide maternity leave for female employees. Historically, maternity leave was not a pertinent legislative concern since mothers were primarily prevented from labor force participation, so SHIELD's maternity policy was enacted quietly as mainly an employer-based policy.

Peggy let her wavy hair down and finished putting her earrings on, so she can start her busy Saturday because today is Sarah's and Michael's second birthday. The family planned a nice day in the city with the twins to celebrate before have cake back at home. As Peggy stared in the mirror putting on her last earring she called out to her husband, "Darling!"

After a moment, Steve appeared at the door, already ready to go in a blue shirt and tie with matching trousers, "I'm here, honey. What do you need?" he asked in a protective tone, always on protective mode since Peggy started showing. Peggy always found his protectiveness sweet and attractive but at times annoying when the hormones toyed with her emotions.

Peggy smiled at him through the reflection of the mirror, "relax, darling. I just wanted to know if the twins are ready."
Steve smiled and walked toward Peggy, "Oh. Yeah, they're ready to go and waiting for their 
mommy." He chuckled, "Your parents are just playing with them right now to keep them busy."

Harrison and Amanda Carter came to visit at the beginning of the week to join Steve and Peggy in 
the Thanksgiving holiday for the first time and to also finally meet their two grandkids they've been 
dying to see since they were born a few years ago. Unfortunately, Vickie, Ed, and their son Alex 
couldn't join the Carters because Ed couldn't get time off from work to visit. Peggy and Steve 
understood and promised Vickie and Ed that they'd be able to meet Sarah and Michael very soon, 
and likely their third child whom they haven't pick a name for yet.

Peggy smiled, "Great." Once she finally finished putting on her earing she turned around and faced 
her husband, "So? How do I look?" she said twirling side-to-side.

Steve wrapped his arms around Peggy and brought her close as possible, "Beautiful. Always drop 
dead beautiful. Like I'd marry you all over again."

Peggy giggled, "Even at nine months pregnant?"

"Don't even question it, honey," Steve said with a grin as he kissed her lips briefly.

Peggy laughed, "With you, I wouldn't ever question it."

Steve chuckled as he went down on one knee and kissed her protruding belly, "Hey there, buddy. 
Ready to celebrate your brother and sister's birthday?"

Peggy laughed, "We're not betting on gender, again are we?"

Steve kissed her belly again and stood up, "My money is still a boy."

Peggy rolled her eyes, "You know I have to bet against you. Besides, I know it's going to be a girl 
because mother's intuition is never wrong."

Steve sighed, "I wasn't wrong last time either by the way."

"Neither was I," she replied humorously. "I guess we'll just have to wait and see," Peggy said with a 
smile as she kissed him on the cheek.

"We still have to pick a name. We have two for each gender, but we haven't quite decided yet," 
Steve said plainly.

Peggy sighed, "I know. So many names it's hard to pick. We can talk about it later tonight after we 
get back home," she said as she ran a hand through her hair. "Dine in tonight or in the city?" she 
asked curiously.

Steve shrugged, "I saw we dine in tonight. We still have a ton of leftovers from Thanksgiving."

Peggy sighed, "I forgot about that." She rubbed her baby belly gently, "Well I know I'll be craving 
random foods regardless what we do," she said with a chuckle.

Steve smiled, "We also have a cake for the twins downstairs in the fridge." He nodded, "Also if we 
eat in tonight and the twins get tired, we have a shorter distance to put them to bed." He shrugged, 
"Essentially, less logistic concerns if we eat here tonight."

Peggy shook her head with a grin, "Okay, darling. You made your point."

"I have my moments of genius," Steve replied with a grin.
"Don't push it, sweetheart," Peggy replied humorously.

"It's going to be a great family day," Steve replied happily.

Peggy chuckled in agreement, "I'm looking forward to it too." She turned to look at the clock on the wall and noted it was time to go, "We should join my parents downstairs, so we can head out."

Steve nodded, "right," he said as he turned and left the bathroom with Peggy, turning off the lights as they left.

Steve and Peggy made their way down to the foyer then into the family room where Harrison, Amanda, and the twins are. Upon entering the family room, Peggy saw her mother sitting at one of the couches with Sarah on her lap while her father sat on the adjacent couch with Michael on his.

"Good morning," Peggy greeted cheerfully. Everyone was dressed for the brisk autumn outside, everyone but Steve and Peggy who still needed to grab their coats from the downstairs closet, even the little twins were bundled in warm clothes.

Amanda, dressed in a brown overcoat over her dress, turned around at the sound of her daughter's voice, "Good morning, darling." She looked at the clock on the wall, "Goodness, Peggy. We're going to be behind if we stay here any longer."

Peggy chuckled, "I know, mother. It's kind of hard to do things like this," she said rubbing her belly.

Steve kissed Peggy's cheek, "I'll grab our coats." Peggy smiled at him in response as he turned and left for the closet by the garage.

Amanda smiled at Peggy, "I know, sweetie. I've been there too."

Harrison, dressed warmly in a coat over his suit, smiled and held up Michael in the air, "Happy Birthday, Michael! You have such a handsome son!" He put the toddler back on his lap before looking at Sarah on Amanda's lap, "And such a beautiful daughter. Do you know that?"

Peggy chuckled, "I do." She walked over to her father and smiled at her son on his lap, "Happy Birthday, sweetie," she said to her son who grinned happily at her.

"It's so good to finally meet our grandchildren," Harrison said while kissing the little boy on the head.

"You already said that, father," Peggy said with a smile.

Amanda laughed, "And he'll keep saying it. Just wait until he meets the other one," she said mentioning Peggy's unborn baby. Peggy smiled in response as she stretched her sore back. "No name yet?" Amanda said with a grin.

Peggy sighed, "Mother, asking us about names everyday isn't going to help much."

Harrison chuckled, "Don't mind your mother, Peggy. She's just excited." He raised his brows, "As am I. We finally meet our grandkids, and now there's another one on the way it's so exciting!"

Sarah touched Amanda's face and babble softly, "Mama…"

Amanda smiled, "I'm your grandma, sweetie. Your mama is behind me."

Peggy made her way over to her mother's couch and smiled at her daughter, "Do you want mommy, darling?"
"I Want Mama," Sarah said as she leaned and reached for her mother.

Peggy chuckled, "Okay, here we go," she said as she walked around the couch and picked up her daughter off of her mother's lap. "Happy Birthday, Darling," Peggy said happily as she kissed her daughter on the cheek, earning a giggle from her daughter.

Amanda spoke up in concern, "Darling, you don't have to carry her now. Take a seat and relax your feet."

Peggy shook her head, "We're about to leave, mother."

Suddenly Steve appeared with his dark grey coat on and Peggy's navy-blue coat draped over his arm, "Ready?"

Peggy nodded at her husband as she bounced their daughter in her arms, "Ready."

Steve looked at his father-in-law, "sir, if you don't mind, can you carry Michael? I got to pack the pram in the car."

Harrison nodded while grinning at his grandson, "You don't have to ask, Steve."

Steve walked over to Peggy by the couch, "Got your coat, hon."

Peggy smiled and turned to her mother, "On second thought, mother, can you take Sarah for me? Just for a moment?"

Amanda smiled, "Of course," she said as she took her granddaughter from Peggy.

With Peggy's hands free, Steve kindly helped put Peggy's coat on, "Thank you, darling," Peggy said with a smile.

"I'll pack up the pram and get the car started," Steve said with a smile as he walked out of the family room.

Amanda smiled as Steve exited the room then looked at Peggy, "I love your husband, Peggy. He's so very helpful and kind. I'm so happy you found each other. In middle of a war of all places."

Peggy smiled, "Steve is a very capable man, and very kind. He's the perfect husband and father," she said in admiration.

Harrison chuckled, "And you said he stopped being Captain America to be with you and the kids?"

Peggy nodded, "Other things factored into his leaving, but that's the main part of it. He's going back to school doing business classes, so he could find a good civilian job and be closer to home. The Carters didn't have the full picture or the whole story as to why their son-in-law retired as Captain America, and they especially didn't know about the situation with Bridget a few months ago, and Peggy wanted to keep it that way.

"I respect that. He's a good man, Peggy," Harrison said approvingly. Even though Steve earned their blessing years ago, he still finds ways to impress Peggy's parents which makes Peggy feel good and secure within her family.

"Don't I know it," Peggy said with a smile.

"Not to mention a safer career choice. God knows what he has to do as Captain America," Amanda said plainly.
Peggy smiled to herself, *you got no idea mother*. Suddenly, Sarah started to wine and whimper as she tried reaching for her mother again.

Amanda bounced the little girl in her arms, "It's okay, darling. You'll be with mama in the car, just hang in there." She looked at Peggy, "Let's go before Sarah starts to cry." Peggy nodded and led the way through the house to the front door.

After a long fun day in the city, the Rogers and the Carters came home around four in the afternoon and had dinner consisting of Thanksgiving leftovers. During their trip to the city, the family took dozens of pictures, visited Central Park, American Museum of Natural History which the twins looked to enjoy thoroughly, and, of course, visited Time Square. Photos filled both the Rogers and Carters camera of the day's events with many of the pictures surrounding Sarah and Michael. Even though Peggy had to often stop due to her feet aching, it didn't prevent the family from having fun. The twins second-birthday in the city was one for the scrapbooks. This week has been a time of making memories that both Steve and Peggy and Harrison and Amanda will forever cherish. From the Carters visiting the Rogers for the first time in the United States, Carters first Thanksgiving, and their first time seeing their grandchildren, it has been a week of firsts and a week of smiles.

It's now early evening, and the autumn sun was setting, producing a vivid orange and yellow glow in the family room and kitchen through the windows. Harrison sat on the couch, relaxing in the family room next to Michael and Peggy while listening to music on the radio. As Peggy and her father relaxed on the sofa enjoying father-daughter conversation, they kept a watchful eye on Michael playing cheerfully between them, and Sarah playing with her toys on the carpet at their feet. In the kitchen, Steve was happily prepping the birthday cake for the twins with candles while Amanda cleared and reset the table for the cake which also served as dessert.

Harrison chuckled, "I can't believe you and Steve got a television set," he said staring at their blocky television set at the corner of the family room.

Peggy shrugged, "Steve thinks it's the way of the future. I didn't believe him at first when he first bought it, but I warmed up to the idea." She saw Michael trying to stand up on the couch cushion causing her to loosely wrap her arm around him, "Careful, darling. You'll fall." Michael babbled happily before turning to face his mother and falling toward her chest. Peggy giggled at her son's antics, running a hand over his short brown hair, "See?"

Harrison chuckled, "You're so cute, Peggy. Being a mother really does suit you."

Peggy rolled her eyes, "Don't start with that, father," she said humorously as she tickled her son at her side.

Amanda appeared from the kitchen, wiping her hands with a towel, "Steve is almost done with the cake and the table is cleaned and ready for our birthday girl and boy," she said with a smile.

Peggy looked over her shoulder and smiled, "Thanks for helping in there, mother. I would if..."

Amanda waved her hands dismissively, "It's nothing, sweetheart. Besides, you're nine months pregnant. You need to relax, and besides Sarah and Michael love spending time with you."

Peggy chuckled, "Thanks, mother."

"Oh, Steve told me their presents are in your room?" Amanda asked curiously.

"Oh yes, the presents are upstairs on the floor of our closet. If you can get them that be great."
Amanda nodded, "Not a problem, sweetie," she said as she turned to head upstairs.

Peggy looked at her son by her side and smiled, "Ready to have cake, darling? And open your presents?"

Michael grinned happily, "Yeah!" He responded excitedly. He then turned confused for a moment, "Where Daddy?" he asked in a broken question wondering where his father has been.

Peggy smiled, "Your daddy is getting the cake ready. He's here. Don't worry, darling."

Harrison leaned forward and scooped up Sarah earning a loud enthusiastic laugh from the toddler and sat her down on his lap, "Almost time for presents and cake, sweetheart!"

Sarah hugged her grandfather, "Yay!" she cheered enthusiastically.

Almost on cue in the kitchen, Steve carefully put the chocolate cake down at the head of the table, "Cake's ready!" He then turned to get a box of matches from one of the countertop drawers.

Peggy slowly stood up from the couch and hoisted Michael into her arms, "Cake time, sweetie! And that means birthday time!" she said happily as she walked to the kitchen. Michael grinned and hugged his mother and leaned his head on her shoulder.

Harrison stood up and held Sarah, "Ready for some sweets?" Sarah nodded enthusiastically as her grandpa carried her to the kitchen.

As Peggy entered the kitchen she saw the decorated chocolate cake with a ring of birthday candles on the surface, "Looks nice, honey," she said to Steve as she walked around the table.

"It's their birthday, nothing but the best!" Steve expressed happily as he walked back to the table with the box of matches.

As Peggy gently put Michael in his highchair, she heard someone knock on the door, "Darling, can you get the door? I'll take care of the candles," she said with a smile.

"Got it," Steve replied and put the box of matches down on the table before turning for the foyer.

Once Peggy got Michael situated in his highchair she reached for the matches but was immediately stopped by her father who just put Sarah in her highchair. "Peggy, I'll take care of the cake, take a seat and relax," her father said warmly. Peggy nodded and took her seat by the head of the table next to her son's highchair as her father started lighting the candles.

In the foyer, Steve opened the door and to his surprise saw Angie and Daniel standing on his porch with Angie carrying a small bag of gifts. "Daniel? Angie? What are you two doing here?" he asked surprised.

Angie grinned, "Not going to miss my Goddaughter's and Godson's second birthday."

Daniel chuckled, "Didn't mean to intrude, Steve, but we just wanted to swing by and give them their birthday gifts in person."

Steve laughed and stepped aside to let them in, "No, it's okay. You guys can stay a while and have some cake and open presents with them. Besides, the twins love seeing you."

Angie smiled, "thanks, Steve," she said as she walked into the foyer followed by Daniel.

Steve closed the door behind them, "Peggy's in the kitchen already, and her parents are here too."
Angie turned around and grinned, "Peg's parents are here! Oh, I'm so excited to finally meet them!"

Daniel chuckled, "Thanks for inviting us to stay."

Steve waved, "Nah it's okay. Probably should've invited you two anyway since you're their godparents. We were swamped preparing for thanksgiving, having Peggy's parents over, and planning for the kids birthday."

Daniel patted Steve on the back, "It's not a problem."

Amanda Carter appeared from the top of the stairs with paper bags in her hands, and called out to Steve, "Steve, who are the new guests?"

Steve smiled and looked at the couple beside him, "Amanda, this is Angie and Daniel Sousa. They're Sarah and Michael's godparents and friends of ours."

Amanda walked down the steps and smiled at the couple, "Charmed to meet you."

Angie grinned happily, "Likewise, Ma'am."

Amanda got to the bottom step, "My daughter mentioned you a lot. Angie, right?" Angie nodded with a smile. "It's great to finally meet you."

Angie nodded happily, "Same here. I always wanted to meet Peggy's parents."

"So, my daughter says you're a successful actress on Broadway."

Steve interrupted, "Amanda, she's actually one of the most popular Broadway actresses AND singers in the city. The city loves her."

Angie waved her hand, "Stop it, Steve." She looked back at Amanda, "But, yes, Ma'am. I'm an actress."

"That's extraordinary, Angie," Amanda said genuinely.

Suddenly the group heard Peggy call from the foyer, "Darling, who's at the door?"

Steve chuckled at the group, "Right, we got a birthday to celebrate." He called back to his wife, "The Sousas are here!" With that Angie and Amanda walked toward the kitchen together while continuing their pleasant conversation while Steve and Daniel followed close behind.

Daniel looked up at Steve as he limped toward the kitchen, "How's civilian life?"

Steve chuckled, "I love it," he said as the two entered the kitchen. He stopped and smiled at what he saw in front of him. The birthday candles are burning on the cake, Peggy smiling with Angie happily embracing her from behind, Amanda and Harrison standing behind them laughing at the two ladies, and Sarah and Michael, of course, are happily laughing while surrounded by family. The view was heartwarming. Steve smiled at the view, "I'm home," he said as the sound of laughter filled his ears.

Daniel smiled at the view too, "the simple life," he said plainly to himself.

"You'll get there one day," Steve replied calmly.

Suddenly, Peggy called out to her husband, "Darling! Are you coming?" she exclaimed while laughing as Angie continued to hug her tightly from behind.
Steve patted Sousa on the back, "Let's go celebrate my kids' birthday." He walked toward the kitchen and cheered, "Who's ready to celebrate!" Everyone cheered happily. Steve scooped up his daughter from her highchair then sat down while keeping Sarah snug on his lap to get ready to blow out the candles. He kissed her cheek, "Ready to blow out the candles, sweetie?"

Sarah kicked happily, "Yes!"

"Atta girl!" Steve said with a grin. He nuzzled his daughter's hair, "You're going to blow out the candles with your brother, okay?"

"Okay!" Sarah exclaimed excitedly.

Peggy couldn't comfortably let Michael sit on her lap because of her nine-month pregnant belly so she opted to have her mother get Michael, so he could blow out the candles too. "Mother, can you get Michael from his highchair? I can't comfortably put him on my lap."

Amanda nodded, "Oh, yes, of course." She chuckled as she picked up Michael from his highchair, "Don't worry, Michael. We didn't forget about you." She then walked around Steve then sat down in the seat next to him and across from Peggy, and situated her grandson on her lap. She looked down at her grandson, "Ready to blow out the candles?"

Michael bounced happily on his grandmother's lap, "Yes!"

Peggy scooted her seat closer to Steve as everyone got into position around the toddlers to sing happy birthday to the twins while her father got his camera from the counter. "Ready?" Peggy asked. Everyone nodded excitedly. "Father, you got the camera ready?" She asked with an enthusiastic grin.

Harrison stood at the other side of the table with his camera ready to capture the moment the twins blow out their candles, "Ready."

Steve started to sing which triggered everyone to start singing in harmony, "Happy Birthday to you! Happy Birthday to you!" Sarah and Michael bounced, clapped, and cheered in excitement over the singing of the adults earning light chuckles and grins from everyone.

"Happy Birthday dear Sarah and Michael!" The adults sang in unison. "Happy birthday to you!"

Peggy smiled, "Blow out the candles, darlings!"

Steve leaned forward with Sarah in his lap, "Blow out the candles, sweetie!" he said while demonstrating to his daughter. Amanda did the same with Michael, and together with Steve and Sarah, they blew out the candles.

Harrison captured the exact moment of Sarah and Michael blowing out the candles on his camera, and once developed would show pure joy and happiness with the whole family smiling happily at the two toddlers.

"Cake time!" Steve exclaimed. He then nodded at Peggy, "I'll get the knife to cut the cake." He looked up at Angie, "Angie, can you take her?"

Angie grinned, "Never need to ask me twice!" She scooped up Sarah off Steve's lap and held her tightly in her arms, "Happy birthday, sweetheart!" Sarah smiled and kissed Angie's cheek.

Peggy giggled, "What do you say to that, darling?" She asked her daughter.
Sarah cocked her head to the side and thought about the words, "Thank…Thank you…” she said slowly then returned to smiling at her aunt.

Amanda bounced Michael on her lap, "Happy birthday!"

"Thank you!" Michael responded happily in his usual high-pitched voice.

After eating cake and opening birthday presents, the twins got new stuffed animals, blocks, playsets, and other new toys, and the twins are more than happy with their gifts. After opening presents, the family with Angie and Daniel returned to the family room to enjoy each other's company and to relax as the day came to an end. Steve turned up the radio with pleasant music and lit the fire in the fireplace to provide comfortable warmth to everyone relaxing in the room. Peggy lay on the couch with her back leaning against a pillow on the armrest while her legs draped over Steve's lap as he massaged her aching feet. Amanda sat on the armchair, happily conversing with Angie who sat on the floor playing with Michael and Sarah with their new toys. Harrison and Daniel sat on the other couch, watching the twins while also deep in conversation about politics and religion with his line of work. Laughter, music, the crackling of the fire, and the smell of good food provided a truly happy atmosphere.

Peggy smiled as she watched Angie play with her kids while talking to her mother. Angie is a great Aunt and Godmother for her kids and will be a great influence on them in the future, for sure. She looked at her husband with adoring eyes, "Darling."

Steve smiled at Peggy, "Yes, my love."

"I think I got a name if our baby is a girl," Peggy said with a warm smile.

"Oh? Care to share?"

"Angela," Peggy stated happily.

Steve grinned, "Angela?"

Peggy nodded, "Of course. Angie's been a great friend to you and me. She's helped me so many times in the past, and is my best friend outside of you." She smiled, "What's a better name to call our new baby girl than the woman who's been such an influence."

He chuckled, "I love it, and I couldn't agree more to the name."

"Glad you agree," Peggy said with a smile.

Steve grinned, "But, there's one more thing I'd like to add to the name."

"Hm? And what's that, darling?" Peggy said raising her brow.

"Angela Margaret. Have your name in there too because you've been good to me even before we got together," Steve smiled lovingly at Peggy.

Peggy blushed, "I love it, but I think using my middle name would sound better. Besides, I dropped my middle name when we got married so at least our daughter will have that name from."

"Angela Elizabeth Rogers. I like the sound of that," Steve replied with a grin.

Peggy chuckled, "Me too." She cocked her head to the side, "Any ideas for a name if it's a boy?"
Steve smiled, "I like the name John over the other we picked."

Peggy nodded, "I was leaning to that one too." She chuckled, "But since you added my name if our baby is a girl, let's add yours." She smiled affectionately at her husband, "Because you've always been the person I aspire to be, and you've always been my hero in more ways than one. So, our son should have both of your names."

Steve was speechless and didn't know what to say. He shook his head with a smile, "I…Peg." He chuckled, "If we have a son, he'll have my name anyway."

Peggy smiled, "But he'll have his father's first name too. John Steven Rogers."

Steve chuckled, "Okay. Good names." He lifted one of Peggy's legs and kissed her bare skin, "I love you, Peggy."

Peggy smiled, "And I love you, Steve."

Angie interrupted their moment, "What are you two lovebirds blushing about?" she said with Sarah on her lap causing everyone to look at the couple.

Steve and Peggy shared a glance before laughing amongst themselves. Peggy spoke up in response, "Just baby names. We got the names if it's a boy or a girl."

Amanda clapped happily, "Tell us, tell us, darling!"

Daniel chuckled, "Peggy, Steve, don't you dare string us along for this."

Peggy grinned at Steve. Steve shook his head, "You'll just have to wait and see."

Harrison sighed, "Margaret Carter ROGERS! We'll likely be back in England when your baby is born!"

Peggy shrugged, "It's got to be a surprise, father."

Angie sighed, "That's so her." She kissed Sarah on the cheek, "I hope you aren't as devious as your mother is, sweetie." Sarah just kicked happily.

"Can you at least give us a clue?" Amanda asked curiously.

Steve and Peggy shared a knowing look with each other…

Today has been a beautiful day for the Rogers family. Although Steve has been retired as Captain America for well over a few months, peace like this is what Steve has been striving to find. Though the Rogers live a far from ordinary life, times like these give them joy.

Will Peace last for the Rogers? Will Steve be able to keep a normal life?

A little fluffy chapter since the last few chapters have been occupied with Hydra and Leviathan.

Short Chapter, but it's a feel-good Chapter.
Chapter 33 The Minstrel Boy

North Korea: East of Chosin Reservoir November 23, 1950, Thanksgiving

Regimental Combat Team 31, Task Force MacLean, US Army

Steve dressed in his recently repaired Stars and Stripes, uniform carried his shield through the 32nd Infantry Regimental CP (Command Post) through the thick snow and slush. The brutal Korean winter gave him a severe chill that sunk deep into his bones while the frigid winds struck deep into his core. Though he's super human, the harsh mountainous Korean winter still made him ache. But thanks to the serum his temperature threshold is far greater than the average human, so he could function normally in extreme temperatures. Regardless, Steve still hated the cold with a passion, especially after being trapped in the ice during the Second World War.

It's early Thanksgiving morning in the Northern border of North Korea and China, and the sun is slowly rising above the tall mountains. The skies are clear with a broken cloud layer sitting just above their position overlooking the mountain valley below. Sunrise, the coldest part of the day, where the cold feels the most bitter, made him groan from the intense sharp pain in his body. Steve made his way to his squad battle position, down the hill from the CP, to make his rounds up and down the line. Though he's a Captain, the Army gave him a rifle squad of 12-men instead of a company to provide him with more maneuverability in combat which is essential for his abilities. His squad wasn't the commandos he's used to leading, save for Jonathan "Junior" Juniper who volunteered to fight in the war, but they listened to him and are confident in the heat of battle. His squad also made a reputation for themselves for one of the most effective units in all the UN forces on the peninsula.

As Steve reached his battle position, he could see the line of fighting holes his men dug into the side of the mountain to cover a portion of the mountainous northern area of Sinhung-ni. Snow blanketet in and around the holes which only worsened the cold feeling, especially if you were sitting still in the hole for long periods of time like many of the soldiers around. Steve walked to Junior's fighting hole first which also functioned as a machine gun position for a .30cal air-cooled machine gun, and was immediately greeted by the generally enthusiastic kid. "Good morning, sir," the young Jonathan said with a warm smile. Jonathan "Junior" Juniper wore a winter jacket under his combat gear, thick gloves, OD green scarf, and wore a beanie under his helmet to keep his ears warm.

Steve stuck his shield vertically into the snow then squatted down at the hole and nodded, "Morning, fellas."

Junior's buddy in the hole, Private Jake Cooper, turned around and greeted Steve, "Good morning, sir. Happy Thanksgiving." Cooper, like Junior and many other soldiers, wore mostly the same thing, anything he had that was warm he had on.

"Happy Thanksgiving," Steve replied.

Junior turned around to look across the mountains, "Would you look at that, we can see China from here." He chuckled, "the war is going to be over by Christmas. I guarantee it."
Cooper chuckled, "Yeah. The Communists are practically finished." He turned around, "Think we'll be home by Christmas, sir?"

Steve chuckled, "I hope so, but keep your head in the game. War isn't over until it's over." Steve had an unnerving feeling deep down in his gut other than the cold. They've recently had an increase in contact with Chinese soldiers as they fought the remnants of the North Korean People's Army (NKPA) to their current position. The sparse conflict with Chinese soldiers alarmed Steve of possible Chinese entrance into the war. He routed it up the chain of command but was told not to worry and to continue the advance. Steve couldn't help but to still feel concerned. For the sake of his men's morale, he didn't dare bring it up with them to save them from worry.

Cooper nodded, "I understand, sir." He rubbed his gloved hands together to keep his fingers warm. He let out a breath of air, which he could see due to the intense cold, "I could do without the stupid cold though."

Junior nodded in agreement, "Me too. The Koreans have got some crazy winters."

Steve chuckled, "Yeah. I'm not a fan of the winter either. I'm not a fan of the cold in general."

"Oh right. Because," Junior paused. "Yeah," he said not wanting to continue down that line of thinking. He knew how much that memory of being trapped in the ice during the war plagued his commanding officer, so it was smart not to bring it up.

Cooper shivered behind the machine gun, "God, I wish the communists would surrender and let us go home. This cold is the painful type of cold. You know? The one that digs into your bones and makes it hurt to move."

Junior nodded, "I know. Give it time, man. The North Koreans don't have much of a country left. They're practically in China now."

Cooper sighed, "Then let the Chinese take care of them."

Steve patted the two young men on the back, "Well I got good news for you two."

"And what's that, sir?" Junior asked shivering.

Steve grinned, "We got air drops coming in. The Air Force is bringing us some holiday bounty. We'll have turkey, coffee, hot chocolate, and all the fixings. Our own holiday meal to celebrate Thanksgiving."

Junior grinned, "Yes! I can't wait!"

Cooper leaned his head back and grinned, "Ah. Hot chocolate. I'd kill for that stuff," he said letting his mind wander to the holiday feeling.

"You'll have it soon enough," Steve replied cheerfully. "First drop should be in a few hours. Depending on the weather, obviously." He grinned, "The sky will be full of planes dropping cargo from the sky and give us some good food to eat."

Junior patted Cooper on the back, "See? You'll get your hot chocolate sure enough."

Steve chuckled. He remained silent as he stared out across the mountain tops to the Chinese border. Junior was right; they could practically see the Yalu River, the natural landmark for the Chinese and Korean border, from their position. Steve's squad in the Regimental Combat Team 31 is positioned farthest north of the Regimental Combat Team, and are in all aspects, the tip of the spear.
He shook his head and patted Junior and Cooper on the back, "Don't worry. The Army is taking care of us."

On January 3, 1950, Steve and Peggy welcomed a very healthy and beautiful daughter, Angela Elizabeth Roger, to the family. Their family grew to be a family of five and Steve and Peggy couldn't be happier. Their baby daughter was born with blonde hair like their father and had a striking resemblance to her mother. Born at nearly 8-pounds, she was a bit heavy but still a healthy baby girl nonetheless. With the new addition of Angela to the family, things were going great. Sarah and Michael continued to grow, smile, and laugh with Steve and Peggy trying to cherish every moment of it. The Rogers have a new house, Peggy continues to lead SHIELD, Steve is back in school to earn a degree in business and art to join the workforce and then eventually seek a regular job. Though the Rogers family is far from normal, Steve and Peggy did their best to maintain a form of stability, normalcy, and peace as a family. All Steve wanted after capturing Bridget was to live his life in peace with his family.

Peace is something Steve never truly experienced. As a sickly adolescent in his youth and frequently attacked by bullies on the streets, Steve was continually fighting something or someone. He longed for a simple and normal life, but he never thought he'd have one until he met Peggy. That one random moment in time and that chance encounter changed everything for him. Steve didn't know how much he longed for the simple life until he was diving Schmidt's plane into the ice. But when he got a second chance at life after waking up from his cryogenic sleep, he made a promise to settle down and have a peaceful rest of his life with Peggy. Truth be told, after meeting her, Steve knew he wanted to marry her. Though it took Steve a while to get out of being Captain America and away from conflict, he finally found the peace he was looking for with his wife and family. Family. Having a real family, in the end, was his goal in life. Peggy, Sarah, Michael, and now Angela are the joys of his life, and he made a promise to always protect, support, and love them all the days of his life.

Unfortunately, the peace Steve and Peggy strived for didn't last. In the summer of 1950, the United States along with many other countries part of the United Nations entered the Korean War to protect the South Koreans from falling to the Communist invasion from the North. Under the UN Security Council Resolution 82 and 83 which called for military invention into Korea, the United States spearhead the counter of North Korean aggression in the peninsula and restore peace in Korea. The UN empowered the United States to select a commander of UN forces in Korea, and the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff unanimously chose US Army General Douglas MacArthur to be commander of United Nations Command or UNCOM. President Truman believed that fighting the invasion of the North was essential to the U.S. goal of containing communism from spreading. Needing to stop the advancing communist forces from seizing the entire Korean peninsula the U.S. military needed to mobilize rapidly. The U.S. military activated over 130,000 U.S. Marine Reserves and boosted numbers with drafts and recalling men to service.

Due to the war, Steve was then recalled to service much to Peggy's dismay and given less than a month to report. Steve didn't want to go to war as much as Peggy didn't want him to, but it was out of their control. Though Peggy didn't want him to leave, she briefly tried finding legal ways to keep him in the states including having him rejoin SHIELD, but she knew it wouldn't be the right thing to do and, in the end, she couldn't do much about it. Besides, Steve rejoining SHIELD after the call for service would look suspicious. Peggy's no stranger to duty and responsibility, and she knew Steve had to go to war even though neither of them wanted him to go. So, once again Steve had to pick up his shield and answered the call for service. After being called to service, Steve got Howard to repair his stars and stripes combat uniform and got his shield back from the SHIELD Aegis headquarters. After a passionate night before deployment and tearful goodbye at the train station, Steve reported back to the old Army Garrison in Camp Lehigh in New Jersey. Steve and Peggy are once again
faced with the present harsh circumstance of war and are once more forced to be separated a world away from each other.

Upon arriving at Camp Lehigh, the rapid mobilization expedited things and Steve got assigned a rifle squad and a machine gun team immediately. Much to Steve's surprise, he saw Jonathan "Junior" Juniper assigned to him because of his previous service with him as a commando. It turns out that Junior volunteered for the war solely because he was too young to see any substantial action in World War II, a reason that troubled Steve. But there was nothing Steve could say or do to change anything. He made a promise to himself and Junior that he would do his best to get him home, but Steve knew such promises can't be kept in war. In July, Steve and his squad shipped off to Korea with barely anytime to train and prepare.

Steve's squad landed in the Pusan Perimeter in September 1950 and was attached to the Army X Corps. The Pusan Perimeter is a pocket of UN forces and Republic of Korea forces with their backs against the sea, and for months held out against the NKPA's relentless attacks. Steve helped the Army breakout of the Perimeter after the Marines successfully landed and seized the harbor at Inchon, effectively cutting off the North Korean supply lines. After breaking out of the perimeter, the UN forces advanced rapidly and recaptured the South Korean capital of Seoul and continued to push the North Koreans to the 38th Parallel, the latitude line that acted as the border between North and South Korea. Steve and his squad participated in many major engagements after the Pusan breakout including the capture of Seoul and pushing the NKPA to the 38th Parallel.

After many significant military and psychological victories, General MacArthur's idea of victory started to change. Instead of liberating South Korea and destroying the NKPA in the South, he realized he could pursue the NKPA into North Korea and destroy what's left of the communist opposition in the North. The goal of victory changed to seizing the entire peninsula, an idea that's backed by nearly all leaders in Washington. Total victory over the communists looked to be in plain sight. So, UN forces didn't stop at the 38th Parallel and continued to drive deep into North Korea and seize the capital of Pyongyang and made their push toward the Chinese border in the hopes of unifying the peninsula.

The press and the military enjoyed taking Steve's photograph and filming him because he boosted morale among the troops and back at home. Steve and his squad continued to participate in nearly all of the significant engagements after the capture of Seoul including the seizure of the North Korean capital. During the months of fighting, Steve kept up his correspondence with his wife and family, and in return got plenty of mail and care packages from Peggy.

Back at home, Peggy longed for Steve to return from war but thanks to the war she was able to dedicate some of S.H.I.E.L.D's resources to gather intelligence to help the UN claim victory which made her feel secure that she was in a way helping her husband. Thanks to the consistent press coverage of Steve, it wasn't an uncommon sight to see Steve's photo in newspapers in both South Korea and the United States. For Peggy's sake, seeing Steve consistently in papers and news assured her that he was safe. Though Steve is Captain America, he's still human and still her husband so she couldn't help but worry about his safety now and then. The news of nearing victory brought hope to Peggy that he'll be home very soon. But, Peggy was receiving unsettling reports from her agents and assets warning of Chinese intervention into Korea. She advised everyone she could, but the military leaders brushed passed her warnings. Phillips also urged the military of warning signs from the Chinese, but again the warnings fell onto deaf ears. Peggy was left worried about what's to come and hoped and prayed that the Chinese wouldn't intervene in Korea.

In Korea, the feeling among the troops was one of optimism as the UN forces pushed toward the Yalu River, the border of China. The UN forces had every reason to be optimistic because they faced and defeated an aggressive enemy time and time again and continued to push them back. By
November, the Yalu river was in sight, and MacArthur had a plan to seize the rest of North Korea by the end of the year and before the heavy winter. This advance to the Yalu through and around the steep Taebaek Mountains was the advance that, in all practical sense, would end the war. During that time as the UN advanced to the Yalu, Steve was attached to the Regimental Combat Team 31, part of the 32nd Infantry, 7th Infantry Division, Task Force MacLean. The advance through the mountains was treacherous as the only way to get through the mountains were through narrow ox trails dug into the side of steep mountains with plunging cliffs. Coupled with the dangerous roads and temperatures dropping below -25 degrees at night, the push North was dangerous.

In the last week of November, the eastern half of the UN forces, now stretched thin from overextending supply lines, reached the Chosin Reservoir are split in two by the Reservoir itself. U.S. Marines secured the West, prepared to spearhead North, and to the East of the Reservoir is the U.S. Army along with several Republic of Korea (ROK) units assigned to protect the Marine advance. To the forces positioned around the Reservoir, victory was in sight, and they had nothing to fear.

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**North Korea: East of Chosin Reservoir November 27, 1950**

**Regimental Combat Team 31, Task Force MacLean, US Army**

It's late at night in the mountains of the Taebaek Mountains in the Chosin Reservoir, and the temperature was a startling -25 degrees below zero. The air was so cold that it hurt to move, and it was so dark that he could barely see what's in front of him. At this point in the war with the North Koreans in full retreat, the enemy is not the Communists, but the brutal Korean winter. This is the type of cold that pierces to the core, the wind that whips, and descends to the surface. When there is no noise of war, no bombs or machine guns, there is only the whistle of the cold settling down upon the soldiers on the North Eastern side of Chosin. For Steve's squad and the soldiers of the Task Force, dug into shallow fighting holes in a thin line in the mountainside, many of them slept chilled to the bone while a few other soldiers stayed up to watch the line. Sleep was nearly impossible in the cold, especially in the harsh winter blanketed by snow.

Steve walked the line of his squad with his shield in hand to make sure there is someone on watch for every two fighting holes. Steve knew that the Regiment was under strength and that it was spread thin across North East Korea which is why the Regiment assigned him here in the mountainous northern side of Sinhung-ni. His squad positioned on a hill is also spread flat with fighting holes in greater distances than usual between them to tie two different platoons together. At least his squad had an excellent vantage point of the valley below. Steve bickered at the cold as he walked down the spread-out line of fighting holes, hearing the light snoring of his soldiers trying to get some sleep before the next day's advance. At least his troops had some reprieve a few days ago when the Air Force dropped tons of holiday bounty from the air for Thanksgiving. Thanksgiving was a good day, the skies filled with cargo planes dropped food to the front-line soldiers and Marines. Everyone was happy to have an actual meal that didn't consist of the standard military rations.

Steve heard someone whisper for him, "Hey, Captain."

Steve turned to his right and walked to the sound to one of the fighting holes toward the center of his battle position and saw it was his Staff Sergeant. Staff Sergeant Thomas Foley, a man in the mid-30s from New Jersey, a veteran of World War II, remained in the Army after the war and got assigned to Steve's squad as the senior enlisted man in the team. The two men got along very well and respected each other personally and professionally. Steve squatted down and sat at the edge of the hole next to Foley, "Staff Sergeant, how are you doing?" he asked quietly, careful not to wake up the soldier sleeping next to his Staff Sergeant.
Foley shrugged, "You know. Cold."

Steve chuckled, "Yeah. Me too." He looked across the pitch-black horizon and sighed. "Need anything?" Steve said looking back at his Staff Sergeant.

Foley sighed, "Just got a bad feeling about this whole thing tomorrow."

Steve nodded, "I see." After five months of fighting, if Steve missed something than Foley would catch it, and if Foley has a bad feeling that it's usually spot on and warrants caution. Steve and Staff Sergeant Foley, two combat veterans, made an excellent team and they complimented each other's skills. They even considered each other friends. "What are you feeling, Foley?" Steve asked curiously.

Foley shook his head, "I don't know what it is, but something really bad is about to happen."

Steve nodded, "I feel it too."

Foley nodded, "We'll see." He shook his head, "How's your family? Get any mail from your wife?"

Steve smiled, "I always get mail from her." He chuckled, "To answer your question, yeah I got mail from her. Sent me an great letter, a family photo, and sent me more cold weather socks."

Foley chuckled, "Gotta love wives. My wife couldn't send me socks, but my family sent me some gloves and chocolate."

Steve nodded, "Hey, if she sends you something, even if it's only a letter, then that's enough in my opinion." He laughed, "But chocolate is a pure act of love right there." Foley laughed lightly in response.

Foley smiled, "The chocolate was from my kids. Speaking of, you never answered my question about your family."

Steve shrugged, "Well, my wife says my kids miss me a lot and wonder when I'll be coming home. The twins just turned three, and my baby girl was just born in January." He sighed in frustration, "I've been away a long time, and this is the first time I've missed my twins birthday. At this rate I'm afraid I might miss my second daughter's first birthday. God, do I miss them too." He shook his head, "I feel bad that my wife has to work and take of the kids herself, one of which is still a baby, while I'm a whole world away."

Foley nodded, "That's right. Your wife is the Director of SHIELD, right?"

"Yeah," Steve nodded quietly.

"Don't worry about it, sir. She knows that this is your duty and that you would rather be at home with her, but with hope and luck you'll be home with them soon." Foley smiled, "And I'll be home with my kids too." He chuckled, "I can't wait to play catch with my sons again in the summer. Honestly? I think that's what I'm fighting for..."

"Your family?" Steve said with a warm smile.

Foley shook his head, "No, summer. Screw this cold." Steve chuckled lightly.

"How's your family doing? I'm sure they missed you for Thanksgiving," Steve said with a warm smile.
Foley grinned, "Oh they did, but I got a lot of photos in the mail about it. Kids laughing, eating, probably giving my wife a hard time, and pictures of my wife, her parents, and mine." He sighed, "I sure do miss them."

"Me too," Steve replied quietly.

Steve took a moment and let his mind wander to a memory of his wife and kids in the spring time in April…

Central Park, New York City

April 1950

Steve looked up at the clear blue sky as the warm sun beamed on his face and the cool spring breeze washed over him. The evergreens, spruces, and flowers scented the air with their new growth; the birds sang joyfully caroling, and families gathered in the park for picnics in the warm spring day. His family too is in the park for a picnic by the lake to enjoy some family time on this sunny Saturday afternoon. Steve smiled at the warm feeling over him.

Steve suddenly felt a nudge on his leg causing him to look down and saw his daughter grabbing onto his leg with a wide grin. Sarah beamed up at her father, "Daddy! Play!"

Steve chuckled, "You want to play?" He grinned and scooped up his little girl in his arms, "We'll play!" He expressed earning a loud laugh from his daughter. "Do you want to fly, sweetie? I can show you how to fly," Steve said to Sarah happily.

Sarah kicked happily, "fly!" she exclaimed excitedly.

"Okay, here we go!" Steve started to make airplane noises as he pushed his daughter high up in the air and started to run and swing her around in the grass causing Sarah to continuously laugh.

Peggy, dressed in a blue floral sleeveless picnic dress, sat on the picnic blanket with the baby Angela in her arms next to the family picnic basket, watching her husband play with their oldest daughter with a loving look. Peggy couldn't help but grin widely at her husband running around in the grass pretending to have Sarah fly. She knew Steve wouldn't let anything happen to Sarah so watching him play the way they are is completely fine. The sound of laughter from both her husband and her daughter made her heart melt with joy. Suddenly, Peggy felt Angela kick her legs and make a soft sound which diverted her attention back to her baby in her arms. Peggy smiled at Angela, "Hello there, darling. Did you sleep well?" she asked softly. Angela just moved her arms, wiggled her toes in response, and slowly opened her curious eyes at her mother. Peggy kissed Angela on the forehead, "It's a beautiful day, darling, and a great day to spend together as a family.

Peggy then looked around to check to see where her son went and quickly saw him picking red flower by the tree next to them. Peggy smiled as the young two-year-old stood up and slowly walked back to her. Michael stopped next to his mother and handed her the flowers, "Mama. F-f-floers," he said softly, mispronouncing the word.

Peggy took the red flowers with her free hand with a warm smile, "Thank you, darling. They're beautiful." She put the flowers down on the blanket and took one of the flowers and stuck it in Angela's hair. Peggy looked at her son, "These flowers are gorgeous, sweetie." She grinned, "Do you think your sister looks pretty with this flower in her hair?"

Michael hugged Peggy, "Yes!" he exclaimed enthusiastically.
Peggy smiled, "Me too." She chuckled, "Are you hungry?" she asked Michael who nodded quietly in response. "Let me call your father and sister and we'll eat, okay?"

"Okay, Mama," Michael replied as he sat down next to his mother and happily fiddled with Angela's toes in his way of playing with her.

"Darlings!" Peggy called out to her husband. She saw Steve stop and look back at her as he settled Sarah in his arms. "Let's eat, Michael is getting! I'm sure Sarah isn't far behind!"

Steve waved, "Coming!"

Steve quickly rejoined the rest of the family and placed his daughter down on the blanket then sat down next to his wife. Steve then leaned into Peggy and kissed her on the lips, "I'm starving," he said with a grin.

Peggy giggled, "Me too. Let's eat."

"Want me to take Angela?" Steve said as he started to open the basket to get the food.

Peggy shook her head, "I got her, darling. Thank you." As Steve got the sandwiches wrapped in paper and homemade potato salad out of the basket, Peggy grinned, "You and Sarah looked like you were having fun."

Steve chuckled, "Oh we were. Could hear her laugh a mile away couldn't you?"

Peggy smiled, "And yours." She leaned into him and kissed his shoulder.

Steve finished putting the food out on the blanket and finally saw Angela with a small flower in her hair. He grinned, "She looks so cute with that flower in her hair."

"Doesn't she? She's so cute," Peggy smiled widely at their beautiful baby.

"Where'd you get the flower?" Steve asked as he picked up a sandwich labeled "Grilled Cheese" on the paper for Sarah and started to undo the wrapping.

Peggy reached forward with her free hand and grabbed another grilled cheese sandwich for Michael. "Michael actually picked these flowers," she said as she managed to unwrap the paper with one hand for her two-year-old son.

"Atta boy Michael," Steve said proudly to his son. Michael just grinned happily at his father as Peggy handed him his sandwich. Steve unwrapped a ham sandwich and handed it to Peggy, so she could eat with ease.

"Thank you, darling," Peggy said fondly to her husband. She looked at her two kids sitting by them with sandwiches in their hands, "Go ahead and eat, darlings." Almost on cue, Michael and Sarah started to eat with joy in their eyes. Peggy and Steve smiled at their two kids as they ate their grilled cheese sandwiches in contentment.

Peggy leaned into Steve and kissed his lips, "This is a beautiful day."

Steve smiled and looked up to the clear blue sky, "Yes, it is."

Present

Steve was brought out of his memory when he saw a series of bright white flares pop in the sky in
the distance over the hill on his left where 2nd Platoon was positioned. "What the…" Steve said quietly as he and Staff Sergeant Foley looked at the burning flares in the sky. Suddenly he heard more flares pop on his right causing him to turn and see more burning white sparkles illuminate the air, this time the illumination popped over the lip of the hill in the vicinity of 1st Platoon. Steve slid into Foley's hole and gripped his shield cautiously.

The sound of flares popping in the sky continued to echo in the mountains which put the two veteran soldiers on edge. All of a sudden a distant roar of bugles and whistles fill their ears followed by the crack of gunfire and screams in the distance. Foley looked at Steve, "This doesn't sound good," he said as the sounds of gunfire and frequency of the roar of bugles intensified over the lip of the hill on their left and right.

Steve nodded, "get everyone up," he said as he got his blue helmet on.

Foley nodded, "Got it, sir." He tapped the soldier to his left, a young Irish-American named Corporal Riley Kelly, probably the strongest soldier second to Steve in the squad. "Kelly, get up. We got trouble."

Kelly groaned, "What?" he asked rubbing the sleep from his eyes under his sleeping bag.

"We got trouble, get up," Foley urged as he pushed Kelly awake.

Suddenly more white flares popped in the sky but this time illuminated Steve's squad battle position. The soldiers that are already up looked completely confused and surprised as the flares illuminated the darkness surrounding them, many of them were looking up at the sparkles absentmindedly and confused. Steve looked around his squad battle position cautiously and saw some of the soldiers waking up on their own from the sudden illumination of the pitch-black night. But right when Foley was about to get out of the hole to wake up the squad, Steve spotted the scariest thing he ever saw. Hundreds maybe thousands of Chinese soldiers running up the hill toward their position, blowing bugles and whistles as ammunition flares continued to pop above them.

Steve grabbed Foley by the belt just as he got out of the hole and dragged him back in, "Get down!"

Foley looked over the lip of the hole and saw the wave of enemy soldiers rushing up the hill, "What the?"

"It's the Chinese!" Steve yelled over the chaos. He looked at Foley, "Staff Sergeant, we have to hold this position no matter what!" Foley nodded in response, taken by surprise by the sight of the vast number of Chinese soldiers rushing up the hill towards them.

Kelly brought his semi-automatic M1 Garand rifle up and quickly fired at the approaching Chinese, "Holy shit! There's thousands of them!"

Steve spoke up quickly over the intensifying gunfire, "Foley, I need you to establish the defense on the left flank, here. I'll go to the right and do the same!"

"Every Chinese communist in the universe is here!" Kelly yelled in distress as he got a glimpse of thousands of shadowy figures charging up the hill behind those who were illuminated by the flared immediately ahead of him.

Foley nodded as he calmed down, "Got it, Sir!" He yelled as he brought his Thompson submachine gun up and opened fire at the approaching wave of Chinese soldiers. In the illuminated night sky, Steve could see a sea of quilted and tan winter clothing and uniforms the Chinese wore as they surged toward his battle position.
Steve raised his shield to cover his upper body as he sprinted from hole to hole screaming, "Everyone up! We're under attack! Hold your positions and return fire!" By the second or third hole, everyone in his squad was up and firing their weapons frantically at the charging enemy. There truly wasn't any distinguished sectors of fire, it was all one long sector of fire as Steve's squad sprayed bullets and tracers at the overwhelming wave of Chinese soldiers. The continuous Chinese use of ammunition flares kept a consistent illumination of the battlefield and staved off the darkness, and let the U.S. soldiers on the hill get a good estimate of how outnumbered they truly were.

Steve saw a couple of enemy soldiers charging up to his radio operator in a fighting hole who was occupied with shooting in another direction, and Steve immediately threw his shield at rocket speeds at the Communists. The shield nailed one soldier in the jaw before ricocheting into the other then tumbled through the air back to Steve. In less than ten minutes, the situation was desperate as the Chinese kept on coming and nearly overwhelming the thin line of soldiers on the hill with each passing second. Gunfire and screams filled Steve's ear as he ran from hole-to-hole, using his shield and pistol, to fend off the Chinese soldiers trying to breach the line and kill his fellow soldiers. If Steve couldn't use his shield, he would use his pistol, which turned out to be more frequent than he'd like. The amount of Chinese attacking them was so numerous that if Steve didn't have his shield for more than a few seconds, he would be utterly vulnerable to enemy gunfire. He also intentionally exposed himself to draw enemy fire away from some of his squad since he stood out like a thumb with his bright colored shield and uniform.

Steve ran back to his radio operator, "Charlie, radio!" he called out as he slid into the hole by his radio operator. Charlie handed him the handset to the backpack radio at the bottom of the hole just as a round from a PPSH-41 submachine gun hit him in the head, penetrating the metal helmet he wore. Charlie slumped down to the bottom of the hole, limp and lifeless. Steve turned and whipped out his M1911 .45cal pistol and shot three times at the communist soldier, killing him instantly. Steve couldn't take a moment for his fallen comrade in the heat of battle, so he pressed the transmit button on the handset to call Company headquarters, "Baker main, this is Baker 1-4, heavy contact with the Chinese soldiers, need reinforcements at our position."

The Company Commander for Baker Company called back instantly on the radio, "Negative on reinforcements, Captain. Chinese are attacking us on all sides, possible Division reinforced strength. You need to hold that position no matter the cost. Baker main, out." Steve sighed and peered over the lip of his fighting hole, and fired the remaining rounds of his pistol magazine at the approaching Chinese soldiers before getting back on the radio to call for artillery support.

Junior held down the trigger of the .30cal machine gun and fired the weapon at a cyclic rate to mow down the advancing Communist forces. No matter how many he and Cooper killed, there were two more that took his place. Junior heard a click in his machine gun which signaled that he needed to reload. He opened the feed tray cover just as a Chinese soldier ran up to their hole with a grenade in hand. Cooper saw this and immediately tried to shoot the soldier in the chest, but Steve's shield hit the soldier in the back of the head causing him to fall forward lifeless, dropping the grenade on the ground as his body fell over it. Cooper and Junior ducked just as the grenade exploded by their hole. Junior coughed out the dirt and snow he inhaled, "Need ammo!"

"Got it!" Cooper called over the intense gunfire as he picked up an ammo can of 200 rounds. Junior and Cooper frantically started to reload the hot machine gun as Steve rushed to their fighting hole and rapidly started to cover them with his shield and pistol. Junior cocked the machine and started to open fire again as the shrieking sound of artillery screamed over them and impacted mere yards from their fighting hole. The Earth shook with each impact of U.S. mortars and artillery, tossing mounds of dirt, rock, debris, and water vapor in the air. The artillery and mortars became the shield to fend off the attacking enemy. But only briefly.
Steve ducked his head below his shield as the artillery and mortars rained steel and high explosive from the sky. The indirect fire gave his squad a small moment of reprieve, but he knew that this wouldn’t stop the Chinese because the artillery would be needed elsewhere. Steve looked down and shared a quick glance with Junior, neither of them saying a word, the look of fear on their faces said it all. After a moment, Steve gave a small smile of reassurance then took off and ran into the dim distance down the line to help others shore up their defense.

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North Korea: East of Chosin Reservoir November 28, 1950

Regimental Combat Team 31, Task Force MacLean, US Army

1300

The previous night engagement against the Chinese forced Steve's squad and the rest of the 32nd Infantry to fall back and nearly get overrun in the process. Forced to abandon their position to the north of Sinhung-ni rather than get massacred at a static position, Steve and much of the regiment retreated, leaving behind clothing, food, gear, and personal effects. The under strength RCT-31 retreated but the Chinese didn't pursue which allowed the taskforce to counter attack in the following morning, this time surprising the Chinese and routing them back down the hills and mountains. The Americans reoccupied their battered positions and took account for their heavy losses.

Steve lost three soldiers during the heavy night fighting and was lucky it was only three, but he knew the fighting wasn’t over. He did his best to protect his troops and maintain morale during the siege, but the massive Chinese Army bearing down on them overwhelmed him and his squad. Though the Chinese Communist Forces weren’t as technologically advanced as the Nazi Army or Hydra during World War II, the Communists had sheer numbers to their advantage which vastly outnumbered and overwhelmed Steve and the understrength US Army taskforce.

Steve, only wearing his stars and stripes combat uniform and helmet with his shield in hand, again walked along his squad's defensive position. The temperature is still below freezing, and it started to snow only a few hours ago, adding to the cold misery everyone is feeling. The weather was only getting worse as the clouds slowly darkened and slowly got lower as time went by which signaled an impending snow storm. The long night took a toll on everyone in his squad, fear in his soldiers being the most significant outcome in their mentality. Steve couldn’t blame them, being at the top of the world then suddenly surprised and eventually overrun by thousands of enemy soldiers would shock any person. Fear, overwhelming enemy opposition, and subzero temperatures only added to the decay in his soldier's mental state. It wasn't just his soldiers that were reeling from last night, everyone in the regiment and the Marines who got stricken on the west side of the Reservoir. But for his squad and the regiment, they were in bad shape after the Chinese attack last night.

Steve could see the blank stares, and the sagging eyes in his remaining soldier's faces as he walked by their positions. Last night might as well have been worth three days of fighting. As he walked the line, he heard the echoing sounds of gunfire, the booming sounds of artillery, and the roar of jets and the prop F4U Corsair planes dropping bombs and napalm in the distance. The aircraft only had a limited time to drop ordinance before the weather prevented their support. The daylight hours brought the effectiveness of the might of the U.S. airpower which seemed to stave away the Chinese counterattacks.

Steve then saw Staff Sergeant Foley squatting by Junior's and Cooper's fighting hole. Steve strolled up to them and squatted down next to Foley, impaling his shield in the snow and dirt again, "How you boys doing?" he asked trying to sound positive.
Junior looked up at Steve, "Chinese looted our gear. We barely got any remaining cold weather gear or even socks."

Cooper shivered in his jacket and uniform, "it's so cold." The tempo of fighting, withdrawing, and reattacking exerts a lot on the human body which causes it to sweat. When the tempo slows down and there’s a momentary low in fighting, the sweat becomes a hinderance as it rapidly cools the body in the subzero temperatures.

Junior smiled and hugged his buddy, rubbing Cooper's arms to use friction to try and warm him up. "Hang in there, Coop. We're going to be alright. You'll be surfing in California soon, I swear." After all that's happened in the past night, Junior still remained the positive and optimistic voice in the dread.

Foley nodded in agreement, "We had to withdraw so quick, we had to leave everything behind that wasn't on our backs. The Chinese peasant army took everything they could carry." He looked at Steve, "We're going to have a bad case of foot rot, frostbite, and hyperthermia if we don't get resupplied with more cold weather clothing. Not to mention ammo."

Steve sighed, "I know. I don't think resupply is going to be possible."

"Those Red prisoners we captured this morning talk?" Foley asked. After their counterattack with 1st platoon, Steve and his squad took five Chinese and North Korean prisoners.

Steve nodded, "Yeah." He sighed, "We were attacked by a division last night."

"Holy shit."

"And we're surrounded. The Chinese cut off our supply road between Sinhung-ni and Hudong-ni." Steve adjusted his helmet, "We got the taskforce CP, tanks, artillery, and HQ battery and other forces located at Hudong-ni. If we're going to get reinforced and resupplied, our best hope is them, but they got hit hard too."

Junior frowned in nervousness. Steve patted him on the back, "We'll be okay, Jonathan. We'll make it home," he said reassuringly, not sure if he believed it himself.

Junior let out a deep sigh, "I got you, sir." He smiled, "Don't worry, we'll give them hell. No matter what."

Steve smiled, "I know." Steve noticed a loose piece of paper sticking out of Junior's jacket pocket. Steve patted him on the back, "writing a letter home?" he asked suddenly changing the subject to distract the two men in the hole on the harsh reality they're facing. Junior nodded with a smile in response. "Is it family?" Junior didn't respond. "A girl?" Steve said raising a brow. Junior grinned widely without saying a word.

Foley chuckled, "Knew it."

Junior nodded with a smile, "The girl, sir. At least I hope."

Steve nodded, "What's her name?"

"Doris Williams, sir. Been with her for a little over a year," Junior said enthusiastically.

"Got a picture to match the face to the name?" Steve asked with a smile. Junior nodded as he removed his helmet and took out a small picture he had tucked away in it, and handed it to Steve. Steve took the picture and smiled, "She's beautiful, Junior." He showed Foley.
Foley grinned, "She's a living doll, wouldn't you say?"

Junior chuckled, "Thanks."

Cooper shivered, "She got a friend?"

Junior laughed, "I'm sure I can set you up with one if you visit New York."

"Never pegged you for a ladies man, Jonathan," Steve said humorously. The talk of girls, family, and humor was their attempt to escape their brutal reality. The war was so close to ending in their favor that the massive counterattack by the Chinese completely shocked them and threw them into a sudden horror of being overrun. Seemingly losing the sight of victory in an instant dashed their hopes and morale.

Suddenly a soldier came up behind Steve, "Captain Rogers, sir."

Steve turned around slightly, "Yes?" He saw the soldier looked tired, muddy, and dirty from the heavy fighting the night before much like everyone else.

"Sir, the CO wants to see you at the CP immediately," the soldier said quickly.

Steve handed the photo back to Junior, "I'll be right there." He stood up and grabbed his shield and slung it on his back.

As Steve walked away to the CP, Foley stood up and went after him, "Sir," he called out to the Captain.

Steve stopped and looked over his shoulder, "Yeah?"

Foley walked up to Steve, "Did you want to brief the men on the enemy situation?"

Steve sighed and looked out to the mountainous horizon in front of his squad's position. He paused, "Take away their hope and all we got is our rifles." Steve sighed, "It's not enough."

Foley nodded, "I understand. But they'll find out sooner or later, it's probably best if they heard it from you."

Steve nodded in understanding, "You're right. I'll spread the word when I get back." With that, he turned and headed for the CP.

Foley returned to Junior and Cooper's fighting hole, "Junior," he called as he squatted back down by the fighting hole.

"What's up, Staff Sergeant?" Junior responded.

"You served with Captain Rogers before right?"

Junior nodded, "After he got found in the ice after the war. I served under him during cleanup operations in Europe then continued serving with him when we joined SHIELD."

Foley smiled, "Wow, so you know him very well."

"I got to know him personally along with his wife and his kids," Junior responded with a fond smile. "He really knows how to take a bunch of strangers and make them into a team."

Foley nodded, "He sure does." He chuckled, "Before I got assigned to him, I thought he was self-
absorbed with his hero persona as Captain America." He shook his head, "Glad I was proven wrong."

"He didn't like having public attention, and he wanted to retire from being Captain America to be a family man," Junior said evenly. He sighed, "Unfortunately, this war brought him back." He grinned, "But no matter the circumstances, he will always give a 110%. No matter what, he will always look out for us and the mission," Junior said with praise.

Foley nodded, "he's a good leader and a solid tactician."

"For As long as I known him, he's always been close to his team, Staff Sergeant," Junior said evenly. He furrowed his brows and frowned, "Those deaths last night. Charlie, Gene, and Rob. Those affected him."

Foley nodded, "I know, but he's okay. Trust me." He sighed, "We have to move on too. We're still in this fight, and we can't do anything for them now." He smiled and patted Junior and Cooper on the back reassuringly, "He's going to get us through this, I assure the both of you."

Foley, as the senior enlisted in the squad and Steve's second, knew the men better than Steve in many cases. He's responsible for assuring the team carries out Steve's orders and overseeing supply and maintenance of gear and weapons. But his other duty as Steve's second is to make sure the men maintain a good state of morale and discipline especially when Steve can't be everywhere at once. Foley wasn't like other Staff Sergeants in the army in the sense that his squad looked up at him as a big brother rather than an authoritarian while they treated and respected Steve as their leader and commander.

Foley stood up and was about to walk away when Cooper called out to him through his chattering teeth, "Staff Sergeant?"

"Yeah?"

Cooper shivered, "We got over a division of Chinese soldiers watching us down in the valley… what are the odds of us actually making it home. We're outnumbered..."

Foley squatted down and looked at Cooper, "Stow that shit, private. That attitude isn't going to help us. We killed more of them than they did us. We'll make it home, and we'll claim victory of the communists. If you don't trust me, then trust Captain Rogers," he said sternly.

Junior rubbed Cooper's shoulders, "Just hang in there, Coop. Hang in there." Cooper nodded quietly in response.

At the 32nd Infantry Regimental CP, Steve along with several other Company Commanders and Platoon Commanders met with Colonel Allan D. Maclean, the commander of RCT-31, Lieutenant Colonel Don C. Faith Jr., the commander of the 1st Battalion/32nd Infantry Regiment, and the surprise guest of US Army Major General Edward Almond, commander of US X Corps, who flew in earlier in the afternoon by helicopter. The group of officers huddled together in a tent surrounding a map on top of a makeshift table made of wooden munition crates.

General Almond, dressed in a thick OD green winter coat and wool hat, stood over the map confidently, "Gentlemen, I know we've had a pretty rough time last night and were taken completely by surprise by the Chinese, but our counter-attack this morning pushed them off our lines. This means we have the initiative over the Communists." He nodded, "Though the Reds surprised us and
came at us with sheer numbers, our forces along the front have withstood their waves and broken their backs. Last night and this morning with our superior air and firepower we have decimated their forces. I believe the Chinese and the North Koreans are in full retreat after facing such staggering losses once they realized their surprise attack failed to break our defense."

The subordinate officers including Colonel Faith looked at each other with surprised looks and worry because the General obviously had no idea what occurred last night let alone the information they just gathered. Almond grinned, "We're going to attack first thing in the morning. The 1st Marine Division will attack through the West and RCT-31 will attack through the East. I assure you the Chinese facing you are nothing but remnants of retreating units."

Colonel Faith spoke up, "Sir, we captured a number of North Korean and Chinese soldiers after this morning's battle. We're facing over two divisions of Chinese forces. The 79th and 80th PLA. They aren't retreating. In fact, we sighted the Chinese encircling us this morning."

Steve spoke up, "I have to agree with Colonel Faith, sir. We're vastly outnumbered out here, sir. They have a larger force and they still maintain the initiative especially at night."

Almond shook his head, "relax, you two. I assure you they're retreating. We're going all the way to the Yalu. Don't let a bunch of Chinese laundrymen stop you." The General not only had racist views of the Chinese and North Koreans but he also didn't have an appreciation for his enemy's strength and didn't fully understand the situation facing the task force.

Colonel MacLean didn't object, "We'll get the job done, sir."

Almond smiled, "I know. Good man. Colonel, we're going to talk about tomorrow morning's attack. Everyone else dismissed." As the officers left the tent, the General called out to Steve and three other officers, "Faith, Rogers, Connelly, Roberts, stay if you please," he said loudly. The four men stopped and returned back to the map. Almond gave them a confident smile, "Gentlemen, stand at the position of attention." The four men complied as ordered. "Since we're short on time, we're going to have to make this quick," the General said as he removed a Silver Star from his jacket pocket and walked up to Steve first.

XXXXXXXXXXX

An hour later Steve returned to his squad with a Silver Star in hand and made his way directly toward Staff Sergeant Foley's hole. By this time, the weather has gotten worse with thick cloud cover up above and heavy snowfall. Even though there's thick cloud ceiling, Marine Corps pilots continued to fly sortie after sortie through the inclement weather, dropping fragmentation bombs and napalm on reported enemy positions. The sounds of artillery booming and planes dropping bombs and napalm still echoed through the mountains.

As Steve neared Foley's hole, Foley spotted him and called out to him, "What's the word, sir?"

Steve squatted down at the side of the fighting hole like usual and sighed in frustration, "The General awarded a few of us including Colonel Faith Silver Stars," he said opening his palm to reveal the medal.

"What's that…number two for you?" Foley said with a grin. He noticed Steve wasn't reacting to the question, "What's the matter?" he asked concerned.

"The General wants us to attack first thing tomorrow morning," Steve said sadly.

Foley sighed, "You got to be kidding," he said under his breath.
"What?" Corporal Riley Kelly asked in shock. "They outnumber us, and we barely got our position back this morning." He shook his head, "And we know they're going to attack us tonight."

Foley slapped Kelly on the helmet, "Can it, Corporal. Let us worry about this stuff."

Kelly nodded, "Sorry, Staff Sergeant."

Steve sighed, "The General says the Chinese are in retreat and we'll be facing remnants of their forces." He shrugged, "We know it's not the case."

"So, what's the plan, chief," Foley responded calmly.

"I'll brief the men later, but the plan pretty much entails us being attached to first platoon as we push down the mountain at first light." Steve tucked his medal away in a pouch on his belt, "But for now we'll bolster our defenses, one man on watch per a hole and machine guns manned at all times."

Foley nodded, "I'll pass the word," he said as he grabbed his Thompson submachine gun at his side and climbed out of the hole.

Steve stood up and sighed as he looked out through the thick snowfall to the mountains surrounding him. He knew the Chinese were watching and waiting in the trees, limiting exposure in the open to avoid American airpower and accurate artillery. Steve knew that night time was the best time for their attacks because air support and artillery support became limited. Last night the Chinese attacked in force, but they were more of probing attacks to see the weak points in the allied lines, and they found many of them. Steve needed to hurry up and reinforce his squad's defense by any means necessary and fast before nightfall arrives.

Throughout the day Steve's squad and soldiers along their thin perimeter worked all day to improve their defensive positions to prepare for the attack they were sure is coming. The lack of supplies and little to no sandbags prompted the soldiers to use anything to increase their cover around their positions including the dead that littered all around the cold ground. It wasn't an uncommon sight to see dead bodies used as sandbags around the fighting holes. The sudden Chinese intervention in the war brought desperation to the thin American line holding the Eastern side of the reservoir, but regardless the Americans got ready for the coming fight.

Steve slung his shield on his back and picked up a Soviet-made Mosin-Nagant bolt action rifle with bayonet off the snow and walked ahead of his squad's battle position as they finished improving their defenses. The squad stopped what they were doing and watched curiously when they saw Steve walk in front of their line. Steve stabbed the Soviet rifle into the snow and spoke loudly to his squad, "This is the line! Don't let them cross it!" He spoke up confidently, "I know it's been a long few days and this fight might be longer, but give me everything you got and hold this line. I know we're outnumbered, and we're only eight. But show them what eight men can do, make eight men fight like 800. We gave them more than they did last night, now let's do the same thing tonight. Let them pay for coming here." His squad nodded confidently and grinned with rejuvenated vigor. "Finish up your positions, when the sunsets we're on stand-to for an hour then two hour watches one-man in every hole." Steve's soldiers quickly got back to work, nervous and frightened but motivated and with the slither of hope. That little bit hope of making it to morning was hopefully enough.

0000hrs November 29, 1950

Second night since the Chinese surprise attack along the UN line, and the temperature is well below freezing. The wind howled through the mountains, blowing the falling snow to sting, piling it up in drifts, and blinding the night with ice-white dust. The night is pitch black and quiet on the
mountainside, and the only thing heard among the soldiers were the clattering of teeth, shivering, and the ominous howl of the mountain wind. Sleep was pitiful at best. Fear kept the soldiers up and made everyone feel colder. Hyperthermia, extreme frostbite, and trench foot was as much an enemy as the North Koreans and the Chinese. Unfortunately, given the situation, there was nothing that can be done for the hyperthermia and frostbite because the soldiers couldn't get resupplied with cold weather clothing, medical supplies, let alone ammunition.

Junior sat in his hole by the .30cal machine gun anxiously waiting for the Chinese attack, unable to sleep. Cooper was manning the gun and shivered violently under his frozen clothing. Junior let his mind wander to think about his girlfriend at home, and wondered what she was doing that night. Luckily, he finished that letter to her before the sunset. He didn't know when he'll be able to mail it, but he made sure the letter wasn't negative so if anything did happen to him, Doris wouldn't feel like he died alone and afraid.

Junior sighed and rolled to his side. Cooper heard him and whispered, "Junior, you up?" he asked while shivering.

Junior turned around and replied in a hushed tone, "Can't sleep."

Cooper shook his head, "It's so damn cold."

Junior hugged him and kept him warm, "I know. Got to hang in there, buddy."

Cooper started to cry, "I can't die here..." He shook his head as tears rolled down his cheeks, "I can't...so far from home. God please let me go home," he said praying aloud.

Junior frowned and rubbed Cooper's shoulders, "Stay strong for me, buddy. Hang in there."

Over at Steve's hole, he sat in the pitch-black night staring at a photo of Peggy and his kids. Even with his enhanced vision, he could barely see Peggy's face and his three kids in the picture. He longed to see them again and fought hard to keep his mind off the coming battle to have a few moments with his family in his thoughts. Just seeing their faces in his mind gave him just enough of a break from all the madness surrounding him. His reprieve was short lived when he heard the unique sound of flares popping in the sky followed by the sounds of bugles, whistles, and a cacophony of screaming down the mountain. Steve quickly put his picture away in his pocket as the sky illuminated in an ominous green color.

Steve gripped his shield and drew his pistol, "Get ready!" he called out to his squad. His squad all got their weapons ready and prepared for the onslaught.

Suddenly, chaos broke loose as screeches of Chinese artillery and mortars rained from above. Steve ducked and held his shield over his head as the steel rain fell from the sky and exploded all around his position for what seemed like forever. When the barrage finally lightened, gunfire immediately followed. Steve stood up and noticed the sky was pitch black again, and the only thing he could see in the night are muzzle flashes and green and red tracers flying through the air in every direction. Sporadic explosions from mortars and artillery strikes illuminated his surroundings briefly, and he could see how close the Chinese were to his position. The Chinese were so close that his soldiers were fighting hand-to-hand and using their sidearms more than their rifles and submachine guns. The Chinese didn't waste any time charging up to the squad battle position. Through the lack of light and the burning hot tracers whizzing through the air, the only thing the American soldiers could see were silhouettes of people running toward them. To the desperate fighting Americans, the Communist soldiers weren't people but creatures of the night trying to kill them.

Steve sprung to action, slinging a handheld SCR-536 Radio over his shoulder, gripping his shield,
and charged out of the hole to protect his fellow soldiers. Steve shot his pistol multiple times at Communist soldiers, killing them, as he ran from position to position. Steve saved one of his soldiers about to get overwhelmed by a group of Communist troops by charging shield-first into the group and smashing them with his shield then shooting the ones he couldn't reach. The battle was getting bloodier by the minute.

The soldier Steve just saved got out of his hole and nudged him to the side, "Look out, sir!" the soldier said as he fired his BAR (Browning Automatic Rifle) at a charging squad of Communist troops killing and wounding them. Steve turned around just as a round hit his soldier in the shoulder, but the soldier kept on fighting until another one hit him in the head, killing him instantly and sending him tumbling down into his hole. Steve frowned but continued fighting, unable to let his mind dwell on the death toll around him.

Hours passed, and Steve's squad held their position bravely as wave after wave of Chinese forces crashed up against his thinning battle position. Steve continued to move from hole-to-hole, fighting off squad after squad of attacking Communist troops while simultaneously coordinating indirect fire from allied artillery and support from the adjacent units.

While Steve moved around to fight where he's needed, Staff Sergeant Foley stood in his fighting hole fighting viciously with his submachine gun, doing his best to rally the soldiers by his side to break the wave of Communist soldiers poised to overrun their position. Foley fired his submachine gun until it clicked, empty. He was completely out of Thompson ammo and quickly drew his pistol and shot at the approaching Communist troops. He looked over at Kelly, "Kelly, I'm out of Thompson ammo! How much rifle ammo do you have?"

Kelly didn't respond as he continued firing his rifle until his clip pinged out of his M1. "Two maybe three clips left!" Kelly said as he loaded another 8-round clip into his M1.

"Shit," Foley said as he shot another Communist soldier charging up the hill at him. All around his fighting hole were dead Communist soldiers and dead American soldiers, all sharing the same graveyard.

A young American soldier called out from the adjacent fighting hole, "Staff Sergeant, we're getting overrun! We need to get the hell out of here!"

Foley reloaded his pistol, "You stay put and you fight God damn it!" Suddenly two rounds snapped into his side and chest sending him into the back of his hole. Foley didn't hesitate and quickly returned fire with his pistol killing the dark figure that shot him. Foley coughed up blood as he groaned in agony while explosions, screams, and gunfire still filled the air.

Kelly lowered his rifle for a moment to tend to Foley, "Staff Sergeant!"

Foley pushed the young corporal away, "I'm alright. Keep shooting."

Kelly looked at him confused, "But…" he tried protesting.

Foley pushed him away, "I said keep shooting. That's an order." Foley groaned in pain as he bled.

Steve slid to Foley's hole and held up his shield to draw fire to protect the two soldiers as he shot advancing Communist troops. "Foley, what's the situation over here?" Steve called out as he fired his pistol from behind his vibranium shield.

Foley groaned in pain as he reloaded his pistol again, "We're spread thin on the left flank but we're holding… they won't get through here, sir. I promise you that."
Steve looked over his shoulder and noticed Foley was bleeding, "Foley, you're hit."

Foley chuckled in agony, "This will be my third time wounded today."

Suddenly a soldier ran up to Steve and called out to him over the cacophony of gunfire and explosions, "Sir!" As Steve turned around to address the soldier, Foley took his last breath and slumped down and faded away.

Steve held up his shield protect himself and the other soldier, "What is it?"

"Sir, the Colonel is ordering an immediate withdrawal!"

"Now?" Steve yelled in question.

"He's going to pull out the rear echelon units first along with Headquarters Company. Baker Company is going to have hold the line until we get all the shit packed up and don't leave anything useful for the Chinese!"

"How long is that going to take!"

"At best we'll pull out by 0500, sir!"

Steve sighed, "Got it!" The young American soldier nodded and ran off back toward regimental CP. Steve turned to Foley to pass the word, "Foley!" Through the flashes from explosions, Steve noticed Foley was dead. Steve frowned, "Oh..." he didn't know what else to say.

Kelly turned around and noticed Foley's lifeless body next to him. Kelly dropped his rifle and gripped Foley, "Staff Sergeant!" Foley didn't move causing to Kelly to gasp in sadness and emotional pain.

Steve shook his head to get his mind back in the present. He pointed at Kelly, "Kelly, get it together. You're the Sergeant now. Shore up the defenses here. The Regiment is pulling out, but we have to hold this position until headquarters company can get their ducks in a row!"

Kelly nodded, "Yes, sir!"

"Hold this position until my order!" Steve said.

Suddenly, Steve heard someone call out to him, "Sir! Junior's hit, sir!"

Steve turned in shock toward Junior's position on the opposite side of the line. He turned back to Kelly, "You hold this line!" With that Steve charged down the line toward Junior's position, leaving Kelly in charge of the left flank.

As Steve sprinted across the line, he shot, hit, and killed, numerous Communist soldiers in his path while charging through thick crossfire and raining artillery and mortar fire. Once Steve got to Junior's fighting hole he saw Cooper slumped over the machine gun, dead from blood loss. Steve slid into Junior's fighting hole and saw him shivering violently with blood oozing out of his chest and stomach. Steve put down his shield and immediately tried to help his friend by applying pressure to his wounds with his hands.

"Captain," Junior called out to him in pain.

Steve shook his head, "It's okay, Jonathan. I got you," he said as an artillery round hit nearby raining dirt and debris over them.
"My letter," Junior said shaking uncontrollably.

Steve released pressure from Junior's wounds and searched the young man's clothing for the letter. He found the letter in Junior's pocket and took Junior's hand and gave it to him, "Here you go," he said gently.

Junior gritted his teeth. "Can you mail it for me," he said over the chaos around them. "Please?" He asked desperately pushing the letter back to Steve.

Steve looked down at the bloody envelope and gripped the letter in his hand, "I will, kid."

Junior gasped in pain. "I'm scared. I'm scared," he gasped as his heart pumped four times its normal rate due to blood loss.

Steve put pressure on Junior's wounds, "Hang in there, Junior! You have to hang on! Hang on!" Junior gasped in pain as his breathing shallowed.

Suddenly Steve saw a Chinese soldier run up to the hole from the corner of his eye. He let go of Junior and whipped out his pistol and instantly shot the silhouette of the enemy soldier four times in the chest, killing the enemy instantly. Steve lowered his pistol and watched the enemy soldier fall backward and noticed he didn't carry a weapon and had his hands up. As the sky flashed brightly from mortar burst, Steve got a glimpse of the person he just killed. A young Chinese kid no more than 17-years old, with a look of pain and fear across his face as the kid, fell out of view. This marked the first time Steve got a real glimpse of who he was fighting. In the midst of stress, fear, and chaos, Steve got a look of not a faceless ferocious adversary, but another young man who was just as scared as him and his fellow soldiers.

A nearby mortar impact brought Steve back to reality. He shook off his thoughts and looked back down at Junior and saw him lifeless in the dirt and snow of the fighting hole. He frowned and slumped in shoulders, instantly saddened and left in shock at the loss of his friend. Steve didn't move as the chaos around him continued. His squad's death toll and the loss of multiple friends and soldiers in less than 24-hours under his command struck him deep in his core. Steve let out a tear as more artillery and mortars burst around him. He looked up to the night sky and saw the sight of red and green tracers whiz over his head in between the flashes from explosions and flares. Steve didn't know what to do in the face of being overwhelmed as he remained frozen from the men he lost.

Steve heard numerous frantic voices call out to him, "Captain!"

"We're getting overrun!"

"Running out of ammo!"

Steve calmed himself down and clenched his fists as the Earth shook with explosions. He nodded and took a deep breath as he stood up and climbed out of Junior's fighting hole. He gripped his shield and disappeared into the chaos of explosions and gunfire.

Time Square, New York City, SHIELD: AEGIS HEADQUARTERS

1130 EST

November 28, 1950

Peggy sat at her desk in her office quietly reading operation reports before heading down to the Ops Center to oversee a few overseas operations. While she read the report in her hand, Peggy couldn't
help but let her mind wander to Steve on the other side of the world from her and the family. She missed him terribly, and she knew all three of her children did too. Sarah and Michael, and even the ten-month-old Angela didn't understand why their father has gone for so long. The kids are too young and didn't understand war and why their father had to go and fight it, but Peggy did her best to keep them happy and to keep the two toddlers mind's off where their daddy went. Peggy couldn't wait to have Steve home, so they can be a whole family again, and go on Saturday trips like the picnic they went to in the city during spring.

Peggy's mind wandering about Steve signaled to her that she needed to take a quick break. She too sometimes needed a way not to let her mind wander about Steve, which usually meant she drowned herself in work to avoid worrying about Steve's safety. She couldn't help it sometimes especially when SHIELD is gathering intelligence on the war in Korea. Peggy closed the file on her desk and stood up to walk around and stretch her legs, and maybe make some tea. As she walked around her desk to the electric coffee maker on a cabinet, Howard barged into her office. Peggy sighed at the sight of Howard, "Goodness, Howard. Do you even know how to knock?"

Howard closed the door behind him, "Peg, uh. You're going to want to sit down."

Peggy cocked her head confused, "What? Why?"

"Trust me, please," Howard said, obviously showing some distress on his face.

Peggy sighed in frustration, "Howard, just tell me what is it?"

Howard walked to Peggy's desk and took out a file from under his arm and placed it down, "The Chinese entered the war. Overran our forces in the North East." Peggy quickly turned around and stared at Stark with a blank expression. "UN forces are outnumbered and cutoff in North Eastern Korea. Our intelligence states that over six Chinese divisions are surrounding the UN forces there."

Peggy put a hand over her mouth in shock, "Oh my God," she didn't know what to say.

Howard nodded, "The 1st Marine Division is trapped at the west of the Chosin Reservoir, and the US Army 32nd infantry, in the east, got pushed back and suffered heavy casualties." SHIELD has been keeping tabs of the UN advance since the war started and often provided intelligence on enemy movements to the military.

Peggy snapped at Howard in shock, "Did you say the 32nd?"

"Yeah," Howard responded sadly.

"Steve's in that regiment!" Peggy exclaimed, losing all sort of composure. Howard nodded sadly in response. Peggy quickly walked to her desk and finally sat down with worry sweeping over her entire body. "Oh my God," she said under her breath.

Howard frowned, "I'm sorry, Peggy." He shook his head, "I don't know what we can do… I don't think there's anything for us left to do."

Peggy's body nervously shook as she did her best to regain her composure, but Howard was right, there is nothing they can do now for the UN troops engaged in Korea. In frustration and worry, she slammed her fist onto her desk making a deep hole in the wood surface. Peggy glared at Howard, "Why didn't they listen to me?" For the past month, SHIELD discovered, through field agents deployed in Korea, China, and the Soviet Union, of warnings of massing Chinese forces in Manchuria by the North Korean border. They even gained significant intelligence of a few Chinese units crossing the border and engaging in armed conflict with UN forces. Peggy, of course, notified
Washington, but no one heeded her warnings. Howard and Phillips also tried, but they didn't make any progress either.

Howard shook his head, "Peg, they didn't listen to you, they didn't listen to me, and they even didn't listen to Phillips. MacArthur didn't listen to anyone." He sighed, "We did all we could, it's the brass over in Korea who are too prideful to listen."

Peggy sighed and ran a hand through her hair, "Doesn't make me feel better." She shook her head, "Is there any reports on my husband?" she asked with plea in her eyes to hear anything about Steve in Korea.

Howard shook his head, "No. We got sporadic reports from Army units in the East of the Reservoir. They got pushed back and are cutoff and surrounded. They're still counting their losses, but they're still fighting. As far as I know, Steve's unit is surrounded."

Peggy shook her head, "Steve wanted to hang up the shield. All he wanted was to have some peace and be with kids and me. He wanted as close to a normal life as possible." She frowned and continued to vent, "But no, the military needed him again and called him back to service. Steve obviously did the right thing and went back to serve." Peggy was starting to lose her inner strength as she fought back the tears of fear, worry, and grief, "I don't know where my husband is, and I don't know if he's alive. We have a family, and the deal was that we're supposed to help each other around the house and raise our kids together." She covered her mouth with her hand, "He almost didn't make it back the last war, and I'm afraid he's not going to make it back from this one. I want him to come home so bad."

Howard frowned and looked at her with worry, "Peggy, he'll be okay. I know it." He wasn't good with the comforting her grief and fear. He never was good at it. A prime example would be when Steve first disappeared after the war and Peggy was overcome with grief then.

Peggy shook her head, "I'm just scared of losing him again, Howard." She gasped, "I can't lose him twice." She bit her lip, "It just seems like the universe is forcing us to be apart. It always seems like we're always facing some 'near-death' experience. It all seems like one big sign."

Howard walked around her desk and squatted down in front of her, "Peggy, listen to me." He sighed, "You know I'm not good at this stuff, but I'm going to try. Now, Steve means a lot to me too and is arguably one of my only best friends. I never told him that, and I'm terrible at showing it, but that's the truth." He gave a reassuring smile, "But what I'm getting at is that I know him too. I know he'll fight tooth and nail to get back home to you. No matter what, he'll find his way back. He always does. You have to believe in him, believe in each other." Howard nodded, "Don't give up hope on him yet. Take comfort in his drive for you."

Peggy gave a thankful smile and wiped away a stray tear, "I never gave up hope on him, Howard. I'm just…venting my fears."

Howard chuckled, "I never said you did. It's okay to be afraid, Peggy. You knew the threat of death lingered over him since he went to Korea…"

"But he wasn't getting overrun by the entire Chinese Army," Peggy replied.

Howard sighed, "You get the idea."

Peggy nodded and wiped away her tears, "I know. Thank you, Howard. I'm just scared."

Howard stood up, "Me too." He gave a small smile, "Be strong like I know you are, Peggy. Be
strong for Steve and be strong for your kids."

Peggy nodded and did her best to compose herself, "Howard," she said calmly.

Howard went back around the desk, "Steve is a super soldier, he'll be okay," he said reassuringly.

Peggy nodded, "I know," she said frowning. Because her husband is a super soldier, he's expected to do more and quite obviously be singled out by the enemy. With the Chinese in the war, Steve is in over his head, and no amount of the serum will protect him from the thousands of Communist soldiers targeting him. Peggy shook those thoughts out of her mind and maintained the hope of Steve's safe return. Though Steve has been away on dangerous missions before, the war was a different sort of madness in itself. Additionally, Peggy was never worried about Steve being overrun by divisions worth of Communist soldiers when he was on missions for S.H.I.E.L.D. There was always worry when Steve was on missions for S.H.I.E.L.D, but war and the intervention of the Chinese frightened her.

"He'll be fine. I'm positive," Howard urged reassuringly again.

Peggy looked up at Howard, "I just have to have faith that he'll back come home to me and we'll be together once more." She sighed an ran a hand through her hair again, "damn it." She frowned as she focused on a family picture on her desk, "I need you to come home, darling. Please," she whispered under her breath.

Howard barely heard her whisper that last sentence and he too frowned. He too is worried about his friend stuck in the cold countryside of North Korea. Howard wasn't much of a religious man, but for the first time in years he made a silent prayer for Steve, and he knew Peggy was doing the same.

Peggy looked back up at Howard, "Howard, if you aren't too busy, I'm going to need your help to coordinate a new Operation with our agents in China to disrupt their supply lines heading into North Korea." Howard nodded.

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**Steve & Margaret Rogers Residence, Scarsdale NY**

Peggy returned home around six in the evening as per usual and parked her car on the driveway. The weather is gloomy with thick overcast and a brisk wind howling through the neighborhood. The dark clouds filling the skies and the muggy weather seemed to symbolize Peggy's current mood perfectly. After hearing the news about the situation in Korea and the long drive home from work, she couldn't help but sit silently in her car for a moment. Peggy slumped in her seat and sighed as stress and worry for her husband continued to fester in her mind and body. She frowned and ran a hand through her long brown hair and did her best to fight off the worry that seemed to take permanent residence in her mind. Five years ago, Steve almost didn't make it back from the war, but from a miracle, he made it home. It was a damn miracle that Howard was able to find him and bring him back. Steve got a second chance at life, and he and Peggy were quick not to let it go to waste. The two of them made a family and started a life together despite the immediate challenges that faced them, but when everything finally seemed to settle for the couple, Steve was called back to war. After everything that happened, from surviving the war to protecting each other from Hydra and Leviathan, Peggy couldn't bear to lose Steve now.

After a long while of sitting in her car and dwelling on her fears, Peggy took a deep breath, gathered her things, and got out of the car. She needed to be strong for her three very young kids and remain hopeful for Steve's safe return. Peggy may be tough and independent, but the fear of losing her husband and the man she loved in war, shook her to her very core. That would rattle anyone. Peggy closed the car door, slung her purse on her shoulder and tucked a small stack of files under her arm,
and made her off the driveway and down the curvy path to the steps of the covered porch. Peggy
walked up the steps and got to the front door and paused. Peggy took a deep breath and did her best
to look calm and collected for her children. She opened her front door and stepped into the foyer,
"April, I'm home," she said as she closed the door behind her.

Peggy heard April, the babysitter, call from the family room, "We're in here, Mrs. Rogers."

Peggy walked to the console table and dropped off her car keys at the table before heading to the
kitchen and family room. As Peggy walked into the kitchen, she looked into the adjoining family
room to see April sitting on one of the couches reading a book next to Angela, tucked into a brown
straw baby bassinet basket on a foldable stand. Though Peggy couldn't see Sarah or Michael, she
could hear her three-year-old's playing somewhere in the family room, likely on the floor in front of
April. "How were my angels today, April?" Peggy asked as she walked to one the countertops and
dropped off the files and her purse.

April closed her book and smiled, "They were wonderful today. Angela was a little fussy, but she's
calmed down." She put her book away in her bag then stood up, "Sarah and Michael wanted to
know where their dad is, and I did my best to answer. I didn't know how to talk to them about that."
Sarah and Michael recently turned three a few days ago, and for the first time, Steve wasn't there to
celebrate their birthday with them. The kids missed him dearly, and they often cried for him because
they didn't truly understand why he had to go for the past five months. Peggy did her best to
celebrate their birthday with Steve gone. She threw a small party, inviting the neighbors and their
kids, and other family friends including Angie, Sousa, and Howard. It wasn't much, but it did distract
the twins from their father's absence for a short while. Peggy couldn't deny how much she and all
three of her kids missed Steve.

Peggy walked into the family and removed her navy-blue coat, "I know. It's okay. They miss their
father." She sighed, "As do I."

April grinned at Sarah and Michael, "Sarah, Michael, your mommy's home." Sarah and Michael
smiled happily and quickly stood up, both stumbling as they did.

Sarah bounced happily as she ran toward Peggy, "Mama!" she cheered happily.

Michael wasn't far behind, "Mama, Mama!" he called out as he followed his twin sister.

Peggy dropped her coat on the floor before falling to her knees and hugging and kissing her two
children. She gave them a warm smile, making sure she didn't show any worry or stress on her face,
"How are you, my darlings!" Sarah and Michael gave their mother a big hug. Peggy kissed them on
the cheek again while holding them in an embrace, "I've missed you so much while I was at work.
Mama loves you," she said softly to her twin three-year-old's.

"I love you, Mama!" Sarah called happily.

"I love you too!" Michael replied.

Sarah gripped Peggy's arm, "Where daddy?"

Peggy frowned, "Daddy isn't home yet, Sarah. I'm sorry. He'll be home soon, I'm sure," she said
softly. Both Sarah and Michael and frowned and looked down, saddened that their father has been
gone for the past five months. It didn't help that Steve wasn't there for their birthday for the first time.
Michael lips started to quiver which signaled that he was about to cry. Peggy focused her attention
on him, "Don't cry, darling. Don't cry. Daddy will be home soon," she said in a motherly reassuring
tone.
Michael looked down and started to tear silently, "Daddy…” he said quietly.

With one hand, Peggy wiped a few stray tears off her son's cheeks, "It's okay to miss your daddy, Michael. I miss him dearly too. We just have to wait and be patient." She gave him a small smile, "I tell you what, when daddy comes home we will make him a cake and throw him a big party like your party a few days ago. How does that sound?" Michael looked up at Peggy and wiped his cheek with the back of his hand. "Like that idea, darling?" Michael nodded silently. Peggy turned to Sarah who looked hopeful after Peggy's words, "You like it too, sweetie?" Sarah nodded enthusiastically.

April walked up to Peggy and offered to take her coat, "Let me get that for you, Mrs. Rogers."

Peggy waved her hand with a gracious smile, "It's okay, April. I can take care of it." She kissed her two kids on the cheeks again, "Go on and play, okay? Mama is going to talk with April for a little bit, but I'll be back, and we can play together. Okay?" Sarah and Michael nodded and ran off back to their toys.

Peggy picked up her coat off the floor then left the family room and kitchen to the closet next to the garage. As Peggy left for the closet, April turned around and said her farewells to Sarah, Michael, and Angela before gathering her things. Peggy returned to the kitchen shortly and gave a small smile to April, "Thank you for taking care of them today, April. I really appreciate you taking care of the kids when we're away."

"It's my pleasure," April said as she put her old brown coat on.

Peggy turned back around and got money from her purse on the counter then walked back over to the babysitter and handed her a generous amount of bills, "Here you go. Same time tomorrow?"

April smiled and took the money, "Thank you, Mrs. Rogers. And yes, same time tomorrow." With that, Peggy walked April to the door.

As Peggy opened the door for April, she shook her hand as April left, "Thanks again, April."

April smiled, "My pleasure, Mrs. Rogers. See you tomorrow morning."

Peggy nodded, "Safe drive home. Give your family my best."

"I will!" April called out as she walked onto the porch. Peggy smiled then closed and locked the door before returning to the family room to be with her kids.

Peggy walked into the family room and saw Sarah and Michael playing with their toys on the floor by the coffee table. She gave her two children a small but warm smile as she went down onto her knees to greet them. Peggy kissed Sarah and Michael on the head, "Mama is here, darlings." She slowly stood up and walked to the TV and turned it on to the news program. For some reason, Peggy wanted to know what the press had to say about the situation in Korea. She knew it would be bad for her to hear it, but curiosity and hope to listen to any news about Steve overcame her.

As the TV turned on, Peggy went to the baby bassinet basket and scooped up Angela in her arms before sitting down on the couch. She cradled her baby in her arms and kissed her on the head, "How's my beautiful Angela doing today?" Angela kicked her legs and made babbled in greeting to her mother. Peggy made a small smile, "And I missed you…"

The TV came to life with the evening news, instantly drawing Peggy's undivided attention to the black and white screen. "This is CBS evening News with Ray Allen."
Communist China entered the war in Korea on the evening of the 27th of November. Over 200,000 Communist Reds pour into Korea and clash with UN forces. UN forces are obliged to fall back on all fronts in the face of overwhelming attacks by Chinese Reds. The horde of Chinese Communists continued to swarm over Korea today, threatening to trap desperately fighting allies in an offensive which General MacArthur marked the start, 'of a new war.'"

"In North East Korea, the situation is even graver. Here, thousands of Marines, Soldiers including Captain America, and other United Nation forces are trapped. U.S. Army Battalion encircled and facing total annihilation..."

Peggy's jaw dropped at the news. She covered her mouth with her free hand in shock as the news anchor continued to report the worsening situation in Korea. The news didn't tell her anything that she didn't know already but hearing the situation being broadcasted on national television only worsened her worry. Peggy knew that the Army Battalion encircled is the one Steve is a part of and listening to the news anchor report it frightened her. Peggy looked down at her baby daughter, "Daddy's in trouble," she said softly. She looked up at her two kids playing with their toys on the floor. "Lord, hear my prayer," she started to whisper to herself.

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North Korea: East of Chosin Reservoir November 30, 1950.

Day 4

Regimental Combat Team 31, Task Force Faith, US Army

On the morning of 29 November, the Army 1st Battalion/32nd infantry managed to break through the Chinese blockade surrounding their position and reached the Sinhung-ni perimeter where 3rd Battalion/31st Infantry was under siege. During the withdraw South, Colonel Maclean was shot and captured after mistaking Chinese troops for his reinforcements. Colonel Faith took command and was unable to mount a rescue for the endangered Colonel, focusing on getting his troops into the 31st Infantry perimeter. Baker Company 1st Battalion/32nd Infantry was hit hard and took numerous casualties on the night of November 28. Steve's squad, being the weak link between two understrength platoon suffered heavy casualties with only Steve and Sergeant Kelly were the only ones able to walk away from the night attack. The Chinese stopped their attacks on the night of 29 November which gave the Army units a brief break, but it was a short reprieve. The Chinese began their siege the next morning.

During the siege of RCT-31 on the 28th and 29th November, General Almond instructed the encircled 1st Marine Division on the west side of the reservoir to rescue the battered task force by breaking out of their perimeter around Yudam-ni. Tanks were ordered to push to the crippled RCT-31, and news of reinforcements spread to the broken and tired soldiers of the newly named Task Force Faith...

Steve with his shield in hand carried a wounded Kelly on his back up to the cluttered aid station located next to the 31st Infantry CP on a plateau overlooking the shrinking perimeter. The Chinese have been hitting the perimeter at all sides for much of the morning inflicting heavy casualties. But for the first time since dawn, the Chinese ceased their attacks, but no one knew for how long. Steve seized the opportunity in the break from the fighting to move wounded to the aid station and grab as much ammo as he can for his fellow soldiers along the perimeter. Kelly wounded in the legs and chest in the last Chinese assault a few minutes ago had to be taken off the line, much to his protest. Steve wanted to be safe than sorry and brought him up to the aid station.

Steve continued to carry Kelly effortlessly up the steep slope to the aid station as the sound of gunfire...
and artillery boomed in the distance. The Chinese may have taken a short pause earlier on their position, but they were sure hammering the Marines on the other side of the reservoir as well as the forces South of their position at Hudong-ni. As Steve neared the aid station, two Marine F4U Corsairs roared above him and dropped napalm down in the valley below on Chinese positions. The fortunate break in the weather allowed U.S. attack aircraft to fly countless sorties in support of the desperate UN ground troops around the reservoir.

Once at the aid station, a team of tired medics ran up to Steve to get Kelly off his back, "We got him, sir," one of the medics said to him.

Steve gently lowered Kelly to his feet where the medics slung his arms over their shoulders and took him to the nearest stretcher on the icy ground. Steve watched in silence as he stared at the scores of wounded and dead laying on the stretchers in front of him. Many of the wounded died from the extreme cold no matter what the medics tried. Medics and soldiers tried everything from covering the wounded with blankets and tents, but many of them still froze to death. Steve sighed, it almost seemed like Kelly might have a better chance at living on the line than at the aid station. The sight of the dead and wounded on the ground symbolized the desperate situation. Little to no food, low ammunition, dwindling combat troops, and an ever-increasing Chinese force surrounding them. Everyone in the taskforce became more and more anxious with each passing minute.

As Steve turned around to get ammo at the dwindling ammo dump, he heard Kelly call out to him, "Captain," he said weakly.

Steve turned back and walked over to Kelly propping himself up on the stretcher next to two tired and wounded soldiers. Steve squatted down by Kelly, "I'm here."

Kelly coughed loudly and shook his head, "Sir, I can still do my job." Steve didn't say anything and frowned at the Irish Sergeant. "I can do my job. Just put me in a hole and I'll fight. Don't go back down there without me. Don't. Someone needs to watch your back," Kelly protested.

Steve shook his head and patted his shoulder, "You did enough, Kelly. You did more than enough." He frowned sadly, "If I need you, I'll come back and get you, okay?" He nodded, "I'll get some blankets for you guys, try and keep you warm." He lay Kelly down on the stretcher, "Rest now, Sergeant. You've earned it." Kelly nodded silently as he fought the pain in his chest and legs.

Steve stood up and slung his shield on his back, nodding at Kelly farewell before making his way to the ammo dump to get much-needed ammunition for the troops on the line. Since Steve was the sole survivor of his squad, he floated from unit-to-unit during combat, giving support where he can. That's all he can do at this point.

Steve returned to the line with minimal ammunition on his shoulders to the remnants of Baker Company's 1st platoon taking cover behind a row of stacked dead enemy soldiers. The frozen ground made it impossible for Army soldiers to dig foxholes, so they opted to using the countless dead as sandbags. This battle brought desperation out of everyone, but Steve couldn't blame them. Steve began to pass out the limited ammunition to the soldiers, "Spread the ammunition out." The soldiers silently complied and distributed the ammo amongst themselves.

Baker Company's CO, Captain Berg, walked up to Steve and patted him on the back, "Captain."

Steve nodded, "Yeah."

"I guess you heard?" Steve nodded again without saying a word. "We aren't getting any help. No reinforcements. We're on our own and we have to fight our way out." Steve sighed and turned away from the soldiers around him to hide his sad expression. "Worse, we're stranded here. Our forces at
Hudong-ni pulled out earlier to defend Hagaru." Steve turned back to the line and sighed, letting a large plume of his breath into the freezing air.

One of the soldier's laying prone in the snow spoke up defeated, "It's too late for us now..."

Berg spoke up confidently, "This changes nothing. We go out like soldier's."

Steve chimed in, "It's not too late. Listen up!" The soldiers who could hear him turned and looked at him with desperation in their eyes. "We're going to hold the perimeter and hold this strong point. Got it?" The soldiers nodded quietly in response. Steve looked at all the young men who looked worn out and old from battle, "Conserve your ammo. Only shoot what you know you can hit. We're going to get out of her. We're going to get home."

Steve turned and walked away down the line to check on the other soldiers. Berg chased after him and tugged on his shoulder, "Rogers." Steve turned around and faced his fellow officer. Berg spoke, "Rogers, you need to know something."

"What is it?" Steve responded calmly.

"These soldiers. They're young and many of them haven't seen combat until recently. They look up to you." He sighed, "I know you lost your squad and I'm sorry, and I know you're carrying that with you, but these men look up to you as their hero. And that's not a bad thing. They heard what your small squad did during those first two nights of battle. Your squad on paper should've been destroyed that first night, but it didn't. Your men fought hard to the very last by you for two nights. Captain, you have a trait that makes men follow you down to hell itself." Berg smiled, "these men put all their hopes in you and feel like their invincible with you around. Again, that's not a bad thing." Berg nodded at Steve, "You push these men to fight harder. And these guys won't fight without you nearby.

Steve didn't know what to say and couldn't find the words. He was scared just as much as anyone else. Berg continued, "We all know your super human, but the things you've done...they're no short of a miracle regardless how you became Captain America. You were dead, and you came back to the world of the living. To any man here, you're invincible, and these guys feel invincible with you fighting by them." He sighed, "So what I'm saying is... stay here and fight with us. I know you feel the need to move down the line and help where you can, but... I'm asking you to stay for the sake of these men here."

Steve didn't answer right away. He stared at the tired and battered men of Baker Company. Kids, most of them 18 and looked to be 30. These past few days added years to everyone. After a while, Steve finally responded, "Okay."

Berg patted him on the shoulder, "Welcome to Baker, Captain." He chuckled, "Your Irish right?"

Steve nodded, "yeah, why?" he asked confused

"These men, though they know you're Captain America, they wanted to call you something that's unique to them. They're calling you the Minstrel Boy," Berg said with praise. Steve knew the of the song the men based his new nickname and felt honored, but at the same time not deserving of it. "The Minstrel Boy" is an Irish song that symbolizes the devotion of one's country, in the song's case Ireland, but to the American soldiers, to their home.

Though they were in a constant threat of being attacked, a soldier down the line started to sing the song "The Minstrel Boy." "The Minstrel boy to the war is gone!"
Soon the rest of the men picked up the tune and sang,
In the ranks of death ye may find him;
His father's sword he hath girded on,
With his wild harp slung along behind him;
Land of Song, the lays of the warrior bard,
May someday sound for thee,
But his harp belongs to the brave and free
And shall never sound in slavery!

Steve looked down and hid his face from the men who looked up to him. He didn't know if he could live up to their expectations, but he had to try for their sake and the sake of getting home. The Minstrel Boy, a simple narrative of a young man who goes off to fight for Irish freedom. He defends his country with his sword and sings its praise with his harp. To the soldiers in Korea, Steve is the Irish American fighting for freedom, freedom from the communists, and freedom to live, and he fights not with a sword but a shield with the colors of the United States. It's symbolism enough for the men of Baker Company.

Then suddenly, off in the distance, the dreaded sound of bugles and whistles rang in the distance signaling of another overwhelming attack on their position. The men continued to sing with pride as the Chinese forces neared their firing line. Flights of Marine F4U Corsairs and A1D Skyraiders screeched across the sky and dropped fragmentation bombs and napalm ahead of the soldiers to provide close air support. Even with the threat of superior American air superiority, the Chinese continued to charge toward the soldiers of Baker Company.

Captain Berg got down on the frozen Earth by his men and prepared for the fight. Steve gripped his shield and unholstered his pistol and walked over the prone men and the dead and stood in front of his fellow soldiers, defiantly standing to break the wave of enemy soldiers poised to meet them. For a moment there was nothing. No sounds of explosions, gunfire, or planes, just the rumble of thousands of soldiers charging toward them.

Steve whispered, "I can do this all day…"

"This is NBC newsroom evening report with Keith Davis"

"Breaking news: US Army 31st Infantry nearly annihilated. Only 300 left able to fight. Over 1,000 wounded of a unit of 2,500 soldiers. But with great personal sacrifice and heroism, the men of the 31st Infantry made it to the encircled Marine stronghold on the southern side of the Chosin Reservoir."

"After a long month of fighting, the trapped US Marines spearheaded the breakout out of the Chosin Reservoir along with the remaining U.S. Army forces and UN Forces, and successfully made it to the sea at the port of Hungnam. Arguably the greatest military evacuation by sea since Dunkirk, UN forces overwhelmed by astronomical odds successfully evacuated. Early military reports suggest the Chinese suffered staggering losses during the month-long battle."

"Flash reports from the military: estimated over 7,000 troops killed in action…"

March 1951

LaGuardia Airport, New York City, New York
The winter time has passed; and spring is here, having brought clear blue skies, warmth, and colorful trees. It's a lovely day, for the first of all the days of spring, and it's a good day to be home. Peggy, dressed in a light green, sleeveless, spring dress stood outside of the terminal with Angela in her arms, and Sarah and Michael sitting on the bench next to her and the baby pram. The twins didn't need to use the pram as much anymore since they've gotten better at walking, but it was dependent on the distance they're walking. The pram is used primarily for Angela when Peggy can't conveniently carry her. The Rogers along with dozens of other families waited with anticipation for the flight carrying their loved ones home from war. Last month Peggy received a wire that Steve was coming home and was getting discharged from service. Peggy was ecstatic as well as Sarah and Michael. Steve is finally coming home from war…

During the winter, Peggy didn't know if Steve survived the Chinese siege and was left wondering and worried through Christmas and Angela's birthday. But when Steve finally sent her a letter and belated birthday presents for the kids, notifying her of the ordeal and that he's alive and well, Peggy nearly broke down in relief. Even in war and fight for survival, Steve never forgot his family and sent Angela a figurine from South Korea. During that month Peggy heard from him, she knew the war wasn't over and that Steve still needed to fight, but at least she heard from him after a long while of silence and fear. That was back in late January. But after two months of fighting, Steve was allowed to go home, a decision given directly from General Ridgway, the new Supreme Commander in Korea after General MacArthur was relieved. Though the war was far from over with UN forces again pushing the North Koreans and the Chinese out of South Korea, Ridgeway believed Steve did enough for the service of his country. Steve wanted to go home, but he felt like it was his duty to stay and fight. The General told him, "Your inspiration made ordinary men into supermen, and in a way, you'll always be fighting with them." Although Steve is a valued military asset, no one knew why Ridgway let him go home.

Peggy saw a silver and red striped TWA Lockheed Constellation taxi and stop in front of the terminal. Peggy's heart raced as she suddenly grew impatient for the airport ground crew to push the Airstairs to the side of the plane to let the passengers off. Peggy turned to the bench, "Darlings," she called to her two kids. The kids looked up at their mother in response. "Stand up, your daddy's here," she said with a big smile.

Both Sarah and Michael shot off the bench and excitedly stood by their mother. Sarah jumped excitedly, "Daddy?"

Michael tugged on Peggy's swing skirt, "Mama, where Daddy…"

Peggy smiled at her twins, "He's in the plane, sweetie. He'll be out in a minute," she said excitedly. The other families around her were just as excited as them, waiting for their loved ones returning from war. Peggy couldn't wait any longer and impatiently bounced Angela in her arms. Angela hugged her mother and rested her head against Peggy's shoulder as the family continued to wait.

The excruciatingly slow process came to an end when the door to the airplane opened, and the first handful of soldiers dressed in their khaki uniforms stepped out of the plane, carrying heavy green sea bags. As soldiers walked out of the plane, families happily walked out to greet them after months of being separated. After a few minutes, Peggy spotted Steve, in his khaki uniform, step out of the plane with his shield in hand and his sea bag slung over his shoulder. Peggy smiled happily and couldn't move, overcome with joy. Finally, Peggy looked down at her two toddlers, "There's daddy."

Sarah's and Michael's eyes shot in the direction of the plane and immediately spotted their father walking down the Airstairs to the tarmac. Both the of the twins jumped with joy and ran to their father, "Daddy!" they both cheered. Peggy grinned and quickly followed suite with Angela in her arms.
Steve saw his family rushing toward him causing him to run in their direction too. Steve stopped short of his twins, dropping his shield and sea bag on the ground, and fell to his knees and embraced his kids tightly. "Daddy!" Sarah exclaimed as she started to cry with joy as she hugged Steve tightly. Michael also cried loudly as he hugged his father.

Steve kissed his kids on the head and began to cry as well, "I've missed you so much." He nuzzled them tightly, "I've missed you guys!" The kids continued to hug their father and sob into his uniform.

Peggy reached her family and stopped behind her two kids. She cried tears of joy too and the sight of Steve embracing their kids melted her heart. Steve looked up at saw his beautiful wife smiling happily at him with their baby daughter in her arms. After being away for so long, Steve stared at her like it was the first time he met her. Peggy grinned, "Hello, darling," she said shakily.

Steve kissed his kids on the head again, "Let me go say hi to mommy, okay?" He said as he wiped his tears from his cheek. Sarah and Michael were both reluctant to let go, fearing he might disappear again. The twins finally let go of Steve and continued to sob happily in front of him. Steve smiled at his son and daughter, "No need to cry anymore. Daddy's home and he isn't going anywhere." He began to wipe the tears off Sarah and Michael before standing to greet his beloved wife.

Steve stepped forward and kissed Peggy passionately, careful not to squish his baby daughter between them. After a long moment for air, the couple broke the kiss. Peggy panted, "I've missed you so much."

Steve smiled, "I've missed you too." He ran a gentle hand across her cheek, "I love you, Peggy."

"I love you too, Steve," Peggy said happily. The two shared another brief kiss.

Steve broke the kiss and greeted his one-year old daughter, "Hi, Angela! It's me your dad."

Peggy grinned, "Want to hold her?"

"Of course, I do," Steve replied as he scooped up his daughter in his arms. He kissed Angela on the forehead, "I'm sorry I missed your birthday, sweetie. I promise to be there for your second and every one after."

Peggy wrapped her arm around Steve's torso and pressed her body up to his. Peggy smiled up at her husband, "She took her first steps a few months ago. I have the pictures."

Steve smiled at his baby daughter, "You took your first steps!" He grinned happily, "Did you say your first word?"

Peggy shook her head, "Not yet. It's been fourteen months. I read that it can take up to eighteen, so I don't think we should be worried." She looked over her shoulder and saw her two toddlers trying to pick up Steve's shield. Peggy grinned, "Darlings, be careful with that!"

Sarah and Michael listened to their mother and immediately stepped away from the shield. Michael grinned at his mother, "Okay, mama!"

Peggy returned her focus to Steve and Angela and smiled as her husband kissed their little baby on the head. Suddenly Angela's high pitch voice surprised the two parents, "Da-Dada!"

Steve gasped, "No…" He grinned, "No… what…You spoke!" he exclaimed as he held his daughter high in the air.

Peggy gasped, "She spoke! She said her first word!" She laughed and hugged Steve, "And she said
it right when she saw you! She must've been waiting for you!"

Steve kissed Angela on the cheek, "I'm so proud of you! You spoke!" Angela giggled and kicked her feet in response. Peggy leaned into Steve and kissed him on the cheek. Steve turned and kissed his wife on the lips, "I'm so glad to be back with my family."

Peggy smiled, "Let's go home. The kids have a surprise for you." She turned to Sarah and Michael, "Sarah, Michael, time to go home. And Daddy is coming with us!"

Sarah jumped with joy, "Yay!"

Steve looked at Peggy, "Can you take Angela, I got to get my things." Peggy nodded and gently took her daughter back in her arms. With that Steve slung his sea bag over his shoulder and picked up his shield. He then scooped up Sarah in his free arm while Peggy took Michael's hand, and together the family made their way back to the pram by the bench.

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Steve & Margaret Rogers Residence, Scarsdale, NY

Once the Rogers returned home, Steve got surprised by a welcome home cake made by Peggy with the assistance of Sarah and Michael. The two toddlers aided in the mixing of the ingredients and decorating the cake. For the rest of the day, the family lounged and played and danced together in the house. The kids especially wanted to spend all their time with their father since he got home. When night came, Steve put the kids to bed in their separate bedrooms, read them a bedtime story and tucked them all in for the night. Before heading to bed with Peggy, he stopped by the nursery and kissed the sleeping baby goodnight. It almost seemed like Steve never left home and picked up where he left off.

In the master bedroom, while Peggy was in the bathroom getting ready for the night, Steve sat on his side of the bed shirtless while he fiddled with his worn out gold wedding ring on his finger. His mind wandered back to Korea specifically the first days and nights of the Chinese attack. He saw the faces of his squad all of them he couldn't save. At least, Steve was able to protect Kelly. Fortunately, after the Chosin Reservoir, Kelly was evacuated to Japan for further medical treatment. But Steve's mind wandered on that hellish month in the freezing mountains of Korea. He could still see Junior's face showing fear and pain as he bled to death. Steve could again hear him say, "I'm scared. I'm scared." Steve took a deep breath and shut his eyes and tried to block out the painful memory. Of all the soldiers he fought beside and lost, the one that guilted him the most was the loss of Junior. Not because the other soldiers didn't mean anything to him, but because Junior became the face of his survivor's guilt and pain.

Steve heard a creak on the floor causing him to look up and saw Peggy leaning on the doorframe of the bathroom. Peggy, dressed in her rose pink nightgown, gave a small smile to her husband, "Are you okay, darling?"

Steve sighed and nodded shyly, "I will be. Just… memories."

Peggy pushed herself off the doorframe and walked to her husband, accenting the sway in her hips as she walked. Steve didn't take his eyes off her as he leaned back to allow Peggy to straddle his lap. Peggy sat down on his lap and wrapped her arms around his neck, "Come home to me, Steve," she said softly. She ran a hand through his hair gently, "Be here with me, darling."

"I am. I don't ever want to pick that shield up again," Steve said quietly. War affects everyone who participated, even those who didn't, no matter how strong, and Steve was no exception.
Peggy gave him a small smile, "then don't," she said as she ran a gentle hand across his cheek.

"I'm sorry that I'm so tense. I…"

Peggy put a finger to his lips, "Sh. Don't apologize." She smiled at him, "let me help you relax and we can talk after if you want."

Steve smiled, "Okay."

Peggy kissed his lips, "Don't hide anything from me, Steve. No matter how bad those memories are," she said in a gentle tone. "I can handle anything you say, but I can't take the quiet," Peggy said softly.

Steve nodded, "I'll tell you. I promise. I just…I just need some time."

"I know." Peggy gave him a seductive look, "Now, let me help my husband relax tonight."

Steve smirked, "And what do you have in mind?"

Peggy kissed his lips, "this," she said as she pushed him down onto the bed.

I wasn't initially planning on writing on the Korean War, but it's a significant historical event and will effect Steve's mindset in the future.

***"We're going all the way to the Yalu. Don't let a bunch of Chinese laundrymen stop you."- MG Almond. Direct quote during the war. ***

This chapter isn't to make light heart of War or downplay the significance of the Korean War.

Three Silver Stars were historically awarded to officers of RCT-31 during the opening days of the Battle as Chosin, but I don't know their names.

Packing a month-long battle into a single chapter is hard, but I hope I did it right.

"The Minstrel Boy" a very popular Irish Patriotic Song.
Chapter 34 The 50s

I don't own Captain America

1957

It's 1957, and the United States experienced an economic boom, following the end of World War II, with an increase in American industry, domestic products, and home construction. Following the Second World War saw a suburban boom with millions of families moving to suburban neighborhoods away from cities to raise families. Consequently, the post-war years saw an increase in the birthrate, therefore, called the baby boom due to couples starting families after putting off marriage during the war. The improving economy and rising living standards facilitated the increased birthrate and the mass emigration from cities to suburban neighborhoods.

Also, to the mass shift from city living to suburbs, American culture made a significant change as well. American exceptionalism is on the rise or the idea that the United States is unique among nations with respect to democracy and personal freedoms. Though the term can be coined as negative, Americans believed it to be positive due to the post-war prosperity and economic boom. The popularity of television skyrocketed in the United States with a vast majority of American households purchasing their first set in the first couple of years. Television programs became increasingly popular, and the genre of Science Fiction became a hit in Hollywood. With science fiction came the optimistic view of a semi-utopian technological future with flying cars and sprawling towering cities and futuristic homes and robots. Music also changed with the introduction of Rock-n-roll and grew incredibly popular in the country, mostly toward the teens and youth of the nation. With the change in culture, the civil rights movement gained traction with the landmark Supreme Court ruling of Brown vs. the Board of Education in 1954. The Supreme Court ruling paved the way for the right for all Americans to equal and fair education regardless of race, creed, or religion. Unfortunately, during this time, racial segregation was still present in the U.S. as well as other countries. The increase of the civil right movement challenged the idea of segregation to guarantee equality for all eventually.

The '50s also saw a growth in the U.S. anticommunist sentiment. The Cold War only escalated further into a nuclear arms race following the first Soviet atomic test in 1949. The 1950s became the Atomic Age with both the Soviets and the U.S. developing more powerful nuclear weapons of mass destruction. The Korean War, the first significant U.S. international intervention against the spread of Communism, lasted until 1953 with an armistice signed between communist North Korea and the Republic of Korea. Due to the censorship of the war, brutal conflict, and being overshadowed by the victory of World War II, the country wanted to forget the war, and thus the Korean War slowly became known as "the Forgotten War." The Korean War, the nuclear arms, and brewing international conflicts helped create a politically conservative climate in the U.S. Fear of communism spread like wildfire causing Congressional hearings in both houses of Congress, loyalty acts, and lasting anti-communist sentiment in the United States. The events of the Cold War so far made the public fear of Communist invasion and subversion causing a "Red Scare" through the public. Individuals like Senator Joseph McCarthy capitalized on the Red fear, particularly during the Truman Administration. He is especially known for alleging that numerous Communist and Soviet spies had infiltrated the United States government, universities, film industry, and other parts of the country. He used smear tactics which prompted many people to fall victim to false accusations as communists by
politicians, neighbors, and coworkers. The U.S. Senate censured him and the term "McCarthyism," coined similar anti-communist activities. In 1952, World War II hero and retired Army General, Dwight D. Eisenhower became President and won re-election in 1956.

SHIELD drastically grew in size under President Eisenhower with the young clandestine intelligence agency acquiring an increase in funds. SHIELD gained a surge of thousands of more agents and employees allowing the agency to broaden its activities around the globe. The agency continued its actions against the Soviet Union, Leviathan, and their enduring enemy, Hydra. Though the Soviets and Hydra are in league together, public hysteria against Communism overshadowed SHIELD's private war against Hydra. Additionally, SHIELD quickly developed a network of stations all over the world to project the reach of U.S. intelligence gathering and espionage. Under the charge of Captain Timothy Dugan and oversight from Director Margaret "Peggy" Rogers, the Special Purpose Unit grew to rival a small private Army with different units stationed all over the world with the three primary units stationed in Los Angeles, New York City, and Washington D.C.

On March 1954, after returning from her third maternity leave after giving birth, Peggy took charge of SHIELD when Phillips retired at the age of 61. Phillips retired with a full pension and currently lives in a beach house in upstate New York with his wife. The retired Director of SHIELD left the agency with guilt from feeling that he didn't do enough to warn the U.S. military of Chinese intervention during the Korean War. His guilt only worsened when he learned that Steve almost got killed in the Chosin Reservoir. The failure of General MacArthur and other ranking military officers to heed the warnings was not on Phillips, but Phillips carried the burden of not doing more when he could. In the end, Peggy and Steve both figured Phillips' retirement heavily based on the outcome of the Korean War. The former Director of SHIELD continued to live a highly private life with many SHIELD employees, including the Rogers, not truly knowing who his family is or where he lived.

On 22 May 1953, Peggy gave birth to her and Steve's fourth child, a healthy baby boy named John Steven Rogers. The baby born nearly seven-pounds had blonde hair and looked a lot like his father. Though Steve and Peggy partially planned for Angela, the birth of John completely surprised the couple. Nonetheless, the Rogers are happy to raise another child and a big happy family. Once becoming the head of SHIELD in 1954 following her maternity leave, Peggy immediately capitalized on Phillips' progress and vision, and rapidly expanded SHIELD to be able to protect the much of the free world in secret effectively. Then in 1956, Peggy discovered a Hydra plot to assassinate the President. She ordered a SHIELD team to raid a Hydra occupied suburban house in DC and prevented the plot from ever occurring. Eisenhower awarded Peggy with a certificate of honor and appreciation the following weekend. Peggy further improved her reputation in the intelligence community and DC with her straightforward manner, decisive decision making, and firm but fair attitude. Though she's the only woman as a Director of a government agency, an intelligence agency, in this case, Peggy still faced criticism and discrimination based on her sex. Regardless of what others thought of her, Peggy sallied forth in her job with loyal and dedicated subordinates and a loving family behind her.

Peggy and her family remained in Scarsdale, NY and she works out of the SHIELD Aegis Headquarters building. Peggy travels to Washington DC every so often for meetings, hearings, and briefings when needed, but she largely remains in New York with her family. Though Peggy is busy during the weekdays and some weekends, she always makes time to be a mother for her four children. Regardless of how tired she is, Peggy always tried to care for her four kids and particularly her youngest, John Steven, who's only three years old. It wasn't a secret that working fulltime and being a mother is hard work, but Peggy found a way to do it and balance her busy life. Also, it didn't hurt to have the serum from Steve working in her favor. She's, in all intents and purposes, a super mom.
After coming home from the Korean War, Steve was discharged from service once again. In his career as a soldier in the armed forces he earned numerous accolades, awards, and medals for his service. He was awarded the Medal of Honor for outstanding acts of heroism during World War II, two Distinguished service crosses for separate actions during World War II and Korea, and two Silver Stars from two different conflicts, just to list a few. Steve became one of the most decorated soldiers in history, but in the end, it was worth to nothing to him. Steve fought for what he believed was right, fought for his fellow soldiers, family, and country. But, all Steve wanted as a reward was coming home to his family. After returning from Korea, he sent his shield back to SHIELD, boxed up his uniforms and medals, and locked them away in the closet, hoping never to put them on again. The experiences of all the conflicts he fought, especially the chase for Bridget and the Chosin Reservoir, affected him deeply. Something in Steve changed when he was shot in the chest during the hunt for Bridget, but then his attitude further changed when he survived the battle at Chosin. Steve didn't want anything to do with conflict and wanted to have a normal and peaceful life with his family. He was designed to be a weapon, but Steve didn't desire to remain one and sought the simple life. Steve told Peggy the dark thoughts that haunted him, and she was caring and helpful as ever, but Steve continued to live with the memories and the feelings of danger. Steve did have bad dreams from time to time but seemed mostly mentally stable.

Steve completed school after the war and got a job working for the new Stark Industries facility in Manhattan built in 1954. Thanks to Steve's relationship with Howard, his innovative and imaginative mind, and leadership abilities, Steve quickly became a Senior Manager of Civil Technologies Division after working in Stark Industries for three years. Howard had something to do about his promotion, but Steve didn't know. Steve worked in the entry level position until he learned the ropes and rapidly got promoted. His job entailed him managing operations, activities, and profits of technology that will improve everyday life. Because of his position as Senior Manager, Steve worked closely with Howard and the board of directors. Steve made good money, stable job with flexible hours, and it felt like he finally got to experience the simple life.

Regardless of what occurred during the war and past conflict with Hydra, Steve always remained a dedicated husband and family man. He cared deeply for his wife and kids and often helped around the house with Peggy. He enjoyed going on dates with his wife to keep the romance alive and spend time with his four kids. Though things are never perfect, Steve and Peggy's system of taking turns doing household chores worked the majority of the time. Though Steve retired from being Captain America, he's still a household name and still largely popular. It also didn't help that Steve had his own TV show called "The Captain America Adventure Program" based on the old radio broadcast show of the same name. It was an instant success. Both Steve and Peggy hated it and guided their children to avoid the show entirely.

The Rogers family of six is one big happy family and are very close to one another. Steve and Peggy did their best to raise the kids to be very close to each other and to care for one another. The kids didn't always get along, but for the most part, they're incredibly close. Sarah and Michael are both a shocking ten years old and are finishing up fourth grade. Sarah, the oldest by forty minutes from Michael, continued to grow as a beautiful brown-haired little girl and turned out to be more and more like her father with every passing moment. For a kid her age, she has a strong sense of altruism and the drive to do the right thing. She also picked up Steve's easy-going nature and both her parent's self-confidence. Like her father, Sarah has a noble and honest spirit, and intolerant to injustice and abuse. Michael continued to grow as a handsome little boy with brown hair just like his twin sister and mother. Michael took on after Peggy and became very resilient, adventurous, confident, loyal, and picked up Peggy's sarcasm. He was also very selective of who he became friends with and who he got close too, with only a tight group of friends in his class. Michael, however, was very close to his siblings and extremely protective, particularly to his youngest sister, Angela. Like Peggy, Michael believed in doing the right thing but was always willing to cross the boundaries if the situation called
Angela, at the age of seven, is in the second grade and is the middle child of the family. The little girl grew to have a striking resemblance to Peggy but with blonde hair. Angela didn't share the trait of self-confidence as her older siblings and parents did and is shy and self-conscious in public. She opens up and is more comfortable around family than out in public, and thus has very few close friends. Like Peggy and Michael, Angela shares being selective with who she gets close with and whom she considers as friends. But when people do get to know Angela, the little girl becomes very talkative and outgoing. Being shy is what deters her from opening up with most people and being social. However, Angela did share the altruistic values of her parents but often kept her views and opinions to herself.

The youngest child, John Steven Rogers, just recently turned three years old and is an extremely energetic young toddler. He's very talkative and like his father, very selfless. Though he's only three, there have been plenty of times John went to comfort his mother, father, and older siblings when they appear to have their hard days. Like Peggy, he's incredibly adventurous and gets into trouble with his mother when he wanders off or does something dangerous. As the youngest, his older siblings tend to be protective over him, particularly Sarah.

The serum infused into Steve during World War II already had a clear mark on the children. The kids are stronger than any other child their age, Sarah and Michael, particularly at ten years old, are stronger than most young adults. In addition to the natural strength, the kids have a higher metabolism than average, and, of course, inherited the rapid healing ability. Thanks to their parents, the kids inherited seemingly all aspects of the serum first injected into their father. The serum is affecting them slowly with each passing year, but Howard believes that the serum will change them the most during their teenage years and when they hit puberty. Since neither Howard or Steve and Peggy know what to expect, they have to wait and see. But thinking about the kids reaching puberty wasn't on Steve and Peggy's radar since they just wanted to embrace the time they had them as kids. The time Steve and Peggy have with their four children are priceless.

Angela "Angie" Martinelli Sousa continued her successful acting and singing career as an actress on Broadway. She starred in several hit musicals and capitalized on Broadway's golden age, and became a well sought out actress on stage. She became nationally famous for her unique acting and voice talents and earned quite the fan base. But her newly acquired fame didn't change her caring, friendly, easy-going, and spirited nature. Angie is still happily married to Daniel Sousa, and publicly voices her love toward her husband, quoted in interviews with "this is what a real marriage is supposed to be." In the winter of 1951 the couple had their first child. A boy named David Bradford Sousa. Then in 1955, the couple had their second child, a beautiful girl named Margaret Gabrielle Sousa, named after Peggy. Steve and Peggy were, of course, the kids' Godparents. Angie remained close to the Rogers and often visits from the Sousa residence in the suburbs of Bronxville, NY.

Daniel Sousa, a loving husband, and father became a dedicated family man and a Deputy Director of SHIELD. When Peggy got promoted to be the Director of SHIELD, Peggy promoted him to fill her spot as the Deputy Director, still working out of the Aegis headquarters alongside her. In 1956, he helped Peggy organize the raid to thwart the plot to assassinate the President and supervised follow-up actions against Hydra cells in the United States. At home, Daniel loved Angie and his kids deeply, and dedicated himself to be the best husband and father he can. The Sousas live in a nice house in Bronxville, NY, fifteen minutes from the Rogers.

James Buchanan Barnes still regularly goes to the SHIELD psychiatrist but largely overcame the effects of Hydra's mental torture, brainwashing, and manipulation. He is still struggling to find peace within himself and suffers from a mild case of PTSD. Though he has post-traumatic stress disorder,
Bucky continued to serve with distinction in SHIELD's SPU. In 1956, Bucky participated in the raid to stop the Hydra plot against the President and following operations against them. In Steve's absence, many SHIELD employees and agents nicknamed him the "New Captain America." Bucky didn't believe in the title and thought that name should remain with Steve. Though Steve and Peggy offered him the shield, Bucky refused, saying he wasn't worthy of what the shield stood for. Bucky stays in the same apartment in the city and visits his nieces and nephews at the Rogers house every so often.

Howard Stark remained the same charismatic businessman, and womanizer everyone knows. As the head of Stark Industries, he further transformed his company into a multi-industry company that covers everything from civil engineering, film, weapons, and advanced technology. His company continued earning defense contracts through the Korean War and even after the armistice. The U.S. need for better weaponry to combat the Soviets kept his company with consistent defense contracts. Stark also spearheaded the research of the Tesseract and the development of advanced technology to keep the U.S. above foreign competition both in the civilian and military sectors.

Additionally, Stark Industries profits continued to climb allowing Howard to start opening businesses everywhere from more facilities in New York City to Detroit, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Hollywood. Howard also worked closely with Steve in the Civil Technologies Division in his recently built New York City facility and enjoyed working with him, both as a friend and subordinate, in that sector. Howard also continued to provide SHIELD with weaponry and technology to keep them above Soviet and Hydra competition. On the side, Stark also tracked the progress of the serum effects on Peggy and all four of the Rogers children.

Edwin Jarvis continued to serve Howard Stark loyally and faithfully. His marriage with Ana continued happily, and the couple had their first child in 1951, a girl named Elise Jarvis. Though Jarvis is a workaholic serving under Howard, Jarvis did his best to work both as a butler, father, and husband for his family. He maintained a strict timetable to be able to do his duties for Stark as well as be an excellent husband to Ana and father to his daughter. Ana left her job in the city to dedicate herself to raise her daughter and be a stay at home wife. Money was never an issue for the Jarvis' since Stark paid him handsomely for his loyal and dedicated service all the years. The Jarvis' also remained close to the Rogers and often came to visit. Especially Ana enjoyed visiting Peggy and the kids. Ana and Peggy budded a lasting friendship with one another, and so did their kids.

Timothy Dugan, now Captain of the Special Purpose Division, remained in SHIELD and expanded the SPU to its current size to be stationed all over the world. In 1954, he surprised everyone by getting married to a lovely young woman by the name of Annie Hughes whom he was introduced to by Steve in the pub the two often frequented together. The Dugan's live together in a suburb of New York. Jim Morita left SHIELD in 1952 and remained in New York. He married a young Japanese-American woman named Nancy Okura, a native of New York, shortly after his departure. By the end of 1956, Jim and Nancy Morita had two children, two girls named Alicia and Gloria Morita. In the face of public discrimination against the Japanese, Jim finished school and became a high school teacher in Queens. James Montgomery Falsworth remained in the states and left SHIELD in 1953 and eventually got married to a German-America woman named Joan Decker. Jacques stayed in SHIELD but left the field in 1954. He volunteered to be stationed back in Paris, France as a Station Chief, and eventually got married. Gabe Jones stayed in SHIELD and got married to a Kendra Grant in 1955. He had his first child in September 1956, a boy named Anthony Allen Jones. Against racial discrimination, Gabe always appreciated that Steve and the rest of the commandos let him into the team back during the war. Captain Sam "Happy" Sawyer remained in SHIELD and served as Dugan's second in command for the Special Purpose Division. Pinkerton stayed in SHIELD but left the SPU team to be a field agent in 1953.

All the Howling Commandos held a private memorial service for Jonathan "Junior" Juniper, the only
commando to have been killed in action in 1951. Despite Steve's best efforts, he couldn't physically bring Junior home during the breakout of Chosin Reservoir, and the body remained in Korea. Steve continued to carry the burden of not being able to bring him home. Peggy renamed the SPU team room in the Aegis Headquarters building to the "The Juniper Team Room" though many people still refer to it as simply the "team room."

The commandos, though many of them went their separate ways, continued to remain close, especially to the Rogers family. Since all of them lived in roughly the same geographical area, Jacques being the exception, the commandos tend to see each other frequently. "Commando" family gatherings weren't an uncommon thing during the weekends and summer months. The Howling Commandos were as much a family like any other.

SHIELD Special Agent Jack Thompson remained in SHIELD as the leader and Senior Field Agent of the SHIELD Aegis Headquarters Major Cases Response Team which covered domestic and international investigations and operations. Thompson stayed Peggy's and Sousa's lead agent in the majority of cases and operations, and remained loyal and trustful of Peggy since her promotion to head director of SHIELD. Thompson is quick to correct other SHIELD agents and employees in their slander, distrust, and sexist remarks concerning Peggy after he was proven wrong on his sexist driven beliefs of her after his firsthand experience of her leadership, abilities, and skills. He committed himself to assure Peggy gets the respect she is due even though she doesn't need him to enforce it. Special Agent Mike Li remained in SHIELD and continued to serve under Thompson in the Major Cases Response Team. In 1951 he married his longtime fiancé Priscilla Nakano. The couple welcomed their first child in 1952, a boy named Joseph Li. Special Agent Rick Ramirez continued his career as a SHIELD agent along with his friends and fellow SHIELD agents Thompson and Li. In 1953 he married his childhood sweetheart Evelyn Marie in a small church in Brooklyn. The couple welcomed their first child in 1955, a girl by the name of Elise Marie Ramirez.

Special Agent Kathryn Ottis served as a SHIELD officer, a spy, in the Soviet Union from 1951-1955. She was recalled home in 1956 upon sabotaging and destroying the Soviet production of Nitramene, a chemical compound developed by Howard Stark stolen in 1947, in Siberia. Kathryn was awarded by Peggy and given a temporary assignment in Thompson's Major Cases Response Team.

END OF "ACT 1."

"ACT II" will continue with Chapter 35: will have a focus on the Rogers children and new adventures for the family. Some good and some bad. Steve will discover the repercussions of his decision of retiring as Captain America. As Director of SHIELD, Peggy will have to make considerably harder decisions, some that will affect not only her family but the country. Steve and Peggy will do their best to lead a normal life and raise their children. The Rogers children will go through their own adventures through school and their youth.

This chapter is mostly a transition to another one.

The side characters will return. Expect to see more from Bucky and Stark especially.

It's the 1950s and I decided everyone started getting married and having families since it's the middle of the Baby Boom years which spanned from 1946-1964.

Also decided to have some fun and have Steve and Peggy have a big family. I'm essentially changing many things in the Marvel cinematic universe based on the fact that Steve was found.
Annie Hughes: Inspired by Hogarth's mother of the same name in the movie Iron Giant.

I don't know much about Edwin and Ana Jarvis' relationship and family so I decided to give them a family.
Chapter 35 In Medias Res

I don't own Captain America

Latin: In the middle of

Ten Years Ago

November 1947

Harrison and Amanda Carter Residence

London Borough of Hillingdon

In the backyard of Peggy's parent's house, a very nine months pregnant Peggy was sitting with her back straight in a white outdoor patio chair with her mother around the patio table. Peggy wore a soft Navy Blue button up wool coat that flared just past her knees like the dress she wore underneath. Her mother, on the other hand, wore a long brown jacket that went past her knees. Though it was still a bit chilly outside, the overcast clouds cleared a few hours earlier opening up the sky for some much-needed warmth from the late afternoon sunlight. Peggy leaned back and smiled at her mother as they continued a pleasant conversation.

Peggy smiled, "Thank you again, Mother." For the past few minutes, They've been talking that it's okay to be nervous about parenting. She nodded, "Speaking of, where is my husband?"

Amanda laughed, "Your father took him to meet some of his friends at the pub."

Peggy chuckled, "Good luck."

"Who? To your husband?" Amanda asked curiously.

Peggy laughed and shook her head, "No, to father and his friends. Steve physically can't get drunk."

Amanda's eyes widened.

London

TC's Pub

Harrison pulled up his car to the curb a few blocks away from the pub, the closest parking spot they can get for the evening. From their parking spot, both Steve and Harrison could tell that the pub was extremely crowded with people drinking and talking on the sidewalk by the entrance. It's looking to be a very lively evening.

Harrison smiled at his son-in-law, "ready? This pub is very popular and a local favorite."

Steve smiled, "yeah, I can see that."

"During the war, military men from your country and mine came together here and enjoyed much needed time off." Harrison grinned, "they have a piano and sometimes a band that plays here. But
almost always there's singing and dancing."

Steve chuckled, "sounds like just my kind of place."

Harrison nodded, "then let's go. I think my mates are here already."

The two men stepped out of the car and made their way to the pub. Steve and Harrison entered the crowded pub and weaved their way through the lively crowd to the bar. The pub is dim with wood fixtures and furniture accenting the rustic look of the bar. The crowded pub is lively with someone playing an energetic tune on the piano with a vast majority of the people singing along with the song. Though the establishment is crowded, the energy was contagious. As Harrison lead Steve toward the bar, he spotted his two friends sitting at the bar with two empty seats beside them; no doubt saved for them. Harrison nodded toward his friends, "found them! Come on!" He yelled over the crowd and music to Steve. Steve followed his father-in-law closely toward the barstools. Harrison patted a mid-aged red-haired man with a thick mustache, "Ryan! Good to see ya!"

Ryan turned around and hugged his friend, "Glad you could finally join us, Harry! Charlie, here, and is three beers in."

Charlie, another mid-aged man with brown hair, turned around and smiled at Harrison, "late as usual. A usual Carter. What kept you?"

Harrison smiled and stepped aside to introduce Steve, "well first, I'd like you to meet my son-in-law, Steve Rogers."

Ryan looked at the towering American beside Harrison, "son-in-law?" He exclaimed in surprise. Charlie also looked at Steve with a shocked expression, "wait, Harry. Does that mean Margaret got married?"

Harrison nodded, "Married and nine months pregnant."

Charlie wrapped his arm around Ryan happily, "MARRIED AND PREGNANT! WHEN DID THIS HAPPEN!"

Harrison laughed, "Year ago and right after the war." He pushed Steve toward his friends, "again, this is Steve Rogers. Margaret's husband." He waved toward Ryan, "this is Ryan O'Donovan. Toughest Irishmen I know. He was RAF."

Ryan chuckled and stood up and greeted Steve, shaking his hand, "Ryan O'Donovan. Nice to meet you."

Steve smiled, "Steve Rogers. A pleasure."

Harrison then waved toward Charlie, "Steve, this is Charlie Hampton. Career beer enthusiasts," he said humorously

Charlie stood up and shook his hand, "I drink, and I know things. Pleasure, to meet you, Steve."

Harrison chuckled, "he can drink you under the table."

Steve chuckled, "I don't think so."

Charlie laughed, "that sounds a lot like a challenge. I like this guy already!" He nudged Steve, "be careful what you wish for, my boy."
Harrison smiled, "He's Captain America."

Ryan smiled, "Wait, you're that Steve Rogers?" He asked in shock.

Charlie laughed, "Peggy sure knows how to pick 'em." He waved to the seat next to him, "pull up a chair. First drink is on me." He smiled at Harrison, "your cheap arse can buy your own drink." Steve took a seat next to Charlie while Harrison sat down next to Steve.

Harrison laughed, "naturally."

Steve waved his hand to the other men, "uh lets' not mention me as Captain America to anyone else. Don't want to draw too much attention."

Harrison laughed, "no problem, Steve. We completely understand." The other two men nodded in agreement. Harrison chuckled, "But, no promises once we start drinking."

"Here, here," Charlie said energetically. Charlie then called the bartender, "hey mate! two beers!" The bartender nodded and poured two beers into glass pints and served them to Charlie. Charlie then passed a beer to Steve.

Steve took the beer, "thanks," and clinked glasses with Charlie in cheers.

Ryan leaned forward and spoke up to Steve, "Steve!"

Steve took a swig from his beer, "yeah?"

"We got to know. How did you meet Peggy?"

"I met her while I was training."

Harrison spoke up, "they ended up serving together."

Charlie looked over at Steve and took a swig from his beer, "didn't you go missing a while ago? Stop Hydra from dropping their version of the Atomic bomb on the united states?"

Steve nodded, "yeah. But let's not talk about that. That's a...difficult subject."

Ryan jumped in, "were you and Peggy intimate then?"

Steve shook his head, "No. though we had feelings for each other, we didn't act on the feelings until just before I went missing."

Charlie grinned, "almost missed your shot huh, Steve? God must love you. You're one lucky bloke."

Steve smiled, "I'll drink to that," he said as he raised his glass and took a big swig of his beer.

"So after you were found you and Peggy got married."

"Exactly," Steve said finishing his first glass.

"Didn't waste any time I see. Can't say I blame you," Charlie said. He chuckled, "when did you get married?"

"July of last year."

Charlie laughed, "sure work fast. Married and pregnant after a year."
Ryan nodded at Steve, "take care of her. She's a good woman to have."

Charlie finished his beer, "She's as much a daughter to us too." He slammed his glass down on the bar, "you mess up, ill kick your arse. I might not do much, but you'll regret, boy!"

Harrison laughed, "relax, gentlemen! Steve's a good one. I know it, and Peggy knows it. I was sold on his first impression."

Charlie nudged Steve, "let me get you another beer!" He called the bartender again, "Hey mate! Another two!"

Harrison raised his hand and showed three fingers, "make that three."

Ryan slammed his glass and called out, "four!"

The bartender laughed, "are you gentlemen having another beer drinking competition?"

Charlie grinned and wrapped his arm around Steve, "we have to show this American who's boss! He just married our best friends daughter. Got to test his metal."

The bartender chuckled, "four beers coming right up."

Steve laughed, "I guarantee you that ill win." He chuckled, "I can't get drunk."

Charlie laughed, "Those are fightin' words!" He grinned, "I too don't get drunk."

Harrison leaned toward Steve, "he does. And he's a shitty drunk."

The bartender slid four beers to the men at the bar. The night continued with the bar erupting further with more people singing, dancing, and drinking. The four men at the bar continued to hold conversations, to the best of their abilities, while also chugging astronomical amounts of beer. Steve was thoroughly surprised at the numbers of alcohol the three other men could drink. It reminded him of his commandos back home and their fantastic drinking abilities.

Harrison gripped Steve's shoulder and raised his beer glass, "Steve." Steve turned to face his father-in-law. "Cheers, son."

"Cheers," Steve replied as he clinked his glass with his father-in-law.

"Time for a little father and son-in-law conversation before we get lost in the beer." Harrison smiled, "I'm glad you and Peggy found each other. You two deserve this happiness together. Anyone can tell that Peggy loves you and I can tell you love her." Harrison took a swig from his beer, "My wife and I were talking and said that Michael would've loved you. And that's high praise. You two have our support."

Steve smiled, "thank you, sir."

Harrison smiled, "when you got back to America. Don't be a stranger." He chuckled, "I'm glad our Margaret decided to come home. It's great to see her, and we welcomed the wonderful surprise of seeing her husband and finding out she's pregnant."

Steve smiled, "I'm glad to meet you and Mrs. Carter finally."

"Do me a favor before we drink some more, and I get to know more about you."

"What's that?" Steve said drinking his beer.
"Don't break her heart. Promise me that," Harrison said in a deadly serious tone.

Steve nodded, "I promise."

Harrison spoke in a severe tone, "I'm not just talking about divorcing my daughter. I'm also talking about always coming home. I know you said you aren't planning to stay in the Army, but your country might call you again to fight. If history proved anything, a war would always return. No matter how terrible." He sighed, "I know it's an impossible thing to promise, but come back to her no matter what if you get sent to war again." Harrison nodded, ". I know you're a warrior, and she is too, but you have no idea the level of her feelings toward you. She can't lose you too. It'll tear her up. She's a strong and independent woman, but even the strongest people have their weaknesses. Losing you would kill her especially after you two almost never got this chance." He sighed, "Out of everyone she ever met in her life, I've never seen her look at anyone else like the way she does to you."

Steve nodded, "I always plan to come back." He sighed, "I know I almost didn't during the war. I realized, almost too late after years of fighting in the war, I wanted the simple life. And I almost didn't get that chance. I plan to get there someday. Find some peace. Someday," he said reassuringly. Steve nodded, "Just have to fulfill my commitment and stop the remnants of Hydra and other terrible people." Steve couldn't discuss the details of Hydra and Leviathan's infiltration into the United States government during the "SHIELD Incident," but he implied his involvement which was enough information for his father-in-law.

Harrison nodded, "I understand, and I believe you. But realize bad people will always be present, and as long as people like you exist there will always be people to stop them. If anything, the war proved it. But One tyrant will always replace another, and it's not your responsibility to stop all of them." He patted Steve on the back, "it's okay to live a little and settle down. No one can blame you."

Steve wanted to settle down eventually, but he feared the consequences of that decision. No doubt, someday he'll settle down with Peggy and be a loving husband and, soon to be, father. But he didn't know when that'll be, especially since Hydra continues to pop up from the ashes. Steve felt responsible for destroying Leviathan and Hydra, and to see the job done. But that could take a long time based on the pattern of recent events. Steve didn't know when to put the shield down, but he hopes someday that he'll be able to read the right time. Hopefully not too far in the future.

Steve smiled and responded, "I've come to realize that. Someday, after my commitment, Peggy and I will eventually settle to a simple life." He wasn't lying, and yearned for it, but, again, he didn't know when that'll be.

Harrison nodded, "I have no doubt you'll continue to make my daughter happy." He patted his back, "let's drink." He leaned on the bar, "AND ANOTHER ROUND!"

Charlie chugged the remaining beer in his glass, "here, here!" He looked at Steve, "Are you feeling it yet, Steve?"

Steve chuckled, "I can do this all day."

Ryan cheered, "let's keep it going!"

The evening continued with more alcohol for the four men sitting at the bar. The pub only got more electrifying with more people coming in drinking, singing, and having a fun evening. Harrison slammed his pint on the bar, "then Michael accidentally throws Peggy off the tree thinking that
would make her fly, and Peggy just slams into the ground with this massive thud!" He slaps the bar causing a loud bang, "WHAM! Amanda and I rushed out to check if she was okay, and guess what?"

Ryan grinned, "she was completely fine." Steve laughed.

Harrison grinned, "Yeah! She stood up, brushed the dirt off and went to go climb the tree to try it again!" Everyone laughed. "Boy, Amanda gave her hell for that. She got mad at me because I was laughing and seemingly allowing for this un-ladylike behavior."

Steve chuckled, "that sounds like Peggy. Stubborn and never willing to quit."

Harrison nodded, "from what I hear; you're about the same."

Charlie nudged Steve, "got any good stories." He chuckled, "we told you a bunch of ours and a lot about Peggy."

Ryan grinned, "just don't tell Peggy about that time she shaved the side of her head on accident."

Harrison laughed, "she would kill us." He shrugged, "her adventurous nature generally got her into trouble." Steve chuckled. "For instance, Peggy got married, and now she's pregnant. Consequences for being adventurous," Harrison said laughing loudly and slamming his hand on the table. Steve and the two other men also laughed hysterically at the joke. Harrison patted Steve on the back, "you're alright, Steve. You're alright. I like you better than her former fiancé. He was a trout. You got backbone kid."

Ryan smiled, "Steve's turn. What do you got?"

Steve grinned, "well... since we're talking about Peggy. Boy, do I got a story."

Harrison grinned, "let's hear it," he said angling himself toward Steve.

Steve sighed and downed his half a pint in a blink of an eye before slamming it down on the bar, "well. On my first combat mission into Hydra territory, Peggy rode in the plane with me piloted by Howard Stark. She was briefing me on the mission, and Howard Stark asked her for some late night fondue."

Charlie grinned, "uh oh."

"By that time I had some feelings for Peggy and was interested in her. But, from what Howard said it sounded like he and Peggy were together." Steve shrugged with a grin, "or at least sleeping together."

Harrison chuckled, "that doesn't sound like my daughter, and you do know fondue is just cheese and crackers, right?"

Steve sighed, "yeah," he said looking down. Everyone laughed.

"Go on!" Ryan said excitedly.

Steve sighed, "well...I felt dejected at the idea that Peggy was with someone else."

"Here we go," Charlie replied.

"So after rescuing those 400 prisoners from Hydra, I returned to London and waited for my debriefing. While Peggy was in a meeting with the brass, I waited outside for them, and a... gal threw
herself at me and kissed me."

Harrison grinned, "let me guess. Peggy came out right at that exact moment."

Steve again looked down and replied with an emotionless stare, "yeah..."

Charlie put his fist in his mouth, "oh! That's got to sting! What happened next?"

"So I met with Howard Stark to pick out a shield to use as both a symbol and a tool, and he then explained what fondue was. He also told me that Peggy rejected him numerous times." Steve sighed, "then when I picked up my shield of choice, Peggy came in and immediately put the shield to the test." He shook his head, "she shot me."

Ryan dropped his jaw, "she shot you?"

Steve nodded, "she shot my shield, but...yes she shot me."

Charlie laughed, "so if that shield didn't work she would've..."

"Killed me...yes. Good thing, that shield is made with the strongest metal on Earth because she shot me with a pretty big bullet," Steve said with a thankful smile.

Harrison laughed loudly, "definitely sounds like my Peggy!" He patted Steve on the back, "but hey! It worked out, now!"

Charlie chuckled, "you got your hands full with that one. Too strong of a woman if she's willing to shoot you, and you two weren't even together yet."

Ryan laughed, "now that's a funny story. You have to tell your kids that someday."

"Oh, I will," Steve replied.

"Serious Balls," Charlie said. "Marrying the gal who shot you." He shook his head, "Women."

Harrison laughed, "You better watch that tone. Your wife would bury you for such a tone and implied meaning."

"Case in point," Charlie said as he drank.

Harrison clapped Steve on the shoulder and raised his cup, "Oi, Steve. Peggy's your problem now!" Everyone laughed and took a drink. He coughed as he finished his cup, "Don't call me for help when she tries to shoot you again!"

Steve laughed and raised his glass, "Well, she might actually wear the pants in the relationship."

Ryan chuckled, "And that I have no doubt. I don't think opposing Peggy in the subject would be smart."

"We only need some liquid courage, boys!" Charlie called.

Harrison raised his cup, "more beer and more stories?"

Everyone nodded. "Keep it going until one of us drops!" Charlie cheered.
12 AM

Amanda sat alone in the dim living room reading a book on the couch with a single lamp on the end table giving her some light. Amanda decided to stay up and wait for her husband and her son-in-law to get home while Peggy went to bed early. Although Peggy wanted to wait up for her husband too, she knew sleep was important for pregnant women, so she went to bed and left her mother alone in the living room.

It's been a quiet day for Amanda and Peggy. They enjoyed each other's company, listened to music, drank tea, did crafts with dried flowers, and even spent time with Victoria when she swung by for a little bit earlier in the evening. All-together, it was a fun day for the ladies.

As Amanda flipped the page to her book, she heard the front door swing open. Amanda immediately put her book down on the couch and walked over to the front door and saw her husband being held up by Steve. Amanda gasped, "what happened?"

Steve shook his head, "they insisted to out drink me. It didn't work."

Amanda sighed and let Steve in, "lay him down on the couch. Goodness, you two smell like alcohol. Didn't know you two would be out for that long." Steve walked into the living room and laid his father-in-law on his side on the couch. Amanda immediately started to remove his shoes, "did you two have fun at least? Hopefully, he wasn't too much of a pain as a drunk."

Steve chuckled, "he wasn't a bad drunk. But now he's just blacked out. I did have fun though, had nice conversations with him before he got drunk. We got to know each other very well. It was all good fun."

"Hopefully, he didn't scare you too much because we do like you and are happy for the both of you," Amanda said with a smile.

"Not at all. He's a nice guy."

Suddenly, Harrison started to groan and exhibited warning signs of vomiting. Amanda sighed, "I'll get a bucket," she said as she removed the last shoe. She smiled at Steve, "go ahead and go up, Steve. Peggy is fast asleep in your room. I can take care of my husband from here."

Steve stood up, "Are you sure?"

Amanda smiled at her son-in-law, "I'm sure. Go join your wife in bed."

Steve smiled, "thank you, ma'am. If you need anything, let me know." Amanda waved and let Steve head up to get ready for bed.

Steve quietly went upstairs to Peggy's old room and snuck in, doing his best not to wake his wife. He grabbed his sleepwear and his toiletries and silently left the room again to the bathroom down the hall to brush his teeth and shower. After he cleaned himself up, he quietly snuck back into their room and silently put his dirty clothes on his suitcase before turning for the bed. Unfortunately, Peggy woke up from his footsteps on the creaky floor.

Peggy slept on her side with her back turned to Steve. "How's my father?" Peggy asked tiredly with her eyes closed.

Steve slid into bed, "passed out drunk on the couch. Your mother insisted on caring for him."
Hope you liked this little flash back.

Short feel-good chapter before seeing what happens to the growing Rogers family in the 1950s.

Tried writing a light hearted moment combined with serious talk between father and son-in-law. Especially since Harrison just recently found out his daughter is married and pregnant. What better way to get to know someone than go to a bar and talk for hours.

Stay tuned for more.
Chapter 36 Kids

Chapter 36 Kids

"Act II"

I don't own Captain America

Steve & Margaret Rogers Residence, Scarsdale, NY

March 1957

It's a beautiful early spring morning in the neighborhood of Scarsdale, NY in the fabulous 50s. Sleek new cars with tailfins and bright colors drove up and down the block, emulating the golden age of American auto design and the glimpse of a futuristic tomorrow. The early morning sun rose above the clear blue sky and shined on the trees and vibrant flowers of the community. A soft, fragrant breeze lingers in the spring air as it gently blows through the Rogers yard. The crape myrtle trees in the yard and the tall cypress trees around the house swayed gently in the wind. Peggy's flowers rustled quietly from the breeze in the front yard as loose pedals blew to the two shining cars on the driveway. The family's light blue and white 1955 Pontiac 870 Station wagon and Peggy's new 1956 all white Chevrolet four-door sports sedan basked in the morning sun. The sleek and clean cars shine brilliantly in the bright morning sun while inside the cool garage sat Steve's motorcycle and a new 1956 red and black accented Chevy four-door bel air.

Further inside, the house is quiet and calm with the sun peering through the closed blinds and illuminating the shadows. Light beamed through the kitchen window over the sink and shined on the cluttered kitchen counters and drawings made from kids hanging on the refrigerator. Upstairs through the dim hallway hung many photos of the Rogers family. From Sarah, Michael, Angela, and John as babies to family photos and photos of just Steve and Peggy. The house is decorated with an abundant amount of family photographs on the walls. In the quiet master bedroom, the sun illuminated the room like it did the rest of the house. The room is quiet with the light sounds of Steve and Peggy sleeping and the faint sound of the birds chirping and the trees rustling in the breeze outside through the closed window. The serenity marks the beginning of a beautiful spring day.

Steve and Peggy slept silently while cuddling closely like always. Peggy slept in a silver and black floral V-neck full slip nightgown while Steve slept in a white t-shirt and shorts. Like always, Steve had his arm draped over Peggy's side and rested silently with her back pressed up against his chest under the covers. Everything is peaceful, and the couple slept comfortably and securely in each other's presence. But the peace was disturbed by the sound of a door slowly creaking open. Peggy heard the door creak causing her to slowly awaken from her pleasant sleep. Peggy smirked but kept her eyes closed, "Prepare for an ambush," she whispered to her husband hugging her. Steve didn't respond and only grunted as he gently tightened his grip on his wife.

Suddenly, Sarah, Michael, Angela, and little John excitedly bolted into the room in their pajamas, and the three older kids jumped onto the bed with their parents while John ran to his mother's side of the bed. Steve grunted and laughed as he felt Sarah and Angela impact his side. Peggy giggled happily as she felt Michael jump onto her side. Peggy laughed, "Kids!"

Steve grinned after the kids jump-started his morning. He laughed, "Intruders!" he called as he quickly rolled to his back and wrapped his strong arms around his two daughters earning fits of
laughter from them. The two daughters screamed happily as they fought to escape their dad's firm grasp. "You can't escape! You woke up the sleeping giant!"

Peggy giggled and kissed her oldest son. Michael grinned at his mother, "Good morning, mom."

"Good morning, darling," Peggy said to her son. She looked to her side and saw the girls happily struggling with their dad. "Go help your sisters, sweetie," Peggy said gently pushing her son toward her husband.

Steve looked back at Peggy, "Traitor."

Michael crawled onto his dad, "Morning, dad!"

Peggy looked to her side of the bed and greeted her youngest, "Good morning, sweetie."

John smiled happily, "Good morning, mama!"

Peggy sat up in bed while the older kids dogpiled their father and scooped up her young toddler in her arms, "Sleep well?" John smiled and kissed his mother on her cheek. Peggy giggled as she heard the kids and Steve laugh amongst themselves. She stood up with John in her arms and looked over her shoulder, "Kids, what would you like to eat?"

Steve released his daughters with a grin allowing Angela and Sarah to finally calm down. Angela smiled at her father, "Pancakes? Please?"

Michael agreed, "Yes! pancakes!"

Sarah nodded, "Yeah!" She looked up at her mother, "Can daddy make them?"

Peggy grinned, "Why don't you ask your father. He's laying right in front of you."

Sarah turned to her dad and grinned. Steve laughed, "Of course, I'll make pancakes!"

Michael smiled at his mother, "We asked you because we know dad loves to cook anything for us. You're usually the one who decides what we get to eat, mom," he said humorously.

Peggy shook her head with a wide smile, "Alright, that's enough of that. Everyone downstairs so mommy and daddy can get dressed." The kids all laughed and hopped off the bed to go downstairs. As Sarah was about to leave the room, Peggy called her back, "Sarah, darling, can you take your little brother down with you too. I'll be down in a moment."

Sarah turned around and smiled, "Yup!" Peggy grinned and put John down.

Sarah strolled over to John and picked him up effortlessly. "Here we go John. I'll get you downstairs!" she said happily as she walked out of the room.

Peggy grinned and called out to her daughter, "Be careful down the stairs, darling!"

Sarah called back, "I will, Mom!" She looked at her baby brother as she walked down the hallway, "And don't you worry one-bit, little John, Mama is coming down too."

John smiled, "I'm Hungwy."

"Me too. But, don't worry, Daddy is making pancakes for all of us before school starts," Sarah said as she neared the stairs.
Back in the bedroom, Steve stood next to Peggy with a grin. Peggy looked up at her husband, "What?" she asked with a smile.

Steve shook his head, "Sarah." He chuckled, "Always insists in carrying John downstairs even though he can walk down himself."

Peggy laughed and hugged her husband's frame, "She's just being a caring big sister."

Steve hugged her back and looked down at his wife, "And it's a wonderful thing." He kissed Peggy on the lips, "And, good morning to you, hon."

Peggy smiled, "And good morning to you too, darling." She kissed him again and stepped back from him, "As much as I want to stay in bed with you all day, we got to get ready for work and they need to get ready for school."

Steve smiled, "Yes, ma'am," he said kissing her again.

Peggy slapped his butt, "Now, go downstairs and get breakfast going. I'll be there in a second." With that Steve trotted off to cook for his family.

Peggy, in her pink and black robe over her nightgown, strolled into the kitchen to join her family as she ran a hand through her messy brown shoulder-length hair. As she walked into the kitchen, she could smell the sweet and pleasant aroma of Steve's cooking which made her smile instantly. Peggy saw her kids sitting around the kitchen table with John sitting in his table booster seat by Sarah. Steve had his back toward the family while he diligently worked at the stove to cook stacks of pancakes for his wife and kids. Peggy walked over to her kids and wrapped her arms around Sarah and Michael and kissed them both on the cheek, "Good morning," she said with a smile.

Sarah looked up at her mother, "Good morning, mom."

"Hi, mom," Michael replied with a big grin.

Steve placed the final few pancakes on the plates, "Order up," he pleasantly said. He picked up the first two plates of short stack pancakes and walked over to the table.

Peggy walked to Angela and wrapped her arms around her and kissed her youngest daughter on the cheek, "Good morning, sweetheart."

Angela smiled, "Good morning, mama." She nodded toward the counter where a coffee cup sat idly with steam rising from the top, "Daddy, made you tea."

Peggy smiled, "Did he?" she asked knowing the answer because Steve always made her tea in the morning.

Steve dropped off the first few plates on the table to Angela and John then turned back to the stove to get the other two. As Steve returned to the table with Sarah and Michael's plates, Peggy walked passed him to the counter to get her cup of hot tea. Steve placed the plates down and smiled, "Eat up, kids."

Peggy sipped her tea and smiled, "And what do you say, kids?"

Sarah, Michael, and Angela all cheered, "Thank you, dad!"

John cocked his head to the side and gave a goofy grin, "Thank you, daddy!" he said loudly earning
a chuckle from everyone.

Steve returned to his wife and stood by her, wrapping an arm around her hip. Peggy smiled up at her husband, "Thanks for the tea, sweetie."

Steve smiled, "Of course," he said leaning down to kiss his wife. As the couple kissed they could hear Michael shriek.

Michael shook his head, "Ew, mom and dad, we're eating." Angela chuckled at her older brother.

Peggy smirked against Steve's lips before breaking the kiss. Peggy looked at her son, "What? Don't like your parents kissing, darling?"

Peggy left Steve's side and sat down by John to clean him up after he finished eating his pancake. Sarah flicked her twin brother, "Our parents love each other, Michael. That's a good thing."

Michael sighed as he continued to eat, "I know…"

Angela stuck her tongue out at her older brother, "Yeah! It's sweet."

Steve chuckled, "No faces at the table, Angela," he said mock seriously.

Angela chuckled, "Sorry, daddy," she said as she finished up her pancakes.

Steve nodded, "How's the pancakes?"

Michael grinned, "Delicious!" The other three kids with their mouths full nodded in agreement.

Peggy wiped John's face with a napkin on the table then checked the clock on the wall and saw it was 7:30. She looked at her kids, "Okay, kids. Finish up and put the dishes in the sink, and get ready for school."

The kids nodded in acknowledgment and let out an assortment of, "Okay, mom," and "Alright, mommy."

Steve stood by the sink as the three older kids got up from the table with all their dirty dishes and trotted over to place them in the sink. As Michael and Sarah ran off to their rooms to get ready for school, Angela stood by her dad and smiled, "Thank you for breakfast, daddy."

Steve kissed his daughter on the head, "You're very welcome, sweetie." He patted her on the back, "I'll take care of the dishes really quick. Go and get ready for school." Angela nodded quietly then ran off to her room upstairs.

Peggy finished cleaning up John's dirty face and took his dirty napkin and dishes from the table and walked them to the sink. "Can you take the kids to school today? I think it's your turn. I'll pick them up," she said as she placed the dirty plate in the sink.

Steve kissed his wife on the temple earning a warm smile from Peggy, "No problem."

Peggy kissed her husband on the lips briefly before walking back to the table and picking up John from his table booster seat. "April should be here any second, so I'll go up and get ready for work." Peggy chuckled, "Don't worry about finishing up the dishes, you still need to get ready for work too, darling."

Steve smirked, "I know, Peggy."
It's forming to be a pretty standard day in the Rogers household with Steve and Peggy getting ready for work while the kids are getting ready for school. Everything looks normal and from the outside, boring. But after the lives Steve and Peggy have lived, boring isn't a bad thing, and normal is the goal. With a "crazy" and unique extended family, nothing is truly dull. A family is a beautiful adventure in itself. The life Peggy and Steve made together seems too good to be true. The couple is happy, happier than ever but sometimes it all felt like it was fake. Steve sometimes thought it was too perfect and he'd think it was all a dream. But Peggy and the kids always found a way unknowingly to ground him to that this is the reality.

Fox Meadow Elementary School

Steve pulled up his red and black Chevy four-door bel air to the busy curb of the school's grass lawn to drop off his three kids. The curb was busy with countless amounts of cars dropping off children, and the sidewalks were cluttered with kids walking and running to the school. The grass lawn in front of the school is also crowded with kids squeezing out a quick game of tag before it's time to head into their respective classrooms.

Steve, in a dark blue suit and tie, put the car in park and turned to his three kids, Michael in the front with him, Sarah and Angela in the backseat, "Got everything, kids?"

Michael gripped his leather school satchel and turned to his father, "Got everything!"

Sarah also responded with her leather bag, "Yup!"

Steve turned around to see Angela staring out the window, "Angela, sweetie? Got everything?"

Angela came back to reality and looked at her father, "What? Sorry, dad. I was daydreaming."

Michael chuckled, "Like usual." He paused, "B-But it's not a bad thing!" he said in case his last statement came off as harsh.

Steve chuckled, "Okay, do you have everything for school?"

Angela nodded, "Yup!"

Steve nodded, "Great! Off you go! Have a good day!"

The kids started to pile out of the car in a hurry. Sarah stepped out of the car and said goodbye to her father, "Bye, daddy! See you later!" she said as she bolted to her friends on the grass.

As Michael closed the front passenger door, he said goodbye to his father, "Bye, Dad! Have a good day at work!" he said as he closed the door. Michael then stood by the rear passenger door and waited for his little sister.

Angela stepped out of the car and waited by her older brother, "Bye, dad. Have a good day!" she called with a wave as Michael closed the door.

Steve smiled, "Bye kids!" he called back with a wave as he watched his kids head to school.

Steve smiled happily as he saw Sarah disappear as soon as she got out of the car with her two best friends on the grass. But Steve's heart melted when he saw Michael walk with his generally quiet little sister to the school. Though Michael didn't need to walk Angela to her class, Michael did it anyway to keep her company. Angela is a quiet little girl in public outside the family, so Michael took it upon himself to keep her company before and after school. Steve's positive that Angela would
be okay without Michael keeping her company, but then again Angela never protested.

Michael entered his rowdy classroom after dropping off Angela at her second-grade class and walked directly to his seat where his friends were gathering. Michael dropped his satchel on the desk and took his seat as his small group of friends gathered around to greet him. His best friend Riley Richard, a boy and the second tallest in the class, Michael being the tallest, took his seat next to him, "Hey, Michael!"

Michael smiled at his friend, "How's it going, Riley?"

Rhys Chavez, his other good friend, leaned on Michael's desk, "Riley did you tell him about our plans?"

Riley sighed, "I was going to until you interrupted me, Rhys."

Brandon Wright laughed, "We're going to the hideout after school! Want to come?"

Riley frowned, "I was going to tell him."

Rhys nodded, "I do too, but we can go to the hideout around 6 for a little bit after dinner."

Michael nodded, "I think my mom will be okay with it."

Eva Akulov, a brown-haired Bulgarian girl whose family immigrated to the United States after World War I, sat down at the desk in front of Michael's, "Hi," she greeted softly. Eva was the only girl that Michael and his friends are close within class.

Michael smiled at his friend, "Hi, Eva." The rest of the guys greeted her in kind and instantly included her in the conversation.

Riley cheered, "We're going to the hideout today around six! Want to come?"

Eva sighed, "Have to ask my mother and father."

Michael smiled, "We do too, but if you can do you want to?"

Eva nodded, "Yep!"

Rhys smiled, "Then it's settled we're going to the hideout!"

Suddenly a tight group of girls from the other side of the room walked over to Michael. The girls bypassed Michael's friend's and greeted him directly, "Hi, Michael," the girls greeted him at the same time.

Michael faked a smile, "Hi," he said trying not to sound annoyed. That group of girls have been on his nerves since the start of fourth grade.

Michael James Roger is a pretty good-looking kid but wasn't super popular in school regardless of who his parents are. But this particular group of girls recently took a liking to Michael which tended to annoy him because of their attitude. He didn't admire their attitude and their treatment to other kids in the class or in the school, and they generally picked on girls who dressed differently or just didn't fit into their "click." These girls were particularly relentless toward the only Japanese-American girl
in their fourth-grade class. A quiet girl named Irena Kawashima who usually stayed quiet and alone in school.

Brandon spoke up to one of the girls, "Can you girls leave us alone for a second? We're in the middle of something."

One of the girls looked at him with irritation, "Hey, we don't talk to him a lot, can we have our turn. Even Eva talks to him more than we do."

Another girl spoke up, "Yeah, I don't know why Michael would want to talk to a communist." She looked at Eva, "My daddy says people with your last name are Russian and Russians are Communist." Eva didn't say anything and looked down sheepishly, too scared to argue back against the group of girls before her.

Michael looked up at the girls, "Will you stop with that? If Eva's family was communist my mom and dad would tell me. Trust me they would know. Now if you don't mind, Eva and my friends are in the middle of something."

The whole school knew who the Rogers kids parents were, their father being the famous Captain America and their mother being the first woman to lead a government agency, didn't go unnoticed among the adults and kids. Their father being Captain America resonated more with the kids than their mother being Peggy, the Director of SHIELD. The school and the rest of the world also didn't know that the Rogers kids inherited the serum from their parents, particularly their father. The only one who knows of the serum inheritance outside of the Rogers is Howard.

The girls turned and walked away from them. One of the girls hit the other, "Why did you say that? Now I think he hates us now."

Eva chuckled as the girls walked away. "Thank you, Mike."

Michael smiled and shrugged at his friend, "Not a problem. My dad hates bullies and they're a group of bullies."

Riley nodded, "Yeah. Annoying ones."

Michael sighed turned and looked past Riley to see Irena sitting quietly at her desk, alone, while everyone in the class talked amongst themselves before school officially started. He frowned, feeling bad that Irena sat alone. As far as he could tell, she always sat alone throughout the school year and didn't have any friends or people she could spend time around. Michael doesn't know anything about the girl outside from his own observations. It didn't help that the group of popular girls that came by his desk picked on her which made other kids avoid her for fear of losing some social status at school. Michael felt bad for the girl and wanted to talk to her. Maybe befriend her, not for his sake but for hers. He did try a few times but never figured out what to say to her. Michael had little to no interactions with her, so he didn't know where to begin. Michael couldn't lie. He was curious about her and didn't like the fact she was always alone. Michael may be selective of who he calls a friend, but it didn't mean that this girl should be lonely, and it seems like everyone is ignoring her.

Michael was brought back to reality when his teacher, a red-headed woman who looked slightly younger than his mother, walked into the classroom with a big smile, "Good morning, class! Sorry for being late. Had a little impromptu meeting to attend to."

A girl rose her hand, "Mrs. Banks, what does impromptu mean?"

"It means, not planned," Mrs. Banks, the fourth-grade teacher, said with a warm smile as she reached
The clock finally struck 12:15 and the bell rang throughout the school, signaling the sound for "recess" or "lunch." Almost instantly, kids started to pour out of their classrooms and fill the hallways to get to the cafeteria to eat or walk home for a quick lunch. Many kids brought their own meals and the others either carried lunch money to pay for school food or walked back to their house for lunch. In another fourth-grade classroom, Sarah Amanda Rogers took a minute at her desk, cleaning up her space before leaving for lunch. As she finished clearing her desk, her two best friends Hannah and Amy ran up to her excitedly.

Hannah, an energetic red-headed girl, spoke up excitedly, "Hurry up, Sarah. We have to claim our spot before the boys do!" The three girls lived too far from home to walk back and eat lunch, so they ate at school and claimed a favored lunch table outside nearest the playground. Naturally, the boys tried getting to the table first only because the girls wanted it.

Amy, a short fair-haired girl, agreed, "Yeah! Or else we're going to have to settle for the crowded tables by the cafeteria doors."

Sarah stood up and grabbed her lunch box off the floor, "I'm coming, I'm coming." Sarah is the tallest of her friends and likely the tallest girl in her classroom. As Sarah turned to walk out the door with her friends, she turned back to her fourth-grade teacher, "See you later, Mrs. Scott!"

The young teacher waved back at the trio of girls, "Enjoy your lunch, girls!"

Amy waved her hand excitedly, "Thank you, Mrs. Scott!"

Unlike Michael, Sarah was a popular kid in school even with her strong personality. Her caring and easy-going nature made her well-liked with the other students, especially with the other girls in the class. In fact, many of the boys in school liked her, and she knew it, but always remained humble as her mother continuously teaches her. Sarah is a brilliant and pretty girl and seemed to get her looks from her mother which answers why most of the boys have playground crushes on her. But outside of her looks, her intelligence, strong personality, and high self-confidence lead to some other students, mostly boys, to dislike her which lead to trouble more often than not.

After making their way through the hallways and out the cafeteria into the warm spring sun with their lunch, the trio spotted their table unoccupied in the crowded outside eating area. The handful of blue picnic tables outside the cafeteria looked crowded, but the girls knew that the cafeteria was a madhouse with hundreds of kids cluttered on the long lunch tables, so eating outside was clearly a better choice. It may be humid or warm out, but it was considerably worse inside.

Hannah pointed excitedly, "look, our table is empty. Let's go!"

Sarah shook her head, "Go on ahead. I'll catch up."

Hannah sighed, "Aw come on, the two of us won't be able to stop that annoying group of boys without you. You know that!" she complained.

Amy cocked her head to the side, "Wait, are you trying to find that weird kid in our class? What's his name?"

"David," Hannah said as she started walking to the table, not wanting to wait with Amy and Sarah following close behind.

"Oh no. You don't like him do you?" Amy asked concerned.
Sarah shook her head as she followed her friends to their favorite table, "No I don't!" she expressed defensively. "But doesn't it bother you that he keeps getting bullied by everyone?"

Amy sighed, "Uh. Not going to lie…it does make me feel sad to see him getting bullied all the time."

The girls got to their table and immediately put their various lunch boxes down and sat down next to each other. Sarah nodded, "Exactly! My dad always said there's never a good reason why someone should be bullied. Being different isn't a reason. He always tells me and my brother that if we see a chance to help someone then help them."

Hannah nodded, "easy for you to say, Sarah, because you're pretty. Your dad is a war hero and your mom is also super pretty."

Sarah sighed, "That isn't what I'm saying, Hannah." She frowned, "David doesn't seem like he has any friends."

"So, you want to protect him?"

"No. I want to try and be friends with him, so he has someone to talk to… and yeah. Also stop him from getting bullied all the time," Sarah said evenly.

Amy nodded, "That's nice of you, but you know the other kids will look at you weird, right? Might lose…"

Sarah waved her hand, "I'm not too worried about that."

Hannah sighed and wrapped her arm around Sarah's shoulders, "You're lucky we're best friends. I'll try and be friends with him if you try."

"Me too!" Amy exclaimed happily.

Sarah smiled, "We just have to find him." She looked around the outside area to see if she could find David in the busy table area. As she scanned around, Sarah saw her twin brother talking with his friends, and at another table saw her little sister, Angela talking to hers. But in the crowded outside lunch area, Sarah couldn't spot David anywhere in sight. Sarah stopped looking and decided to eat her lunch.

As Sarah opened up her lunch box, Hannah nudged her in the side, "Sarah," her friend said. "I found him."

Sarah looked up and saw David walking alone to an isolated table nearby. David Norris, the black sheep of the school, a young brown-haired boy in fourth-grade who was labeled as a loser by many of the kids at school. Sarah knew he was smart, and all the teachers liked him for his manners and hard work. But she also knew he was soft-spoken and socially awkward around many people. David didn't look like he had many friends or if any, and Sarah knew that other kids picked on him for everything from what he likes, what books he reads, and even the way he dresses. Sarah didn't know much about David, but she knew she needed to try and be friends with him.

Sarah stood up, "I'll be right back."

"Sarah, wait," Amy said taking her hand. Sarah stopped and saw a group of four boys walk up to David with mischief in their eyes.

Hannah sighed, "Great. Here comes the bullies."
Sarah watched as one of the lead boys initiated the bullying by taking David's lunch box and throwing it on the ground and stomp on it. The rest of the boys pointed and laughed at David as he looked down sheepishly and accepted the situation he's in. The boys started to make fun of David for everything, but today they excessively targeted his freckles. Sarah looked around and saw that some of the kids were watching, and laughing, but many others ignored the bullying entirely.

Sarah extracted herself from Amy's grip, "I'll be right back," she said as she walked over to the bullies.

Hannah called out to Sarah, "Sarah, no! Come back!" When Sarah didn't turn around from her determined path to David, Hannah groaned, "Not again!" she exclaimed as she stood up and chased after her friend.

Amy stood up and bolted after her two friends. "Hannah! We can't let her get sent to the office again!"

Sarah reached the group of boys pushing David around in a circle, "Why do you boys keep doing this? You know it isn't nice to pick on other kids like that."

The lead kid of the group stopped and faced Sarah, "Back off, Sarah. What do you know anyway? You're just a girl."

"I'm more than just a girl, Willie…" Sarah said coldly.

"Don't call me that!" the boy expressed angrily. "My name is William!"

Sarah smirked, "then stop picking on David."

William laughed, "Why do you care? Got a crush on him?" He waved his hands mocking girls, "Oh, look at I'm Sarah, I'm a girl, I'm Captain America's daughter, I'm a girl who doesn't know anything, and I got a crush on a loser." He laughed, "You'll never be like your dad. At least, your brother has that going for him. You're just a pretty face."

Sarah refused to let William's comments get to her, "Why do you have to pick on David so much? Is it cause your name is Willie and it sounds stupid and less manly?"

William pointed a finger at her, "Shut up! I'm not afraid to hit a girl you know?"

Sarah smirked, "Why wait?"

"You asked for it!" William said as he ran up to her to punch her.

Sarah sidestepped William's fist and punched him in the nose, breaking it. William fell over crying and screaming in pain.

Back at Michael's table, the boys and Eva were enjoying their lunch and the warm spring sun while holding fun conversations. Riley noticed Michael wasn't as talkative as he usually is during lunch. "Michael, you alright? You haven't said much all day. What's up?"

Rhys nodded, "Yeah. You seem out of it."

Eva added her comments, "Is it those girls that were annoying?"

Michael nodded, "Kind of." He shrugged, "You know Irena?"

Eva nodded, "The Japanese girl in our class? I only know her name, I don't know much about her"
other than that."

"Yeah, Irena."

Rhys looked confused, "What about her?"

"You ever notice she's always alone and never talks to anyone?" Michael said evenly.

Riley shrugged "Maybe she doesn't like talking."

"I mean no one seems like they want to talk to her or be around her. And it seems like she has no one here. She always seems sad." Michael sighed, "At least David has someone to talk to sometimes."

Rhys shook his head, "David only has someone talking to him because he can do their homework or get picked on by bullies."

Michael nodded, "True." All the kids knew about David, but rarely did any of them make a considerable effort to step in and prevent him from getting bullied.

Eva looked confused, "what are you trying to do again?" she asked Michael.

"I'm saying, we should talk to her and try and be friends with her. At least try anyway." Michael shrugged, "I'll at least get those annoying girls in class from bugging her."

Eva smiled, "Have anything to say to start?"

Michael shrugged, "Not a clue. I have no idea what she likes."

Riley shook his head, "Me neither. But I think it's a good idea to include her with us. We can take her to the hideout."

Rhys smirked, "let's not get ahead of ourselves."

Michael chuckled, "I'll figure something out."

Suddenly Michael and his friends started hearing chaos on the other side of the outside lunch area which gave them looks of confusion. Michael began to see a bunch of kids run over in that direction as a crowd started to gather near one of the far tables. Rhys looked confused, "What's going on over there?"

Riley stood up on the bench to try and get a better look over the crowd of kids surrounding the source of the commotion. All the group of friends could hear were kids yelling and screaming excitedly. Even with Riley standing on the bench, he could barely see what was going on because of how far their table was from the excitement. But suddenly, Riley caught a glimpse of Sarah's brown hair in the center of the crowd. "Um, Michael," Riley said cautiously.

Michael looked up at him, "What?"

"Your sister is fighting four boys at the same time."

Michael bolted up off his seat, "My sister!"

"Oh. She just got punched in the face," Riley replied.

"Not my sister!" Michael exclaimed angrily as he charged toward the commotion.
Eva sighed, "Here we go, again."

At the center of the ring of kids spectating the fight, William remained on the ground crying with a broken nose while his three faithful friends stood by him, protecting him from Sarah. Sarah rubbed her jaw, feeling the punch from one of the boys a few seconds ago, "That it? Your friend is crying like a girl."

The crowd of kids all laughed and chanted, "Fight, fight, fight, fight!" The boys in the crowd were cheering for the three boys still standing while the girls chanted and cheered for Sarah.

One of the boys gritted his teeth, "We're going to kick your butt!"

Sarah smiled and raised her fits, "try it."

Suddenly, Michael plowed through the crowd and body slammed one the bullies into the concrete ground and started punching the unfortunate kid in the face repeatedly. Because of Michael's strength from inheriting the serum, the bully rapidly neared unconsciousness after the first or so punch to the head. Sarah lunged forward and hit the second bully in the stomach before also punching him in the head. She then took the disoriented boy by the wrist and threw him over her shoulder onto the ground, hearing a snap in the kid's arm, breaking it.

Before the fight got any worse, numerous teachers rushed in and broke up the fight. The kids spectating all let out a sigh in disappointment, "Aw," the crowd of kids said unanimously.

A teacher grabbed Sarah and Michael by the arm, "You're going to the office and I'm calling your parents. This is the third time for you, Sarah!"

Michael and Sarah's friends looked at the two siblings with shock and admiration. Both groups of friends wanted to do something to protect their friends from getting kicked out of school, but they needed to think of something fast.

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**Time Square, New York City, SHIELD: AEGIS HEADQUARTERS**

**Conference Room**

Peggy, dressed in a women's blue business suit and matching skirt, stood at the head of the conference table with Deputy Director Sousa and the members of the Major Cases Response Team consisting of Thompson, Li, Ramirez, and Kathryn sitting quietly and listening intently to her briefing. Behind Peggy is a blackboard with a map, pictures, and other essential papers taped to it, used for visual aids for the Deputy Director and the Major Cases Response Team to follow along.

Peggy stepped to the side of the blackboard and placed her hand on a photo of a man, "Find where he got the information and remove him and his associates. But the main target is his source. Getting the Hydra cell is easy, getting the source to the leak is hard." She stepped back to the conference table, "Find the source. Capture him or her then silence the cell. Keep Sousa in the loop. This is a priority task." Peggy nodded at Thompson, "As always, Jack is running point. Questions?"

Thompson shook his head and looked at his team of agents, "I got nothing. Any of you?"

Li shook his head, "None."

Kathryn smirked at Peggy and leaned back, "Seems like a piece of cake."

Peggy smiled, "Good. We're going to go over the layouts of the Hydra buildings…"
Suddenly the meeting was interrupted by a knock and the conference door opening. Peggy looked over to the back of the room and saw Rose, her secretary, peak her head in, "Director, phone for you. It's the school, says it's urgent."

The group of agents and the Deputy Director at the table looked at each other with concerned looks. Everyone in the room is connected to the Rogers kids in some way shape or form. Kathryn looked more affected than the others since she has more personal experience with the kids since she babysat them for over a year.

Peggy paused and did her best not to look concerned. She nodded at Rose, "Thank you, Rose. I'll take it in my office." She then turned to Daniel, "Daniel, can you take over from here?"

Daniel nodded, "Yeah. I got it." He stood up, using the table and his crutch to stand, then limped to the head of the conference table as Peggy made her exit.

As Peggy was leaving, Kathryn called out to her, "Did something happen?"

Peggy shrugged, "I'm about to find out. I'll let you know."

Thompson smirked, "Hey if there's a door we need to kick, we call first."

As Peggy left, she turned back to the room, "I highly doubt it's that bad, Jack. Besides, my husband will probably do the door kicking first." She then closed the door behind her and walked down the hallway toward her office. Peggy figured the school called because one of her kids got into another fight and got sent to the office again, and it was probably Sarah. Sarah definitely takes on after her father.

Peggy entered her office and closed the door behind her before making her way to her desk. Peggy sat down and immediately picked up her phone, "SHIELD Director Rogers," she said quickly.

There was a slight pause before Peggy heard the principal of her kids' school reply, "Mrs. Rogers? This is Principal Jerry from Fox Meadow Elementary. Sarah and Michael will need to be picked up from my office after school."

Peggy sighed, "What happened?" She was, however, surprised her son was sent to the office too which produced more questions for her.

Jerry replied calmly, "There was a fight and they were involved in it. We'll discuss this more when you pick them up."

Peggy nodded, "Okay, thank you very much." Peggy hung up the phone and sighed, running a hand through her long wavy hair.

Peggy sighed in frustration at the news of her kids being sent to the office, the third time for Sarah. Sarah is a good kid, and Peggy knew the only reason she gets in trouble in school is that she has a very protective nature for people and detests bullies as much as her father. Peggy's sure, without question, that her daughter picked up the intolerance for bullies from Steve. It isn't a bad thing, but Peggy wishes that Sarah wouldn't resort to fighting all the time. But Peggy knew, on a bigger scale, that sometimes a fight is the only option to prevent dangerous people from succeeding. She also figured her son was sent to the office because he joined the fight to protect his sister, which also isn't a bad thing.

Peggy leaned back in her chair and sighed again. She needed to call her husband. Peggy leaned forward and picked up the phone again to get a hold of Steve at work.
Steve sat in his spacious windowed office on the upper floors of the Stark building discussing business with the lead engineer. Steve closed the folder on his desk, "That should take care of that part at least. Let me know what your team needs for the project and I'll make it happen. Don't worry about Stark or the board. Just let me know what you need."

The lead engineer smiled and stood up, "Thanks a bunch, Steve. We really appreciate it. We're working on something no one has ever thought of before so the budget and materials we need will change."

Steve stood up, "I know. We're working together on this." The two men shook hands, "Keep me posted, Frank," Steve said with a warm smile.

The lead engineer nodded, "No doubt." With that, the engineer left Steve's office and closed the door behind him.

Steve made a small smile then tucked the folder away neatly in his desk. He then turned around, stood up, and faced the window, propping his arm against the glass and placing his hand on his hip and stared at the city street below. He smirked, Steve never thought he'd be a businessman, but he did enjoy the work. His job included but not limited to assigning and prioritizing staff, leading recruitment and hiring to support business needs, ensuring the engineering teams have necessary tools, equipment, process, and training to meet the business plan. That's just to list a few of his tasks as a Senior manager at Stark Industries.

Steve's office is spacious but not as large as Peggy's at SHIELD. The best thing about his office wasn't space, but the large windows that spanned from end-to-end of his office. Steve's desk and walls are decorated with photographs of his wife and family and favored pictures of his time in the Army and SHIELD as Captain America. Steve couldn't lie, a part of him did miss being Captain America, but he wouldn't change anything for the world. He has peace, family, and a stable job, he couldn't ask for a better life. Steve did occasionally have bad dreams from his time at war, but he and Peggy manage to overcome them, most of the time. But in all, the normal life feels good.

Steve smirked at himself as he looked out the window. Suddenly, a knock on his office door brought him back to reality. "Enter!" Steve called as he looked out the window to the city street below.

Steve heard the door open and recognized Howard's voice, "So is this what you call working?" he asked humorously.

Steve turned around and smiled at his friend, "Hey, Howard," he said as he walked to greet him.

Howard walked in and closed the door behind and met Steve halfway and shook his hand. He smiled, "Good to see you, Steve."

Steve nodded, "likewise," he said as he let go of Howard. He turned to his desk, "Have a seat." Steve then sat down at his desk and grinned, "Getting tired of working in SHIELD?"

Howard laughed as he sat down in front of Steve's desk, "Ha. Not at all. I just have to split my time between the needs of SHIELD and my money making business."

Steve leaned back in his chair, "Your company has its own division dedicated to providing weapons, gear, and equipment to SHIELD. I'm sure you aren't splitting time that much," he said with a grin.
Howard chuckled, "Not that much time splitting. But I do like focusing on my own personal projects away from SHIELD. Big projects for the company that will keep the idea of progress at the forefront of our minds. The idea of a technological future."

Steve raised an eyebrow at him, "Are you pitching an idea to me or something, Howard? Because last I checked, I work for you and not the other way around." He grinned, "Or are you preparing for the upcoming Stark Expo or World's Fair pitch?"

"Sort of to both statements. I'll tell you about the idea later. You'll probably hear about it before the board does."

Steve smiled, "Glad you trust me with that."

"You're one of the few I actually do trust," Howard said smiling. He nodded, "Will your division have a functional prototype by the Expo or at least the Fair?"

Steve nodded, "Oh yeah. We're right on track, but my lead engineer and his team require some things to keep the pace." He leaned back in his chair and took out the folder he stowed in his desk, "we especially need more funds to get the hardware, electronics, and other resources necessary if we're going to meet the deadline for the prototype."

Howard nodded, "Let me know what you need and I'll get it to you. Money isn't a concern."

Steve leaned forward and handed Howard the folder, "All of it is in there."

Howard opened the folder and took a moment to skim through the documents and lists. He nodded and closed the folder, "Yeah, I can get all of this to you. No problem."

"Thanks. My guys will appreciate it," Steve said with a grin.

Howard nodded, "How are the kids? Feels like it's been a while."

Steve smiled, "It has. They're doing great and all of them are doing good in school. Well except John because he's only three." He chuckled, "But John is learning a lot and he can form sentences now. He's getting bigger every day."

Howard chuckled, "John. He's three right?" Steve nodded with a smile. "I remember when Peggy first got pregnant with him. Both of you were so surprised." He laughed, "Peggy more than you."

Steve shrugged, "Yeah, well, we sort of planned for Angela, didn't really expect John." He laughed, "Not saying we don't love John, we definitely do and he's a wonderful surprise. We're happy to have a big family."

Howard chuckled, "I know you two do." He leaned back in his chair, "I think it's that time again to have your kids' annual checkup with me to track the serum effects."

Steve nodded, "I'll talk to Peggy about a time that works. The kids have a lot of school stuff and…"

Suddenly Steve's phone rang, interrupting the conversation. "One sec," Steve said as he picked up his phone. "Civil Technologies, Rogers speaking."

He heard Peggy's sweet voice on the phone, "Hi, darling."

Steve smiled at the sound of Peggy's voice, "Oh Hey, honey."

"I'm going to pick up the kids from school this afternoon. Are you still cooking dinner tonight?"
Peggy asked.

Steve nodded, "That's the plan. I'll be home around 5 and dinner should be around 6 or 6:30."

Back in SHIELD, Peggy leaned back in her chair, "Sounds good, darling." She frowned, "By the way, the school called."

Peggy heard Steve hesitate before replying, "Oh? What for?" he asked cautiously.

Peggy sighed, "Apparently our two oldest got involved in a fight. I have to meet the principal at the office to pick up the kids."

She heard Steve sigh, "Did Sarah and Michael fight or did they get into a fight with other kids?"

Peggy didn't wait to answer, "It sounds like they got into a fight with other kids."

Peggy heard her husband sigh again on the phone, "Okay. Well, let me know what happened and how that goes."

"You know I will," Peggy replied. She nodded, "We can talk about it at dinner or after."

"Sounds good," Steve said.

Peggy smiled, "Anyway, I have to get back to work. See you this evening, darling. I love you."

Steve leaned forward on his desk and smiled, "I love you too," he said before hanging up the phone.

Howard raised a brow, "Something come up?"

Steve leaned back and sighed, "The oldest kids got sent to the office. For fighting other kids."

Howard chuckled, "They are you and Peggy's kids," he said humorously. Steve didn't laugh and remained stoic to the joke. Howard waved his hand, "I was kidding."

Steve smiled, "I know."

"Three times?" Howard asked shocked. "Sarah is a good kid. I never thought she would be the one to be sent to the office. Not even once."

Steve shook his head, "She isn't a trouble maker, but… she does hate bullies."

"Sounds like you from what I heard from Peggy," Howard grinned.

Steve sighed, "Yeah. All three times for fighting."

Howard gave him a questioning look, "You don't seem too upset at her."

Steve shook his head, "I'm not."

"I'm more concerned that the kids don't realize how strong they are and how much they can hurt the other kids without even trying." He shrugged, "and also Sarah getting sent to the office for the third time."

Howard nodded, "I get that. Obviously, you told them about the serum years ago, but…"

"We remind them all the time about watching their strength since we first told them when they were six." He sighed, "But in the moment they get carried away." Steve shook his head, "Going to have to
"What about Michael?" Howard asked.

Steve shrugged, "Michael looks out for his sister, so he probably got in trouble because he got caught in the fight while he helped her. Again, can't be upset at that." He shook his head, "We're going to have to talk to them about watching their strength again. This situation is complicated."

Howard sighed, "I sometimes like the fact I'm not a parent."

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**Fox Meadow Elementary School**

Its midafternoon and the kids of Fox Meadow Elementary School just got off of school for the day. The school became chaotic with kids happily running out of class, a line of cars inching their way to the school of parents picking up their kids, and school buses occupying a large portion of the curb space. The sidewalks around the school are also cluttered with waiting kids and kids walking home. The children of all grade levels are happy to be going home after spending all day at school.

After waiting in a line of cars for a while on the road, Peggy finally got into the school parking lot and parked her car. Since she makes her own schedule, she left work a little early to pick up her three kids from school. Peggy's position has its privileges, but she never abuses it while doing her best to be a good mom for her kids. Peggy always wants to pick her kids up from school, play, and cook for them when she gets the chance. Obviously, duty calls and she can't always do those normal things, but she will ever try.

Peggy stepped out of her car and calmly walked toward the main school brick building. As Peggy neared the entrance to the school, she saw her youngest daughter, Angela Elizabeth, talking to her friend next to a tree by the schools' steps. Peggy smiled at the sight of her daughter as she started to walk in her direction.

Angela spotted her mom and turned to her friend, "My mom is here, bye lizzie!"

Her friend waved, "bye, Angela!"

Angela gripped her bag and rushed to her mother and gave her a big hug. "hi, mom!" She said happily.

Peggy happily returned the hug, "hi, darling. How was school?"

"Good. We did a lot of art stuff today about the Earth. It was fun!" Angela said energetically.

Peggy grinned, "sounds like it. You aren't usually this energetic. I like it." She bent down and kissed her on the cheek, "we got to swing by the office to get your brother and sister. Before we head home."

Angela took her mother's hand, "okay," she said as Peggy lead her back into the school.

Lizzie, Angela's friend waved at them, "hi, Mrs. Rogers!"

Peggy smiled back at the other little girl, "Hi, Lizzie!"

"Are you having a good day?" The girl asked happily.

Peggy grinned, "I'm having a great day now that I can see my kids."
"I'm having a good day too!"

As Peggy walked up the steps with her daughter, she smiled back at Angela's friend, "bye, bye Lizzie. Tell your parents I said hi!"

Angela waved at her friend, "bye lizzie!"

Lizzie smiled, "I will! Bye!

Peggy and Angela then stepped into the school and walked directly to the Principals office. The halls of the school were empty and quiet, save for a few kids and teachers walking the hallway. The sound of Peggy's heels clicking loudly on the linoleum floor echoed through the mostly empty halls as the mother and daughter made their way to the office.

Once the two made it to the office, Peggy opened the door and let Angela in first. Peggy then stepped in and was immediately greeted by a pleasant lady at one of the desks. The office is a medium sized square room with two hallway entrances on either side. The office also had two desks on either corner of the room with two couches forming an L-shape at the corner adjacent to the door. "Good afternoon, Mrs. Rogers." The lady greeted pleasantly from her desk.

Peggy nodded, "mhmm. I'm here to see the principal."

The lady pointed to her right, "last door on the left. He's expecting you." She smiled at Angela, "you can have your daughter wait here."

Peggy smiled, "thank you." She looked at Angela, "wait here for me, okay? I'm going to get your brother and sister."

Angela nodded, "okay, mama." She then turned and made her way to the couches.

Peggy made her way down the hall and knocked on the door of the Principals office. She heard a faint voice reply through the door, "come in."

Peggy opened the door and saw the Principal sitting at his desk and her two oldest children sitting at the three chairs in front of him, obviously leaving the center seat for her. Peggy stepped into the office, closed the door behind her, and walked over toward the desk and took her seat, "what happened? Did my kids start the fight?" Sarah and Michael didn't look at their mother from the shame of being sent to the office.

The Principal smiled, "thank you for coming, Mrs. Rogers." He sighed, "as far as we could tell your kids didn't start the fight. Sarah, here, was protecting another student from being bullied by a group of boys. And Michael got caught in the fight because he was protecting his sister." He smiled warmly, "their actions aren't wrong, but respectable." He leaned forward, "though they aren't to blame for the cause of the fight, they still did get caught in it. Its procedure here to notify the parents of situations such as these."

Peggy nodded, "I understand. Are they in any trouble?"

The Principal shook his head, "No." The two kids faces lit up in relief. "But," The Principal began causing the twins to sweat nervously. "The outcome of the fight is concerning. They didn't start the fight so we won't punish them, but Sarah broke another boys nose, another one's arm, and Michael nearly knocked another kid unconscious."

Peggy frowned and looked upset at her two kids by her side causing Michael and Sarah to look
down sheepishly. Peggy looked back up at the Principal, "please continue."

"This is Sarah's third time in the office for fighting. I don't know what to do or say different, but we need to find a way to communicate that fighting isn't always the first and best solution." Peggy nodded in agreement. The Principal continued, "I, however, told them, to try and find peaceful means for conflict resolution."

Peggy nodded, "their father and I will talk to them about it tonight." She sighed, "what about those other boys."

"They'll be punished severely for bullying the other student. Those two students injured in the fight went to the clinic to get checked out for their injuries." He sighed, "the parents are no doubt upset about what happened to them, but let us deal with them. Again, their kids did bully another so they will be punished. I can assure that."

Peggy nodded, "thank you."

"Your twins are good kids, and I hear they are a joy in class and they're doing great academically. It's just this conflict resolution is the problem." The Principal smiled, "they're free to go. Thank you for coming, Mrs. Rogers."

Peggy stood up as did the Principal, "thank you," she said as she shook his hand.

The Principal nodded with a warm smile, "My pleasure."

Peggy turned to her two kids and patted Michael on the shoulder, "let's go home, kids." Sarah and Michael stood up from their seat and walked out of the office with their mother following close behind.

For most of the start of the car ride, the car was dead silent with Peggy thinking what to say and giving her two oldest kids the silent treatment while the twins sat in guilt and worry for what's to come. The kids feared their mother more than their father concerning disciplinary actions. Angela sat comfortably in the front seat while Sarah and Michael sat in fear in the back.

Peggy sighed, "Sarah," she said looking back through the rear view mirror.

Sarah responded quickly, "yes, mom?"

"This is the third time you got sent to the office for fighting." She sighed, "The Principal is right. You need to be better at conflict resolution."

Sarah frowned, "but mom, I tried. I told those boys to stop bullying the other kid. They didn't listen to me. They decided to fight with me instead."

Peggy looked into the rear view mirror, "did you antagonize them?" Sarah looked confused. "Did you say something to make them angry at you and cause them to pick a fight?" Sarah stayed silent and looked down. Peggy spoke sternly, "Sarah Amanda. Answer me."

Sarah nodded, "yes. I said something to make them pick a fight," she said quietly. When her mother says her full name or doesn't say names like "darling" or "sweetie," Sarah knows she's in trouble.

Peggy sighed, "you are as much to blame for the fight as those bullies, Sarah. I know you wanted to protect the other kid, but if you see something like that going on it's okay to tell a teacher or an adult." She shook her head, "things don't have to end in fights all the time."
Sarah frowned, "but dad always says to stand up against bullies. Because bullying is wrong and ignoring it only enforces it."

Peggy sighed, "your dad is right, but that doesn't mean always get into fights." She shrugged, "morally you did the right thing." She looked at her son in the mirror, "you too, Michael, for protecting your sister."

"But why are we in trouble?" Sarah asked.

"Because do you remember you have superpowers? That you have super strength? Do you remember what your dad and I said?" Peggy shot back sternly. Explaining the serum regarding superpowers like those in comic books was the sure way to tell the kids about their abilities they inherited.

Sarah nodded, "yes, mom."

Michael also responded, "yes, mom"

"Sarah you broke a kids nose and Michael you almost knocked a kid unconscious. He probably has a concussion now. And I'll explain that later," Peggy said upset. She sighed, "you kids need to understand that not everyone has your abilities or strength. And it must remain a secret. AND you definitely need to be careful of your strength or else you can do more than just break someone's nose. Especially when you're older." She shook her head, "I'm just glad the last two times you showed some level of restraint or the last two times it didn't escalate to the level it was today."

Sarah nodded, "sorry mom."

"Sorry, mom," Michael also said.

Peggy looked back at Michael, "Michael you especially need to be careful with your strength." She sighed, "we'll talk more during dinner or after with your father." The two twins slouched in their seats and remained worried about being in trouble for the rest of the car ride.

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**Steve & Margaret Rogers Residence, Scarsdale, NY**

It's 6:30 in the evening and the Rogers family sat around the kitchen table for dinner time. The setting spring sun glowed orange beams through the back door and windows, creating a pleasant atmosphere. In addition to the pleasant feeling of the evening, the house is filled with the beautiful aroma of a fresh home-cooked meal. Steve sat at the head of the table while Peggy sat on the other end. Angela sat to Steve's right and next to her sat Michael, closest to Peggy. To Steve's left sat Sarah and to her left is Little John sitting on his booster seat nearest to Peggy. Before dinner, Peggy changed into something comfortable after getting home from work and sported a light red short-sleeve swing skirt dress, far less restrictive attire for dinner and home.

Tonight's home cooked dinner is steak, sweet potatoes, an assortment of vegetables, and freshly baked rolls. The family ate together quietly, enjoying the delicious food made by Steve. Peggy smiled at her husband, "everything is delicious, darling."

Angela nodded happily, "mhmm," she hummed in approval with her mouth full.

Peggy saw John finished eating the small pieces of steak and veggies on his plate which signaled for her to cut more pieces of her steak to put on his plate. As she gave John more food, she looked at Sarah and Michael, "Sarah and Michael, do you have something to tell your father?"
Steve didn't reply as he continued eating, allowing his children to be honest with what occurred at school earlier in the day. Michael spoke up first, "Sarah and I got into a fight at school against a group of boys."

Steve put down his fork, "hm." He looked Sarah, "and what happened?" Peggy stopped what she was doing to hear and observe the conversation between her kids and their father.

Sarah looked up at her dad, "these boys were bullying another and they've been bullying him all year. I told them to stop and they got upset and we got into a fight." She rose her voice, "I couldn't let them keep bullying him!"

Peggy interrupted sternly, "Sarah, don't raise your voice at the dinner table."

Sarah frowned, "yes, mama." She looked back at her dad, "Dad, you said always help people in need and to never tolerate bullying."

Steve nodded, "that's true I did say that."

"But why are we in trouble for doing what was right?" She frowned, "both you and mom agree that bullying is wrong, what's wrong with what I did to help someone else."

Steve spoke in a calm tone, "Sarah, it's not the intention that was wrong, in fact, we applaud you for standing up for that boy against his bullies. It's what how you did it and how it ended up into a brawl is the problem." He sighed, "your mother told me that you broke a kids nose and arm while Michael nearly knocked a kid unconscious. Is that true?"

Sarah nodded sheepishly, "yes."

Michael spoke softly, "yes."

Steve looked at his son, "Michael, I understand you were looking out for your sister. I applaud that and the fight you got caught in wasn't your fight. But the outcome is the problem and that's why you're in hot water too. But I'll return to that." He looked back at Sarah, "Sarah, did you sway them into a fight."

Sarah nodded, "he wouldn't stop bullying the other kid so… I also called him a name he didn't like," she said honestly.

Steve nodded, "okay. Do you see the issue?" Sarah didn't respond. "You pushed him to fight you by stooping down to his level. Essentially, you committed the same crime as him. You don't solve problems or differences that way. You escalated him into a fight. You don't always want to end up in a fight, Sarah." He sighed, "take it from me and your mother. Violence should be your last resort. Do you understand?"

Sarah looked down, "yes, dad."

Steve spoke up, "look at me, Sarah." He looked at Michael, "both of you look at me. We aren't done." He leaned forward, "conflict resolution. Do not always lean toward brute force or violence to solve problems. Show restraint. Show and convince bullies or kids who don't like you that they're wrong and use your words as your weapon. Your physical strength should be your backup because fights do happen, but they should never be plan A." He gave a small smile, "you all know who President Theodore Roosevelt is, right?"

Sarah nodded, "yes, dad." Michael nodded in response.
Steve nodded, "good. He once said, 'Speak softly and carry a big stick.' Do you know what that means?"

Michael responded, "be peaceful and resolve issues but have the strength to overcome any situation if things go wrong."

Steve nodded, "exactly. Exercise intelligent planning or thinking in advance, that's called Forethought. Exercise forethought to deescalate the situation ahead of a fight, but if a fight can't be helped then it's okay to show them their mistake by force as a last resort. Understand?"

Sarah nodded, "yes, daddy."

Michael nodded, "yes, dad."

Steve tapped his temple, "Be mindful with your words. They often can do wonderous things. Say what you mean, mean what you say. You don't always need to fight to resolve a situation, okay? I had to learn that too." Peggy made a small smile as she watched her husband parent her kids. Steve nodded, "Be tactful."

Michael cocked his head to the side, "What does that mean?"

Peggy spoke up, "It means, have a sense what to do or say in order to maintain good relations with or to avoid an offense." She gave a disarming smile, "Darlings, sometimes fights do happen but if you can avoid getting into one by persuading them that what they're doing is wrong then do it. But if they want to fight and you did everything in your power to avoid it then we'll be okay with you defending yourself and your friends."

Sarah nodded, "Okay, mom."

"But never appease your enemies, Sarah and Michael. That means, giving into their demands. If they say they'll stop if you do this and this, and you do it, then those kids will use you and continued demanding from you and you'll never win," Peggy said sternly. She nodded, "Trust your friends but be aware of those who distrust and dislike you." Sarah and Michael nodded.

"The other issue is that both of you sent kids to the hospital." He sighed, "what did we say about your strength?"

"To be careful on how we use it," Sarah said.

"Do you know why?"

"Because we have superpowers and we have to keep it a secret. And that we're stronger than most adults," Michael replied.

"Exactly." Steve nodded, "you can seriously injure someone, like today, or kill them if you aren't careful. You have to control your strength in every situation and show restraint, okay?" The two oldest kids nodded. Steve sighed, "there's nothing wrong with you. You have extraordinary gifts that no one has, and the reason we must keep it a secret is for your protection."

Peggy spoke up again, "your father is right. For the safety of others and your selves, we must hide your powers. If someone finds out you have these abilities they might take you from us. It's unlikely but possible. So you kids need to be careful with your strength, okay?"

Michael and Sarah nodded, "yes, mama." The two said in unison as their parents' words sunk in.
Sarah looked at her dad, "Are you mad at us, dad?"

Steve shook his head, "I'm not mad. I'm a little disappointed. Your reasoning was okay, but lack of restraint and conflict resolution got me bothered." He nodded at Peggy, "your mother is upset because of the same thing but at a higher degree. Also because she had to pick you up from the office again." Sarah frowned. Steve gripped his daughter's shoulder, "let's finish dinner and talk more about it later tonight, okay? Now is family time." Michael nodded as he went back to eating his slightly cool food. The two oldest remained silent as they ate their food, still feeling down about being in trouble. Michael sighed to himself, he might not make it to the hideout with his friends tonight since he got lectured by his parents about the fight.

Peggy cut her steak and turned to Angela next to Steve, "Angela, how was school?"

Angela swallowed her food, "It was good."

Steve smiled, "How is your friends Lizzie and Jessica?"

Angela smiled at her dad, "They're doing okay."

Peggy grinned, "Angela, you were so energetic after school. What happened?"

Angela shrugged, "I don't know." She suddenly grinned, "Oh mama, daddy, we made a papier-mâché globe and we got to color it. It's in the classroom drying. Lizzie and I made the two biggest ones and they look really pretty!"

Peggy laughed, "see? that's something interesting and fun to get excited about."

Angela calmed down back to her mellow self, "Oh, mama and daddy? Lizzie wants to know if I can go over to her house on Saturday."

Peggy nodded, "Oh, of course. We can do that, right, darling?" she asked her husband across the table.

Steve smiled at his daughter, "Of course! That sounds like fun! We can drive you there. How does noon sound?"

Angela nodded, "Good. Thanks, mama, thanks, dad," she said softly before going back to her food.

Steve smiled at Angela, "Check out any new books from the library, Angela?"

Angela shook her head, "I haven't finished by other two yet," she said softly.

"Two books? Wow. I can only read one at a time. I think you have the marks of a genius, sweetie." Angela smiled at her father's praise as she continued eating.

Peggy nodded to her son, "Michael, other than the fight, how was school?"

Michael shrugged, "It was okay." He sighed, "I'm just trying to get to know some other kid in my class that I don't usually talk to."

Peggy interrupted her son, "Is it a girl?"

Michael turned round eye, "What?"

"It's a girl isn't it?" Peggy said with a grin.
Michael shook his head, "I'm already friends with a girl, mama. Eva, remember?"

Steve laughed, "Notice how he didn't deny it yet."

Peggy nodded, "I know Eva, darling. But it seems like this girl, whoever it is, is different to you."
She grinned, "How do I know? Because when you talk about trying to be friends with another boy, you use the pronoun 'he' or 'him.' But when you were talking about being friends with Eva, you use the word 'kid.'" Peggy grinned, "You also haven't denied my statement, and it seems like you wanted to bring her up to us now, suddenly." Peggy wasn't a director of an intelligence agency for nothing. She can piece together the smallest of clues, and she's very attentive to detail.

Michael conceded, "It's a girl." Michael couldn't believe how observant to the smallest details his mother is sometimes. It's almost witchcraft.

Steve grinned and looked at Sarah to include her in the conversation, "Do you know about this mystery girl, Sarah?" Sarah looked up at her father and shook her head silently. Steve knew Sarah was still sulking after being lectured about today's events at school.

Peggy leaned forward toward her son, "Well? Are you going to tell us about her? Because it sure seems like she's troubling you. Did she reject you?" she said with a grin.

Michael waved his hand, "No. It's nothing like that, it's... It's hard to explain. I don't know where to start."

Peggy smiled, "Take your time. You can tell us later. But we do want to know."

Sarah put her fork down and wiped her mouth with the napkin, "Mama, daddy, may I be excused?"

Peggy turned her attention to her oldest daughter, "You may."

Steve nodded, "You may."

Sarah picked up her plate and walked to the kitchen counter to discard the dishes. As she walked away Peggy called out to her, "Remember it's your turn to help me for the dishes since your father cooked."

Sarah nodded, "Okay, mama."

Michael spoke up, "Mom, dad, may I be excused?"

"Yes," Steve said calmly.

Peggy again looked at her son, "Promise to tell me about that mystery girl, okay? Even if you just want to be friends." She grinned, "You're also excused."

Michael stood up and gave his mother a small smile, "I promise."

After dinner and cleaning up the kitchen, the Rogers household mellowed out with the kids going upstairs to play amongst themselves. With their homework completed before dinner, the kids had free time for the rest of the evening. But Peggy, like usual, made her way upstairs through the kids' rooms to check to see if they did all their homework, she noticed Michael and Sarah were feeling down and stuck to themselves quietly in their respective rooms. Peggy knew the twins felt terrible for getting in trouble school, but it was a lesson they needed to learn, especially with their gifts inherited by the serum. Peggy figured her son also wanted to go out with his friends to the place they call the
"hideout," but she knew he wouldn't ask because he was sulking. She would also say "no" because of what he did at school today. As the sun set below the horizon and the sky got darker, Peggy finally returned downstairs to the family room to relax for the rest of evening and sit with her husband on the couch, and watch Little John play on the floor.

Peggy walked into the family room and saw her husband relaxing on the couch drawing in his sketchbook as John played happily with his toys on the floor. Steve heard Peggy's footsteps entering the family room causing him to look up at his beautiful wife wearing a light red day dress that accented everything physically beautiful about her. Steve lowered his sketchbook and smiled as Peggy stopped by John. Peggy saw her husband staring, "What?" she asked with a smile.

Steve chuckled, "You look beautiful."

Peggy shook her head with a wide grin, "I know that look, Steve. No matter how much I want to, but down, tiger, the kids will hear," she said chuckling. Peggy then bent down to her son and kissed John on the cheek, "Hi, darling."

John opened up his arms, "Hi, Mama!" he exclaimed excitedly.

Peggy hugged her youngest son and kissed his cheek lovingly. She smiled at the small mess of toys around John, "Mama is going to be on the couch for a little bit. We'll play in a bit, okay?"

John smiled, "okay!"

Peggy stood up and walked over to the couch and sat down next to Steve, tucking her legs under her and propping her elbow on the back cushion and resting her cheek on her hand. Steve closed his sketchbook and leaned forward to put the book down on the coffee table. Peggy sighed, "So about today."

Steve leaned back and nodded, "yeah. About today."

"That's the third time this year Sarah got sent to the office for fighting. This would be number two for Michael," Peggy said softly.

Steve nodded, "I know. But...she never starts the fights. And Michael usually is in the office because of his sister."

Peggy ran a hand through her hair, "I can't really be mad at her cause she's doing the right thing for protecting that boy. She just jumps into fights." She chuckled, "Reminds me of someone I know."

Steve laughed, "Ha. Our oldest daughter turns out to be more and more like me."

"I know." Peggy smiled, "And that's not a bad thing."

"Neither of our kids like bullies and I'm proud they aren't ones either. At least I don't think they are," Steve replied calmly.

"You know they aren't," Peggy replied seriously.

"I know."

Peggy shrugged, "We raised them well in that matter." She chuckled, "At least I don't think we have to worry about Angela getting to a whole lot of fights. She's way too quiet and mellow."

Steve smiled, "I wouldn't run it by her though, hon."
"Neither would I," Peggy replied. There was a brief pause between the couple as a comfortable silence set in. In the silence, Peggy stretched out her arm and ran a hand through Steve's hair in silent affection.

Steve smiled at his wife, "Our kids are sheepdogs. Protecting sheep from wolves, and that's a wonderful thing."

Peggy laughed, "You're always so dramatic, darling. But, you have a point with the metaphor." She sighed, "Do you think we should ground Sarah and Michael for today? We told them to be careful of their strength repeatedly in the past, and this is Sarah's third time in the office for fighting."

Steve sighed, "I don't think so."

Peggy cocked her head to the side, "What's your reasoning?"

He shrugged, "They didn't start the fight and they acted in self-defense. Like any child Sarah and Michael get excited, and they forget to restrain themselves."

"They did seriously injure those boys, darling, and they didn't show restraint."

Steve nodded, "I know. But those injuries could happen in any fight. The difference is that those injuries are more likely to occur if our kids are in the fight. There could be far worse injuries if the fight progressed, but that's speculation." He leaned back, "I know they understand what we said and, in their own way, they understand how important it is to restrain themselves and be better at conflict resolution. That and they've been sulking about being in trouble since they got home." He shrugged, "besides, we never really talked to them about restraint, mostly Sarah, about the last two times she got sent to the office. Because we saw it as strictly self-defense. At the time, Sarah appeared to show restraint then but maybe it was because the fight didn't escalate to what occurred today."

Peggy nodded, "Yeah. Do you think talking to them will be enough?"

"I think so. At least for now."

"Okay. Then I agree, talking to them is enough, but if it happens for the fourth time then we'll do more than talk to them. Because it is the third time for Sarah. We can't keep letting it slide," Peggy said concerned. She sighed, "We'll have to ground her and punish her because this is serious."

"I know. But the last two times she didn't break any bones or send anyone to the clinic. The only reason both of them are in trouble is the fact they severely injured a few kids." Steve nodded, "And yes, she's in trouble for... kind of the fight and a lack of restraint. Our kids in general need to be better at conflict resolution too."

Peggy nodded, "You're right. We didn't lecture her or Michael the last time since we only saw it as self-defense and nothing bad happened to the other kids."

Steve smiled, "Exactly." He sighed, "Hopefully we don't have to punish them later because they won't get into a fight for the rest of the school year."

Peggy chuckled, "One can only hope." She sighed, "But you're right. I think what's really bothering us is that they broke a couple kids bones and gave a few concussions."

"Yeah. I don't blame them though."

Peggy nodded, "It's the effects of the serum. They can overpower any kid in the school."
"The kids are good at keeping it a secret even with today's outcome in the fight. I don't think anyone would even suspect a couple kids have enhanced strength from us," Steve replied calmly.

Peggy nodded, "What I'm really getting at is their parents might ask us about our kids, how we raise them, and what we give them, and so on and so on." She sighed, "Dealing with the parents of those bullies will be annoying."

Steve sighed, "I know. We can figure that out when the time comes, but we'll just turn it around on them like usual cause their kids picked a fight and our kids defended themselves and a victim of bullying."

Peggy smiled and leaned forward and cuddled with her husband, "I know."

Steve wrapped an arm around his wife, "You know? I'm glad that our kids don't have some sort of ailment from inheriting the serum, so they can experience a normal life… for the most part. And not experience growing up as sickly." He shrugged, "Well, they don't have an ailment that we know of."

Peggy kissed Steve on the chest, "Me too." She smiled, "I'm glad our kids don't get bullied either. But if they did, I hope they'd tell us."

Steve smiled, "I'm sure they would. We're a tight bunch."

Peggy grinned and kissed Steve on the cheek, "Yeah we are."

Steve remembered something from earlier in the day, "That reminds me. Howard says it's time again to have our kids' annual checkup with him to track the serum effects."

Peggy leaned her head back against Steve's arm, "Oh, it's that time now."

It's now late in the evening, and the orange tinted sky has been replaced by the night illuminated by the half-moon high above. Sarah sat in her dim room in her bed, only lighted by a lone lamp on the nightstand next to her as she prepared to go to sleep. Sarah sat quietly, propped up by her pillow as she read a small book her mother gave her a while ago. As she turned the page she heard a knock on her door followed by the door slowly opening.

Sarah turned her attention to the door and saw her dad peek his head in with a small smile. "Hey, honey," her dad said.

Sarah put her book down on her lap, "Hi, daddy."

Steve smiled, "Can I come in?" Sarah nods quietly signaling him to enter. Steve silently closed the door behind him and walked over to Sarah and sat down on the side of the bed. Steve noticed his daughter staring at him nervously. He chuckled, "What's the matter? You look scared."

Sarah looked down and frowned, "Am I in trouble? Is Michael in trouble?"

Steve smiled, "No. Why do you think that?"

Sarah shrugged, "I got sent to the office again for… for fighting. For the third time."

Steve nodded, "Well, yes you did get sent to the office again, but you aren't in trouble. Know why?" Sarah shook her head. Steve smiled, "Because you did the right thing. Yes, this is the third time, but the first time we had to talk to you about showing restraint and explicitly watching your strength."

He chuckled, "You didn't start the fight and you protected a friend of yours. Consequently, your
brother joined to help you because he loves you. A real dynamic duo if you ask me." Sarah laughed lightly at her dad's comforting words. Steve nodded and scooted closer to his daughter, "Come here." Sarah leaned forward and scooted toward her dad and hugged his big frame. Steve kissed Sarah at the top of her head, "I'm proud of you for doing the right thing. But if you can avoid breaking bones and giving concussions that be great too."

Sarah hugged her dad tighter, "I know."

Steve leaned back and looked at his daughter, "the other kids and most adults aren't as strong as you. It's because you..."

Sarah interrupted her father and finished his sentence, "Cause we got powers," she said sitting what her parents tell her and her siblings.

Steve nodded, "You know what, Sarah?"

"What?" Sarah asked curiously.

"You're a lot like me, Sweetie." He chuckled, "You know when I was a kid, I wasn't as strong as I am now."

"Really?" Sarah asked surprised. All her life she saw her father as this extremely strong individual who she looked up too and the country praised for his heroics.

Steve smiled, "I was a kid of ill health. I was asthmatic and skinnier than you are now. I was a kid people bullied constantly and that continued way past high school. I hated bullies. Fought back against them every chance I got. Even if the bully wasn't picking on me, I'd pick a fight because he was a bully." He chuckled, "I'd get my butt kicked but that's aside the point. The point is, I was a lot like you and I wish I considered an alternative to fighting. That would probably save me a few hospital trips and broken bones. But what's done is done." Sarah nodded quietly. Steve smiled and hugged his daughter again, "You got that from me. Not tolerating bullies." He raised his finger, "But my rule of the thumb is doing something is usually better than doing nothing. It isn't always true, but that's for you to decide."

Sarah cocked her head to the side, "How do I know when it's the right time do something?"

Steve smiled, "That's based on what you feel like you need to do. It's a complicated answer, but there's no right way to explain it." He shrugged, "You have to come to that decision yourself. You have to take what you learned, what you see, and what you hear, and then you make a decision." Sarah nodded quietly trying to understand her dad's complex answer. Steve smiled, "You'll understand it eventually. But you might not always be right, but whatever happens..." He pointed to her chest, "you stand by your decision, no matter what. Don't hide from it and own it. Like you did today. Every action has a consequence. Good or bad, you have to own it, okay?"

Sarah nodded, "Okay, daddy."

Steve gave a fatherly smile to his daughter, "When I was selected to be Captain America, a good friend of mine, a mentor, once told me, 'a strong man who known power all his life, may lose respect for that power, but a weak man knows the value of strength and knows compassion.'” He nodded at Sarah, "You and your siblings have a gift. Don't lose respect for it. Never. Lose respect for it," he emphasized. "Be compassionate. You don't need to be perfect, but you need to be a good person." He smiled, "And your lovely mother would say, 'know your value. Be a better than yesterday.'" He chuckled, "I know this is a lot, but you'll get it someday. And your mother and I will guide you along the way."
Sarah hugged her father, "Thanks, dad."

Steve smiled, "Any time, kiddo." He kissed her on the top of her head again, "Time for bed." Steve took the book off her lap and closed it, making sure to mark the page she left off before placing it on the nightstand. He then tucked his daughter in, "Sleep well, sweetie. One more day of school before the weekend."

Sarah smiled at her father, "Good night, daddy."

"Good night, sweetheart," Steve said as he bent down and kissed her forehead. He turned off the lamp and headed for the door.

As Steve opened the door, heard his daughter call out to him, "Daddy?"

Steve turned around, "Hm?"

Sarah smiled, "Can I be like you someday!"

Steve made a proud but humble smile, "I don't see why not. You can do whatever you put your mind to, Sarah."

"I want to be like you, dad," Sarah said happily. She frowned, "But, I'm a girl. How can I do what you do?"

Steve smiled, "That never stopped your mother. Know your value, Sarah. The only one who can stop you is you." Steve knew that Sarah's sex will be a factor in her dreams and goals down the road, but he's confident that she can overcome any barrier or ceiling that society puts up to stop her. How Sarah is now at this young age, he knew that his daughter will achieve her goal no matter how hard. She is a persistent and strong-willed girl.

As Steve stepped out of the room, Sarah called out to him again, "Daddy? I know where we got our super strength from, but how did you get yours?"

Steve smiled, "It's a closely guarded secret, but I can tell you that some other day, sweetie. Now, go to bed." He slowly closed the door, "Good night, sweetheart." Sarah smiled at her dad and closed her eyes.

Steve closed the door and sighed quietly to himself. The kids didn't know much about his service as Captain America other than the favorite stories everyone hears about him. Truthfully, the Rogers kids didn't know much more than the average person about their father's service in the military and as a SHIELD operative. Steve hid the details of his time as Captain America from his kids because of all the memories, good and bad, it brought him. But he agreed to Peggy that he would eventually tell the kids the uncensored truth of his time as Captain America when they're older, but for now, he saw it best to keep up the romanticized image of his heroism for them. The kids are too young to grasp the things their father has done in war and as an operative. What truly troubled him is the fear of his kids wanting to follow his footsteps into service or Peggy's into SHIELD. He will support his kids no matter what they'll do and be a guiding force to them, but he didn't want any of his children to go through the things he has seen and done. No parent wants to their kids to experience war, but time will tell with what they want to do later in life. No matter what, Steve knows that his kids will excel and thrive in whatever they choose to do in life. But right now he will enjoy the time he has with his family when all his children are young.

Steve turned around from Sarah's room and was surprised to see Peggy leaning against the wall next to him. "Hey," he quietly said surprised.
Peggy smiled lovingly at her husband, "You're the best father in the world, you know that?"

Steve smirked, "Sarah wants to be like me," he said in a serious tone.

Peggy raised a brow, "And is that bad?"

Steve shook his head, "No. I just don't want her or either our kids to experience things we have."

Peggy nodded and crossed her arms, "I can understand that, darling." She sighed, "It's our job to be supportive of their goals and ambitions while guiding them to do what's right, but if our kids want to be like us, we'll have to support their decision when they grow up. It's not always going to be easy to support all their dreams, but we have to as parents." She stepped toward him and gripped his arm, "I know you don't want either of our kids to experience war, death, and the stresses of combat and espionage, but if they want to do those things later, I'll support them because I'm their mother. I'll be just as scared as you, but at the same time I'll be so proud if Sarah becomes the next 'Captain America,' Michael becomes a SHIELD agent, Angela a writer, and John, a doctor."

Steve looked at Peggy and nodded, "You're right."

Peggy smiled, "Our children aren't promised infinite success by us supporting them, but it'll feel like it to them, and that's what matters. How we support them will boost their confidence and encourage them which will, in the end, give them a higher chance of succeeding because we never made them feel like they're going to fail." She nodded, "If we raise them with ambition, and to fight for the pursuit of a career of their choice, they'll succeed no matter what they decide."

Steve smiled and wrapped his arms around his wife, "You're right again."

Peggy grinned, "Like always, my darling," she said as she leaned up and kissed his lips.

Steve nodded, "I'll support them no matter what," he said kissing his wife again.

Peggy smiled, "I know you will, Steve." She hugged his frame, "I don't want them to experience the things we have done either, but I'll be so damn proud if they became like us anyway."

Steve chuckled and rested his head on the top of Peggy's as he hugged her tightly, "me too."

Peggy leaned back and smiled up at Steve, "Ready for bed?"

Steve nodded, "Definitely." He chuckled, "It'll be an interesting rest of the school year," he said as he turned for their bedroom, wrapping his arm around Peggy's waist. Steve pressed Peggy to him, "Michael in bed?"

Peggy nodded, "Tucked him in myself," she said with a smile as they neared their bedroom.

"And John?"

Peggy chuckled, "Sleeping nice and cozy in his crib." Steve suddenly stopped and turned back toward the kid's rooms. Peggy looked at him confused, "What?"

Steve walked to Michael's door, "Just want to kiss my son goodnight," he said as he quietly opened the door. Peggy smiled warmly at her husband as she too walked to her oldest son's door.

Steve silently entered Michael's dark room and saw his son sprawled out on his bed with his bed sheets already in a tangled mess. Steve bent down and kissed his son lightly on the top of his head, "Goodnight, buddy," he whispered. He then quietly made his exit. His son is a heavy sleeper and is
difficult to wake him up sometimes, so it was easier for both parents to sneak in his room and kiss him goodnight when he fell asleep. Without making a sound, Steve stepped out of Michael's dark room and held the door open for a moment to lovingly look at his sleeping son.

Peggy snaked her arms around Steve from behind and rested her cheek against his shoulder, "He's a heavy sleeper."

Steve lightly chuckled, "That he is."

"I remember there were times when he was a baby and he slept for so long I thought he was dead," Peggy said reminiscing.

Steve grinned, "Oh…I remember that. You were so scared."

Peggy nudged him, "So were you."

"Fair," Steve said silently with a smile.

Peggy pressed herself to him, "He looks like you every day." She looked up at him, "It's one hell of a life we have. It's never boring and there's always an adventure."

Steve chuckled, "Like Sarah's trips to the office."

Peggy rolled her eyes, "Not too fond of those." She smiled, "But, what I'm saying is, we have a great life. Can't imagine anything different."

"The best," Steve said quietly.

Suddenly, the sound of John's muffled cries echoed in the hallway, "Mama! Mama!" his cries roared.

Steve shut Michael's door and laughed, "I'll take care of it," he said as he let go of Peggy.

Peggy chuckled, "I got him, darling." She smirked, "He called mama, not dada."

Steve laughed, "fair enough."

Peggy walked off to the nursery to retrieve her weeping toddler with Steve following close behind. Peggy entered the room and instantly flipped on the light switch before walking to the crying John in his crib. Once at John's side, Peggy lowered the side of the crib and gently picked up her three-year-old. John continued to cry loudly as he rested his cheek against his mother's shoulder. Peggy bounced her son gently, "Shh, shh, Mama's got you. What's the matter, my darling?" She kissed his cheek, "did you have a nightmare?"

Steve smiled warmly as he leaned against the doorframe and crossed his arms.

Peggy continued to speak to her son in a gentle tone which turned John's cries into light sniffles. Peggy again kissed John on the cheek and started to sing a soft lullaby. "Rock-a-bye baby, in the treetops, when the wind blows the cradle will rock," she began to sing.

As Peggy sang softly, Steve smiled warmly from his spot at the door at the scene of his wife and their youngest son. It's a good life, but he hopes that Sarah and Michael won't get into any more fights at school for the rest of the school year.

Like Sister, Like Brother. Fluffy chapter and not much happened. But it was more to establish what's to happen next with the focus on the kids' lives, initially, Sarah and Michael's.
Of course, Steve and Peggy will have more adventures.

Fluffy chapter and not much happened. But it was more to establish what's to happen next with the focus on the kids' lives, initially, Sarah and Michael's. Of course, Steve and Peggy will have more adventures.

Part of it inspired by the Incredibles.

Hope you enjoyed this Chapter! More to come with family adventures! As always, review and share to the world. Thanks for reading!

ALSO: Hydra and Leviathan are still around, so you'll see what happens with them.
Chapter 37 Michael

I don't own Captain America

Steve & Margaret Rogers Residence, Scarsdale, NY

March 1957

It's an early Monday morning in the Rogers house, and the temperature remained cool as the sun slowly rose above the horizon. The sun filtered through the open blinds of the windows and illuminated the inside of the house with pleasant light. It looked to be another pleasant morning in the Rogers household. Sitting at the kitchen table is Steve and the four kids eating a hearty breakfast cooked by Peggy. While Steve ate and supervised the young John eating his meal, Peggy was multitasking with cleaning the kitchen and eating her share of food. Though the family started a little late on this Monday morning, everyone is dressed for the day with Steve and Peggy both dressed and ready for work in business attire, save for Peggy who had an apron over her suit.

Peggy walked over to the table with a bottle of milk, "More milk, darlings?"

Sarah smiled as she ate, "Yes, please."

Angela raised her hand, "Please!" she called.

Peggy happily poured milk in Sarah's glass then Angela's. "Thank you, mama," Sarah and Angela said in unison with smiles.

"You're very welcome, my dears," Peggy said as she headed back to the kitchen.

Michael shoveled the last bits of corn beef hash into his mouth and stood up from his seat, "May I be excused?" he said to his parents as he swallowed his food.

Steve nodded, "Go ahead. Got everything for school?" he said as he wiped John's messy face from food.

Michael nodded, "Yup."

"Then help your mother with the dishes before she takes you to school," Steve said evenly.

Michael nodded, "Got it," he said as he turned for the kitchen.

As Michael put his plate and cup in the sink and started the faucet to clean the dirty dishes, Peggy walked up to her son and kissed the top of his head, "Thanks for the help, sweetie." Michael smiled in reply to his mother as he started cleaning the dishes. Peggy looked at the clock on the wall and saw what time it was, "Steve, honey, you should probably get going or else you'll be late for work. Don't you have that meeting today?"

Steve looked up and saw the time, "Oh, shoot, I do. Thanks." He stood up from his seat, "Are you sure you can drop off the kids before heading to work?"

Peggy walked over to her husband, leaving Michael to clean up the kitchen, "I might be a little late, but it'll work out."
John saw his mother standing by him causing him to raise his arms, "Mama," he said calling out to her.

Peggy cooed lovingly at her youngest as she picked him up off his seat, "Hey there, sweetie. Are you full from breakfast?" John smiled and hugged Peggy tightly. "You look surprisingly clean. Thanks to Daddy, I'm sure," she joked.

Steve smiled, "Alright, I'll see you tonight, hon."

Peggy turned her attention back to her husband and smiled back, "Looking forward to it. Have a good day, darling," She leaned forward and kissed Steve on the lips briefly, "I love you."

"I love you too," Steve replied. He smiled at John and kissed him on the cheek, "See you later today, buddy."

John waved his hand, "Bye, Daddy."

Steve walked around the table and kissed Sarah and Angela on the top of their heads, "have a great day at school, girls, I'll see you all when I get home!"

Angela smiled at her dad, "Bye, Daddy."

"Bye, dad," Sarah replied, looking up at her father.

Steve walked into the kitchen and kissed the top of Michael's head, "See ya, buddy. Have a good day at school."

Michael turned around as his dad left the kitchen, "Bye, Dad!"

As Steve was leaving the kitchen he turned to his wife, "What time is April supposed to arrive to babysit?" he asked quickly.

Peggy looked at the clock on the wall, "Should be any minute now. She might be a little late."

Steve chuckled, "Everyone is a little late today," He then waved to his family, "See ya! I love you all!" he called as he exited the kitchen to the foyer.

Peggy smiled as her husband disappeared into the foyer. She was brought back to reality when she suddenly felt a painful tug on her hair, "Oh, ow! Darling, don't tug on my hair," she said as John playfully yanked on her long brown hair. Peggy gently took John's hand and forced him to let go of her hair, "It's okay to play with my hair, but don't tug on it. It hurts mommy," she said softly. John didn't say anything, but Peggy knew he understood.

Peggy turned her attention to her kids, "Everyone ready for school?"

Sarah nodded, "Yes, mama," she replied. Angela nodded quietly with her mouth full to acknowledge her mother.

"Good. Sarah, Angela hurry up and finish your breakfast. We have to go soon if we don't want to be late," Peggy said as she adjusted John in her arms. Sarah and Angela started to eat quickly to finish the little bits of food left on their plates. Peggy made her way back into the kitchen while still carrying John, "Oh and help your brother with the dishes."

Angela swallowed the last of her food, "Done, Mama," she said as she stood up from the table.

"Me too," Sarah said as she stood up with her plate.
Peggy started to wipe down the counter with a towel with her free hand, "quick clean-up of the dishes and we'll get going." She turned briefly to her kids surrounding the sink, "Just rinse the plates, sweethearts, save some time. I'll take care of it later this evening." Peggy then focused her attention at her oldest son at the sink, "Michael, thank you for doing most of the dishes."

Michael, who already cleaned a number of plates and pans, finished drying his last plate, "You're welcome, mom," he said cheerfully.

Suddenly there was a knock on the door which caught Peggy's attention. "Great, April is here just in time to babysit," Peggy said with a relieved smile. She turned to her kids, "Finish up and get your shoes for school." Her kids silently acknowledged her and quickly finished up with their quick cleaning of the dirty dishes.

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**Fox Meadow Elementary School**

After getting dropped off by their mother, Michael walked with his little sister, Angela, by his side on the paved path toward the front entrance of the school along with dozens of other kids. Like usual, and though he didn't need to, Michael is walking his quiet little sister to her classroom. Although Sarah wasn't beside her siblings, she remained close by with her group of friends trailing behind them. It was the following Monday since Michael and his twin sister been sent to the office last Thursday and everything has seemingly returned to normal in school. But it wasn't all normal. Michael could hear other kids whispering about him and his twin sister, mostly about Sarah, as he walked toward the school with his little sister. The whispers weren't all bad, most were in praise, but Michael hoped Sarah wouldn't do anything rash from other kids whispering behind her back. But time will tell.

As Michael and Angela walked through the threshold of the school into the crowded and loud hallway, Michael spotted Irena keeping to herself in the crowd as she walked through the hall. Irena wore an old faded colored short-sleeve collared dress and kept an emotionless expression on her face. Her medium length dark black hair was a sharp contrast from her pale skin. Michael couldn't help but look in her direction as he walked with Angela through the hallway. Michael wanted to talk to her and befriend her because it killed him to see her alone in every passing hour of school. He didn't know anything about her, but the fact she was always alone was reason enough for him to want to befriend her. Irena was also vulnerable to the other kids picking on her because of the way she dressed, mostly from other girls. Most of the kids in the school came from well-to-do families and sported new clothes with bright colors, but Irena seemed to go to school in old weathered garments. It wasn't hard for Michael to figure that Irena came from a poor household. Michael made it his goal today to talk to her. Finally.

Michael was brought back to reality by a tug on his arm. He looked down at his sister, "Yeah, what's up, Angela?"

Angela smiled and spoke softly, "We're here," she said pointing to her classroom door.

"We are?" Michael asked confused. Apparently he's been lost in thought staring at Irena the whole time he was walking Angela to class. Michael's fourth-grade classroom is on the far end of the hallway from Angela's which is convenient for him to walk his sister to class.

Angela nodded, "Yup." She hugged her brother goodbye, "Bye, Michael."

Michael hugged her back, "See ya, Angela. Do well in there."

Angela smiled, "You know you don't have to walk me to my classroom every day."
"I know, but I…"

Angela interrupted him with a grin, "You can talk to your crush if you want. I'm sure she'll like the company." She waved, "Bye, big brother."

Michael sighed, "I don't have a crush on her," he said, but it was too late for Angela to hear him because she already disappeared into her classroom. He sighed and shook his head.

His best friend, Riley Richard calling out to him drew his attention, "Michael!" Riley called as he ran up to him.

Michael nodded at his friend, "Hey, Riley."

Riley chuckled, "I saw you eyeing Irena the whole time you've been walking."

Michael rolled his eyes and turned for their classroom, "I was not."

"You totally were," Riley said laughing. "I know last week you said you wanted to be friends with Irena, but you didn't say you had a crush on her."

Michael sighed again, "Awe come on. I do not. I just don't want her being alone all the time."

"Sounds like you have a crush," Riley said with a smirk.

"Shut up, Riley," Michael responded with a playful grin.

The two boys walked into their classroom and headed straight to their seats where the rest of their friends were hanging out. Michael stopped by his desk and dropped his satchel down on his chair and greeted his group of good friends.

"Hey, Michael," Rhys said cheerfully, lowering his book to greet his friends.

Brandon stood by Rhys and waved his hand, "Michael and Riley. Last to show up for our group every time."

Riley laughed, "Michael had to walk his sister to class."

Eva sat on Michael's desk and crossed her legs and chuckled, "Michael, I'm sure Angela can walk to her classroom herself. Doesn't that bother her?"

Michael shrugged, "She never said otherwise. I'm just looking out for her. She is my baby-sister after all."

Eva cocked her head to the side, "Wait…isn't Angela's class down the hall from us?"

"Yeah?"

Eva raised a brow, "And you're with her the whole time after your parents drop you off?"

Michael nodded, "Yeah," he said confused.

"Ah. Never mind. I guess it makes sense why you walk her to class," Eva said plainly.

Suddenly, Mrs. Banks, their fourth-grade teacher, stood up from her desk where she's been the whole time preparing for today's lesson, "Good morning, everyone!"
"Good morning, Mrs. Banks," The class collectively happily greeted their teacher in response.

As everyone started to take their seats and get their things in order, Mrs. Banks turned to Eva who just hopped off Michael's desk, "Eva, you know I don't like it when students sit on the desks."

Eva sat down at her seat and nodded, "Sorry, Mrs. Banks," she said sheepishly.

"That's okay, but don't do it again." She clapped her hands, "Okay, let's get started!"

As soon as class started, Michael's eyes trailed off to Irena's direction to look at her with curiosity getting the better of him. Riley sat next to Michael, nudged him, "I see you staring, buddy."

Michael sighed and shook his head, "Great." He groaned, I won't hear the end of this all day, now.

Of all his friends, Riley Richard, his best friend, is the most talkative and charismatic of the group. Like Michael, Riley wasn't super popular, but the two friends did know a vast majority of the kids in their grade by name. Rhys Chavez, another good friend in the group, is a boy with fair hair and enjoys reading books on a daily basis, and is a wealth of random knowledge. When his nose isn't in books, he's exceptionally talkative about random things and ideas of stories he thinks up. Eva Akulov, probably the smartest in the group of friends, has thick long brown hair and is generally quiet around people, but is hugely talkative around her friends. Also, a big book lover, Eva leans toward the introvert personality spectrum and tends to focus on her own thoughts, feelings, and moods. But though she enjoys alone time, Eva loves being around her group of friends. Brandon Wright, a tall brown haired skinny kid, tends to be quiet the majority of the time unless there's something that interests him. He enjoys reading comic books and manages to bring two or three with him every day to school. Brandon's love for comics has gotten him into trouble with school and his parents, but that never stopped him from spending his allowance on them or bringing them to school.

Later in the morning, Mrs. Banks called a fifteen-minute break after a few hours of the class learning language arts. The class was allowed to use the bathroom, stretch their legs, eat snacks, and talk amongst themselves for that short reprieve before diving back into learning their subjects until lunch time. Michael walked back into the classroom after using the bathroom and saw his group of friends hanging out by the windows, separated from other groups of kids. Michael made a beeline to his group of friends and joined in their conversation.

Brandon sighed, "So you think that because we don't all like the same thing, our group of friends is better because of that? But isn't having things in common a good thing?" he asked Eva.

Michael jumped in, "We do have things in common, but we don't need to all like the same thing. The good thing with our group of friends is that we all like different things which means we can learn new things and always talk about different stuff." He chuckled, "Also it's never boring."

Rhys nodded, "Yeah. Or else we'd be stuck talking about the same dumb thing like those guys over there," he said nodding to a group of boys. He chuckled, "They're always talking about the same thing."

"Or those girls who seem to be bugging Michael all the time recently," Eva nodded to the group of girls hanging out at the back of the room. She sighed, "It's always dolls, house, and the same book series. In that order," she said in annoyance.

Brandon nodded quietly, "I see. I understand."

Riley patted him on the back, "Our group is swell, Brandon. Heck, we're the only group that has both boys and girls."
Eva waved her hand, "Girl. Singular, Riley."

Riley sighed, "Always correcting me. We get it, you're smart." Everyone laughed.

Eva chuckled then turned serious as she focused on Michael, "Michael, can I ask you a question? It's kind of personal."

"What's up?" Michael responded curiously.

Eva sighed, "Earlier, I saw you staring at Irena." She paused, "Um. Do you have a crush on her?" Michael's jaw dropped in surprise. This was the exact topic he hoped to avoid since he talked about trying to be friends with Irena last week. His sudden focus on her the past few days set him up for this current situation. Michael honestly couldn't blame his friends for thinking that way, but it was a tad annoying that all his friends jumped to the same conclusion.

Riley grinned, "He does! I saw him staring at her twice today!"

Michael remained composed and waved his hands dismissively, "I don't," he said confidently to convince his friends. He shrugged, "I'm just curious about her and want to be her friend so she isn't alone."

Rhys chuckled, "Curious about her? That's the same thing as having a crush, man."

Brandon laughed, "You're brave to admit it."

"Guys, I only want to be friends with her. I said that before," Michael said plainly.

Eva chuckled, "I think it's great you want to get to know her, but have you figured out what to say yet?" She shrugged, "I mean, you're usually good at talking to other kids, and you always find words to say, so I think you'll be fine. But I'm just curious what you'll say."

Michael shrugged, "I actually haven't given much thought to it."

Riley stepped in front of Michael, "Don't worry, Michael! If you don't know what to say to her, then I do!" He laughed and placed his hands on Michael's shoulders, "Girls and romance are right up my alley! Don't worry just say what I tell you and you'll be dating Irena in no time!"

Michael groaned, "Riley, can you keep your voice down? Please?" he asked as everyone in immediate earshot looked at them in shock. Michael took a second to look around saw other kids starting to whisper about Riley's outburst. He then saw Irena sitting quietly at her desk on the other side of the room, expressionless, but Michael didn't know if she heard Riley. It was hard to tell with her since she always seems so stoic.

Mrs. Banks stood up from her desk and clapped her hands twice with a smile, "Okay, class, let's get started!" All the kids stopped what they were doing and quickly got back to their seats to resume their classwork until lunch.

Immediately after school, Michael found himself outside at the front of the school face-to-face with Irena, speechless. In the sea of hundreds of kids excitedly leaving school for the day, Michael felt he was in a bubble with Irena standing before him. The two kids stood on the grass by the main entrance of the school as kids walked past them without paying them any mind. But after a moment of uncomfortable silence, Irena spoke up, "You wanted to talk?" she asked in a neutral tone.

"Um," Michael responded nervously. He couldn't help but think that Riley must've told her that he
had a crush on her, which could complicate things. It also didn't help that Michael was unnaturally tongue-tied and was at a loss for words. He usually has something to say when he talks with other people, but talking to Irena was different because he couldn't read her expressions since she's so stoic.

Irena looked away from him, "I overheard your conversation with your friends."

Michael nodded, "Oh," he finally said.

"So," Irena said almost impatiently.

Michael spoke up, regaining his confidence, "I just want to talk to you."

"Why? Do you want to be friends?" She responded in a serious tone.

"Of course, I do. I mean, I want to try and be friends if you let me," Michael responded quickly.

Irena paused for a long moment which made Michael tense uncomfortably. "Friends," she finally said. "What is it that you like about me?" Irena said coldly.

*Man, she's cold,* Michael said to himself. He honestly didn't know how to respond but he needed to say something, so he told the truth. Michael stepped toward her, "I want to be friends because I see you're always alone. And I don't want you to always be alone."

Irena paused again and looked like she was processing what he said. "Hm. You don't have to give me a real answer," she said unsure if Michael was genuine with his concern toward her. She then stared in his eyes, "But, I know you're just like me. Fake. We're all just fakers in this world. We're all hiding something, Michael."

Michael looked at her with a shocked expression across his face at what she said. He didn't know whether or not she's perceptive enough to tell that he is genuinely hiding something, i.e., his enhanced physical abilities, or said that to express her distrust in people. Even with the fight last week, there's no way anyone could tell Michael had enhanced strength just by looking at him without drawing his blood like his Uncle Stark does every year. Sure, he and Sarah had denser muscles than other kids, but they seemed normal from the outside. But Michael held onto the idea that she might be more perceptive than other kids and knows he has hidden physical strength. But the latter thought that Irena has extreme distrust in people worried him significantly. Irena's cold exterior made Michael more and more curious by the second as to what made her that way.

Michael didn't realize he was silent for several seconds when Irena spoke up again, "I saw you help your sister in that fight last week."

*Well, she might know I'm super strong now, since she saw the fight last week,* Michael said to himself. He sighed, *she might know I'm keeping my strength a secret. That's probably why she asked.*

"Do you love your family that much? To get into trouble for them?" Irena asked in a direct tone.

"Yeah," Michael responded without hesitation.

Irena gripped her old leather satchel book bag, "That's good," she said as she turned around to walk away.

Michael stepped forward, "Wait, Irena! So how about it? Do you want to be friends or what?"
Irena looked over her shoulder, "So does that mean you'll protect me and be there all the time?"

Michael nodded, "If that's what it takes. You shouldn't..."

Suddenly a distant call from Sarah interrupted him causing him to turn in her direction. "Michael! Daddy's here!" Sarah called and waved from the far sidewalk next to their dad's car.

"I'm coming! Gimmie a sec!" Michael waved back.

Michael turned back around to talk to Irena and saw her already walking away from him. She stopped and looked over her shoulder, "Your family is waiting," she said in a neutral tone before walking away again.

Michael sighed. He waved, "Bye, Irena. See you tomorrow!" Michael called out to her but got no acknowledgment from her. He had to admit, she's pretty. She may not smile or say much, but it didn't change the fact that she strikes him as pretty. With that, Michael turned and walked to his dad's car waiting at the curb.

When Michael got to his dad's red and black Chevy, he lost the front seat to his twin sister. He opened the back door and slid into the back seat next to Angela. Steve turned around and smiled, "Hey there, kiddo. How was school?"

Michael shrugged, "It was okay. Nothing spectacular."

Steve chuckled, "Really? We saw you talking to a girl over there. Someone new?" he said nodding to the front entrance of the school.

Angela grinned but didn't say anything. Michael chuckled, "She's in my class. A friend is all," he said hoping that Irena would want to be friends.

Sarah giggled, "IS that all," she said under her breath. Steve laughed at Sarah's response.

"Can we just go home, dad?" Michael asked with a smile.

Steve laughed, "Sure thing!" He turned on the car, "Next stop. Home."

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Steve & Margaret Rogers Residence, Scarsdale, NY

Steve and the three kids entered the house and stepped into the foyer and were immediately greeted by the beautiful aroma of Peggy's home cooking. Steve put his briefcase down by the console table next to the door, "Honey, we're home!" he called out to his wife in the kitchen.

"Welcome home, darlings!" Peggy called back from the kitchen, her voice echoing in the foyer.

Angela raced toward the kitchen, "Mama!" she called excitedly. Sarah and Michael rushed after Angela to greet their mother in the kitchen too. Steve smiled and followed his energetic kids.

In the kitchen, Peggy was busy at the stove just starting to cook dinner. She got home from work an hour ago and slipped into something more comfortable that wasn't restrictive like her usual business attire. She wore a short-sleeve blue and white floral day dress with a dark blue apron over her dress while she cooked. As Peggy stirred the pot with a wooden spoon, she heard Angela rush into the kitchen calling for her, "Mama!" the little girl called happily.

Peggy smiled at the sound of her youngest daughter calling her as she removed the spoon from the
pot and placed it on a plate next to the stove before turning around to greet her family. She faced her youngest daughter smiling at her. Peggy chuckled, "Welcome home, sweetie," she said as she walked up to her daughter and bent down to give her a big kiss on the cheek. Angela happily hugged her mother's frame, wrapping her short arms around her mother's shoulders. Peggy smiled, "It looks like you had a good day."

Angela smiled, "mhmm," she hummed in response. Peggy chuckled at Angela's usual quiet responses. Angela grinned and whispered to her mother, "I think Michael is in love with a girl in school."

Peggy smiled, "is that so? I figured it might be that mystery girl he talked about last week," she asked in a hushed tone. She then spotted Michael and Sarah entering the kitchen causing her to grin. Peggy chuckled and stood up, "thank you, darling. I won't tell Michael you said anything," she said quietly. She patted Angela on the shoulder, "Now run upstairs and wash up. If you want you can help me here in the kitchen if you'd like."

Angela smiled widely, "Okay!" she said excitedly. With that, Angela bolted out of the kitchen to go upstairs.

Sarah laughed, "She's always so energetic at home but never at school or anywhere else," she said as she walked up to her mother.

Peggy chuckled, "She's shy in public, Sarah. You know that."

Sarah hugged her mother, "Hi, mama," she said lovingly.

Peggy hugged her daughter back and kissed the top of her head, "Welcome home, darling." After a moment she let go of her daughter then looked at her son who instantly embraced her too.

"Hi, mama," Michael said happily.

"hey there, darling," Peggy said kissing him on the top of the head too. "How was school?" she asked to both her kids.

Sarah swung her arms absentmindedly, "Good. Same, same."

Michael stepped back from his mother, "Yeah. It was good. Nothing new," he said plainly.

"Mhmm," Peggy hummed in response to her son with a small smile across her lips. She patted both of her kids on the shoulder, "Alright, wash-up. Dinner will be done in a little bit."

Sarah looked up at her mother, "Can I play outside with Erin and Ashley before dinner?" she said asking to go play with the neighbor's kids.

Peggy smiled, "Mhmm, as long as you get your homework done before bed time and wash-up before dinner."

"Yay, thanks, Mama!" she said running out of the kitchen, passing by her smiling father leaning against the wall by the pantry.

Peggy looked at her son, "Don't want to play outside today, Michael?"

Michael shook his head, "I want to do some other things first."

Peggy chuckled, "Okay, darling. I'll call you when dinner is ready."
"Thanks, Mom," he said walking out the kitchen.

When the kids left the kitchen, Peggy smiled at her husband leaning on the wall, "Welcome home, darling. How was work?"

"Busy but a good day. Getting ready for the upcoming Stark Expo," Steve said smiling. He pushed himself off the wall and walked over to his wife, wrapping his arms around her and giving her a kiss on the lips. He smiled at her, "I've waited all day to do that."

Peggy grabbed his tie and brought his lips to hers and kissed him again. "Me too," she said breaking the kiss.

Steve smiled, "And how's SHIELD doing?"

Peggy sighed and ran a hand through her hair, "Same enemy different day. Still battling Hydra and Leviathan." She rested her hands on her hips, "The sad truth is that Hydra has too many resources and too many supporters in foreign countries, mainly in communist and third world countries, for us to eliminate them all together right now." Peggy shrugged, "Unless we find a weakness that'll make them collapse on themselves, I don't see us completely destroying them anytime soon."

Steve nodded, "I understand. A small part of me hoped that Hydra would slowly fall apart after we got Zola and his Council of Nine all those years ago. Boy was I wrong. Hydra fragmented and reorganized again and maintained a strong presence in the East. Figures they'd be redundant."

"They do seem to come up from the ashes time and time again. I give them credit for that. But we always find a way to bring them down," Peggy said with confidence. She paused and furrowed her brows, "But we heard some whispers of something big Hydra and Leviathan are doing, and it involves Soviet nuclear weapons. Which is obviously very bad, so we're trying to gain more information to develop a plan to counter whatever it is." She shrugged, "Again, we don't have much to go on yet."

Steve crossed his arms, "Yeah, the idea of Hydra having access to nuclear weapons is not good. Their possession of Stark technology was bad enough, but with an arsenal of nukes, there's no telling what they can do."

Peggy sighed in frustration, "It gets tiring dealing with them, darling."

Steve nodded, "I know." He wrapped his arms around her and brought her close, "You know…if you need me to come back…"

Peggy looked up at him and placed a gentle hand on his chest, "Darling." She sighed, "We would always need you in SHIELD, but you put the shield down for a reason. The kids love having you around, and they don't need to worry about you going overseas on missions for weeks at a time... or for a year." She hugged his frame, "Sarah, Michael, and Angela were too young to remember that you went to war in Korea for over a year, and John never experienced a day without you nearby. I think our kids deserve to keep you around."

Steve smiled, "Yeah."

"Not to mention that I enjoy having you around. Housework and taking care of the kids is easier with you." Peggy smiled at him seductively, "Also you being home equals more time for pleasure," she said softly earning a chuckle from Steve.

Steve nodded, "Remember, if you ever need me. Just tell me."
"I know. I can always count on you, Steve," Peggy said with a smile. She kissed Steve again, "Now, let's drop this topic. I have to continue cooking dinner."

Steve let go of his wife, "Need help?"

Peggy turned around and grinned, "Think I can't cook dinner for my own family, Steve?"

"That's not what I said," Steve said laughing.

"I know, I'm just poking fun, darling." Peggy walked over to the stove to continue cooking, "I can handle the cooking. Besides, Angela is coming down to help cook later."

Steve chuckled, "Okay, I'll be upstairs for a bit working on a few things for Howard."

Peggy waved, "Have fun with that, darling."

Later in the evening as the sun continued to set giving an orange hue inside the house, Peggy continued to work diligently to cook dinner for her family while the radio softly played a lively rock-n-roll tune. The downstairs windows were open allowing the cool spring breeze to blow through the house, and letting Peggy hear the laughter and cheers of kids playing outside over the music of her radio. Peggy could especially hear her daughter yelling excitedly and laughing with her friends even though the kitchen window was at the back of the house.

Peggy scraped vegetables into the pot from her cutting board then set a timer for ten minutes to allow the contents of the pan to cook. She grabbed the timer off the counter and walked out of the kitchen and into the family room where John sat on the floor playing with his blocks in front of the couch. Peggy smiled at her three-year-old son, "Hi, darling," she said as she placed the timer down on the coffee table. Peggy then sat down in front of her son and his blocks, tucking her skirt under her knees, so it didn't get in the way of her son playing. She made sure she kept an eye on the timer, so she can know when to stir the pot.

John Steven grinned at his mother, "Hi Mama!" he called happily.

Peggy smiled, "I see you're having fun, John." She started to move around some of the discarded blocks, "Can I play with you, dear?"

John nodded happily, "Yup!" He put blocks together, "I want to build a castle," he said playfully in his normal high pitch voice. He smiled, "Do you want to help me?"

Peggy chuckled, "I'll love to, thanks for asking." She smiled widely, "Okay, then let's build a castle that even your dad can't destroy."

"Yeah!" he said happily as he and his mother started to stack blocks together.

John could probably say more words and form more sentences than most kids his age. He grasps things really fast and understands the concept of speech very well. Steve and Peggy consistently talk to John, and so does his older siblings, so he learns quickly from others talking to and with him. Steve and Peggy talk to teach, and all their kids quickly benefited from it and learned to speak at a higher level at an early age. John replicates speech from his parents and his older siblings and is extremely talkative. It isn't just his immediate family that John learns from, he learns from his extended family, mainly from Uncle Daniel, Aunt Angie, Uncle Howard, and Uncle Bucky. From all this positive influence on her youngest son, Peggy is still impressed by how much John has picked up from her and the family.
Just as Peggy started building the block castle with John, she heard her oldest son walk into the kitchen, "Mom?" Michael called.

"In the family room, darling!" Peggy called, not looking up from the task at hand.

Michael walked into the family room and saw his mother playing blocks with his little brother. He chuckled, "What are you making?"

Peggy smiled at John, "Want to tell your big brother what we're doing, sweetie?"

John looked up at Michael, "We're making a castle! Want to help?"

Michael laughed, "That's cool." He waved his hand, "I'll join you later, I want to talk to mom about something."

"Okie dokey," John said happily.

"Mama, may I ask you something?" Michael shrugged, "Um, in the kitchen."

Peggy nodded, "Okay, darling. I'll be right there." She looked at John, "John, I'm going to talk with Michael for a little bit. I'll be right back."

John smiled, "Okay, Mama." With that Peggy stood up and kissed John on the top of the head then walked into the kitchen with her oldest son.

In the kitchen, Peggy sat down at the table in the seat next to Michael. Before Michael could say anything, Peggy spoke up with a small grin across her lips, "Is this about the mystery girl you mentioned last week?"

Michael cringed in surprise, psychic witch, he thought jokingly to himself.

Peggy nodded, "It's the girl isn't it," she said acknowledging her son's sudden silence.

Michael nodded, "It's the girl."

Peggy chuckled, "So? What do you want to talk about?"

Michael rubbed his neck, "Um. How do you talk to someone who is super quiet, and you don't know anything about?"

"Well, darling, it's simple. Be yourself. I know that's a very generic response, but be genuine with her. Approach her and introduce yourself and just talk to her," Peggy said with a warm smile.

Michael was about to speak but Peggy spoke up before him, "And you're going to say that 'it's not going to work.'"

Michael cringed, witch, he said jokingly to himself again. His mother wasn't the director of a spy agency for nothing.

Peggy chuckled, "It'll work, darling. It also wouldn't hurt to throw in humor because girls like humor. Find the humor in everyday life and make her laugh." She smiled, "Just be confident and sure of yourself. And I know you don't lack the confidence. Keep a stiff upper lip, honey." She nodded at him, "Also most importantly, be respectful to her."

"Hm," Michael hummed quietly.

Peggy chuckled, "Michael, you became friends with Eva. It's the same way you became friends with
"But, Mom, Eva was very open with me. She's easy going and is approachable. Irena isn't very approachable," Michael said quickly.

"So that's her name, Irena."

Michael nodded, "Yeah, the girl I'm trying to be friends with is named Irena." He sighed, "Anyway, we knew a little bit of Eva before she started hanging out with us, but Irena is different. I don't know anything about her."

Peggy chuckled, "Michael, it's the same process as becoming friends with Eva, but instead you'll have to approach her and do most of the talking first. It's simple, honey. Just talk to her and go from there. Find something in common."

"But what if there isn't anything in common?"

Peggy laughed, "Well, then you shouldn't be friends. But darling, you can't say you have nothing in common when you don't know each other yet. How do you know you don't have anything in common?" Michael shrugged. "Exactly, so don't put that idea in your head because then all you'll only see is differences and no commonality." Peggy smiled warmly at her son, "Find something in common. Be yourself and go from there."

Michael nodded, "Okay. That makes sense. Thanks, mama."

Peggy nodded, "Anytime, honey." She chuckled, "Do you want her as your girlfriend? Is that why you're so worked up about her?"

"WHAT? NO!" Michael exclaimed in surprise. WITCH! Michael screamed in his head.

Peggy laughed, "Okay, darling. Whatever you say," she said jokingly.

Michael waved his hand, "Come on, Mom." He shrugged, "Speaking of…"

"You want to know how to make her your girlfriend?" Peggy shot back with a grin.

Michael sighed, "Mom…"

"I was joking, honey. Please, continue," Peggy said with a light laugh.

"It's about you."

Peggy raised a brow, "Oh? And what is it?" The timer went off which signaled to Peggy that the food was done heating on the stove. Peggy shot up from her seat, "Shoot, I forgot to stir." She walked around the table to the stove, "Keep going, darling. I'm listening."

Michael stood up and followed his mom to the stove, "Um. How did you meet, Dad?"

Peggy paused and hesitated with the answer as she turned down the stove to low. After a moment she formed a small smile and lifted the pan lid, "What brought this on?"

Peggy raised a brow, "Oh? And what is it?" The timer went off which signaled to Peggy that the food was done heating on the stove. Peggy shot up from her seat, "Shoot, I forgot to stir." She walked around the table to the stove, "Keep going, darling. I'm listening."

Michael shrugged, "I'm just curious. Was he the first person you fell in love with?"

Peggy paused and hesitated with the answer as she turned down the stove to low. After a moment she formed a small smile and lifted the pan lid, "What brought this on?"

Michael shrugged, "I'm just curious. Was he the first person you fell in love with?"

Peggy put the pan lid on the counter and picked up the wooden spoon by the stove to stir the food in the pan, "No. Your father wasn't the first person I fell in love with," she said with a chuckle. She continued to stir and looked over her shoulder to her son, "But he's the one I will forever love, now. I
was going to get married to someone else long before I met your father, but lord I'm proud I never did."

"You were going to be with someone else?" He asked in surprise.

Peggy chuckled, "It's a long story that involves your Uncle Michael. Do you remember me telling to you about him?"

Michael nodded, "Yeah, I remember."

Peggy removed the pan from the heat and put it on a different burner that was off. She turned around and gave her son her full attention, "Anyway, to keep it short, your Uncle before he died during the war convinced me not to marry the man because he knew I wouldn't be happy with him. He told me that the life that my fiancé, at the time, wanted wasn't right for me. Your Uncle knew I wanted a life of adventure. And he was right." Peggy smiled, "I'm happy he convinced me to leave him because that lead me to a lifetime of adventures and experience, and eventually lead me to your father."

"But how did you meet?" Michael asked.

Peggy waved her hand, "Right, I met your father in New Jersey on an Army Base when I was working as a liaison from the British government to the Strategic Science Reserve, or SSR and he was training in the Army. The SSR was a top-secret allied agency created to battle the Nazi special weapons division named Hydra. Remember what I told you about Hydra?"

Michael nodded, "I remember. But, Mom, what's a liaison?"

Peggy smiled, "A liaison is someone who is works between two groups to communicate and arrange activities for mutual benefit."

"OH," Michael replied.

Peggy smiled, "Anyway, I met your dad when he was training to be Captain America, and I was one of the instructors and advisors overseeing his training," she said not giving too many details of what occurred during Steve's actual training.

Michael nodded, "I remember Uncle Bucky telling me he was a short skinny kid and was often looked at a loser."

Peggy chuckled, "It's true, your dad was short, skinny, and pretty sickly and many people considered him a loser. But he was incredibly smart, had the strongest spirit, and the biggest heart which is far greater than height, strength, and good looks in my opinion." She sighed, "Many people looked down upon him why he was in the Army, and at the start I did too, but eventually his personality rubbed off on me." Peggy chuckled, "One of the leaders in the camp had faith in him far before I did," she said mentioning Doctor Erskine.

"Did you love him then?" Michael asked shyly.

Peggy smiled lovingly as she remembered, "It wasn't love at first, but romantic curiosity that stemmed into interest." She clapped her hands, "Oh, I have a picture of your father when he was in training. I'll go fetch it and be right back." With that Peggy left Michael in the kitchen and went upstairs.

After a few minutes, Peggy walked back into the kitchen with a small picture frame in her hand and Angela by her side. Michael nodded at his baby sister, "Hey, Angela."
Angela skipped over to her big brother, "Momma says I can help with dinner. Are you helping too?"

Michael shook his head, "I'm just talking to mom about stuff."

Peggy walked over to Michael and leaned on the counter by the sink, "Angela, sweetheart, can you set the table for me? You can help me get the food and plates together when you're done."

Angela smiled, "Okay, mama!" She exclaimed instantly getting to work.

Peggy smiled then showed her son the picture of Steve when he was skinny, "This was your father before he became Captain America."

"That's him?" Michael exclaimed in absolute surprise. He shook his head in disbelief, "I barely recognize him!"

Peggy laughed, "Trust me that's your father." She smiled at Angela, "Angela, do you want to see daddy before he became Captain America?"

Angela who had a stack of placemats in her arms by the far counter, instantly turned around, "Yes!" she called excitedly. She ran up to her mother and brother and took a look at the small photograph in the picture frame in her mother's hand. Angela chuckled, "That's daddy?"

Peggy nodded with a laugh, "That's him."

"He looks so different," Angela said as she returned back to her duties. She laughed, "I like daddy the way he is now."

Michael chuckled, "Me too."

Peggy laughed, "I'd still love him the way I do now, and I'm sure you kids would too."

"Yeah," Michael acknowledged. He cocked his head to the side, "But how did he get so big and tall the way he is now?"

Peggy smirked, "He joined the Army," she said jokingly. "After training super hard for months, your father was given something to give him 'powers,' by a group of scientist," she said for lack of a better word. Peggy nodded, "What he received changed him forever and is why he's so big and tall now."

The serum is still highly classified, but Peggy made an exception to tell her son some part of the truth while still giving an ambiguous response that wasn't far from fact. She importantly left out names, dates, and locations, though she doubts her son would remember anything but the "powers" aspect of the conversation.

Peggy wrapped her arm around her son, "That thing that gave your dad powers, gave you powers when you were born. You inherited his gifts." She smiled, "So if you ever wonder why you have super strength, just remember what I told you." Peggy turned stern, "But Michael."

Michael looked up at his mother, "Yes, mom?"

"Again, I can never stress this enough, you can never tell anyone about your powers, and you can't tell anyone what I told you about your father. Okay, darling?" Peggy nodded, "I'll tell you're your siblings this later, myself."

Michael nodded, "Got it," he said with an acknowledging smile. He cocked his head to the side again, "So… before Dad became Captain America, you had a crush on him?"
Peggy put the photo down on the counter then went to get plates for the food, "Toward the end of his training I started developing a 'crush.'" Angela finished setting the table and quickly joined her mother by the stove to help with whatever her mother needed.

"What did you like about him before he became the hero?"

Peggy looked over her shoulder, "Darling, love is more than just admiring titles, accolades, and the physical." She rested a hand on her hip, "He wasn't like anyone I've ever met. Unlike most men in the Army, your dad solved things with his mind more than his muscles. He also had the biggest heart, and cared for people and treated everyone with respect. Your dad made people feel like they were the center of the world when he talked to them. He was a good man long before he became Captain America." She smiled warmly, "I love your father for who he is, not what he is. His good looks and physical strength are extra." Honestly, Steve changed a little after fighting in World War II and Korea, but she didn't need to tell her son that. Everything Peggy told her son is true and she meant what she said.

"Oh," Michael quietly responded.

"Neither of us acknowledged each other's feelings until toward the end of the war," Peggy responded as she handed Angela a few plates from the cabinet to put on the table.

"So, before Dad disappeared, right? Uncle Dugan told me what happened during the war," Michael responded.

Peggy sighed, "Yes, before that. It's a difficult subject for the both of us, dear, but yes." She turned to her son, "Your uncle is right. If you're Uncle Howard didn't persist in finding your father, you and your siblings wouldn't be here."

"Oh."

Peggy stopped what she was doing again and faced Michael, "I won't go into all that detail about his disappearance. But after he was found, we started dating and got married soon after. We love and cherish each other very much. Then, after we were married, you and Sarah were born. Two years after that Angela then later your brother John." She smiled lovingly at her son, "You and your brother and sisters are our treasures. Everything we did lead us to this moment as a family." Peggy waved her hand, "I know I said a lot, but that was the basic story of how I met your father."

Michael smiled, "What's the whole story?" he asked curiously.

"Some other time, darling." Peggy gave her son a wide smile, "Your father is an incredible man, Michael. He taught me so much without him knowing it. He's the type of person I aspire to be. He always did the right thing and never turned away when things got hard. He's been through every struggle you can image, but never loses his enduring spirit." She nodded, "Always be proud of your father."

Michael smiled widely, "I am proud of my father. I'm proud of both my mom and dad!" he said proudly. Though Michael was satisfied with the talk he had with his mother, he knew there's much more to the story that his mom won't mention. Michael knew he could never convince his mother to say more than she's letting on. That's just the type of person she is, a fair, loving, and tough person. But even with a brief story, it's still amazing how his parents met.

Peggy chuckled, "Michael, I'll cheer you on for your crush, so do your best. I'm sure Irena is worth it."
Michael blushed, "TH-THAT'S NOT IT AT ALL!" He exclaimed in shock.

Peggy laughed, "Whatever you say, darling." She nodded to the foyer, "Can you go out and get your sister. It's time for dinner. We've been talking for a while, I'm afraid the food might be getting cold."

Michael nodded, "On it, Mom," he said walking out of the kitchen.

"Oh, and don't forget your father," Peggy called as her son left.

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**Fox Meadow Elementary School**

The next day after school, Michael was lost in thought as he walked down the empty hallway toward his classroom after using the bathroom. School ended a few minutes ago and already looked deserted with the halls empty. All the kids were anxious to head home after another long day of school, but unfortunately, Michael had to stay behind to use the bathroom since Mrs. Banks didn't let him go in the last few minutes of the day. As Michael walked through the corridor, he couldn't stop thinking about Irena and how to continue his efforts in befriending her. Throughout the day, Michael kept an eye on Irena as much as possible. As usual, she remained quiet and secluded throughout the class, and Michael noted some girls in class slyly picking on her every now and then. From observation throughout the school year, Michael was sure that the reason she's so distant and quiet is due to the other kids picking on her during and after school. Of course, there could also be something going on at home, but Michael couldn't be confident unless Irena told him. Irena isn't like Angela who's naturally quiet, but instead, Michael could sense she was harboring deep pain that she was trying so hard to hide. It didn't take a rocket scientist to see that, but Michael knew that the other kids elected to ignore her altogether. Michael would, no doubt, step in and defend Irena if she was being bullied, but the problem was that she would get bullied when he wasn't around and out of the supervision of teachers. So, the purpose of befriending her was to keep her protected with a group of friends so bullies wouldn't single her out. Clearly, Michael should tell a teacher about bullying, but he had a gut feeling that it wouldn't do much to help her anyway.

As Michael neared his classroom, he started to think about the conversation he had with Irena yesterday about hiding something. He doubts that Irena could tell he was hiding his "powers" of enhanced strength and endurance, but he wasn't sure what else she meant. Again, it was doubt, so Michael locked that idea in the back of his mind, so it wouldn't waste his time thinking about the possibility of her knowing the truth about his physical abilities. Though, he was sure she wouldn't tell anyone anyway.

Michael entered the classroom to find it empty with only his teacher sitting at her desk and his group of friends hovering over his in deep conversation. Michael trotted over to his seat and gathered his things into his satchel to get ready to leave for the day. As he slung his satchel over his shoulder, Rhys patted him on the shoulder, "So, how did it go?" his friend said with a smile.

Riley chimed in happily, "Yeah, tell us! Did you two hold hands?"

Michael raised his hands, "No nothing like that. We just talked."

Brandon spoke up uncharacteristically energetic, "Just you two? Alone? That means she's totally into you!"

Riley smiled, "Nice! That means she is into you because she never talks to anyone alone!"

As Riley continued to make a ruckus and pester Michael, trying to be his wingman, Michael couldn't help but sigh internally. *Could they be any more annoying about this?* Michael thought to himself.
Eva spoke up in a serious tone, "Take it easy, guys. Pressuring him isn't going to help him."

Riley sighed, "You're right."

Brandon nodded at Eva, "Eva, you're a girl, what do you think about this?"

Eva shook her head, "Don't look at me. Everyone is different."

Michael sighed, "Let's just go home, guys." He was thankful for Eva speaking up for him to shut his friends up about his apparent "romantic" interest in Irena.

The group of friends got their stuff together, said their goodbyes to Mrs. Banks, and left the classroom to head home finally. After exiting the school building, Riley, Rhys, and Brandon said their goodbyes for the day to Michael and Eva and started to walk home. Michael waved goodbye to his friends then spotted his dad's car parked in the usual spot by the curb. But just as he was about to make his way to his ride, Eva spoke to him, "Michael, can I talk to you for a second?"

Michael turned around to face his friend, "Sure." He smiled, "Hey, thanks for speaking up, those guys can get pretty pushy on some things."

"Don't need to thank me. I understand," she said with a warm smile.

Eva turned serious, "By the way, about Irena, I think it's great you want to get close to her and all, but I get the feeling you're exceptionally trying at it." Michael looked at her with surprise. "You said last week you wanted to include her in our group and didn't want her to be alone all the time and to stop the annoying girls in class from bullying her. But I get the sense there's something else that's driving you." She shrugged, "I don't mean to be nosey and I'm not judging, but I'm here if you need to talk to someone." She shrugged, "If not me then the other guys are here for you too."

Michael nodded, "Yeah. I appreciate that." He shrugged, "It's not as complicated as you think. What I said last week is still the reason why." He chuckled and changed the subject, "I think the only reason why she talked to me yesterday is because she overheard our conversation." He shrugged, "I don't know if Riley did anything to have her talk to me though."

Eva chuckled, "He did. I was there." She smiled, "Did you talk to her? Irena."

"Yeah. Only for a bit. She opened up a little though, but she's hard to read," he said plainly.

"That's good. Well, if you want to talk, let me know," Eva said politely. She nodded toward the street, "Your sisters are waiting for you."

Michael turned around and saw his twin and younger sister standing by their dad's car by the curb. He nodded, "Yeah." He smiled at Eva, "See ya tomorrow, Eva!" With that Michael turned and ran off to his siblings. Eva didn't say anything but only waved.

On the car ride home, Michael sat in the front seat and spent much of the start of the trip thinking about Irena. He figured out earlier of the two possible reasons why she acts secluded and distant, but now he started to wonder why her. Why are the other kids singling her out for their bully games? Michael knew that there isn't a complicated nor a right answer. Bullies could pick on her for any number of reasons stemming from Irena being different, her family, race, religion, money, and the bullies enjoying their superiority over her. Regardless of the reason, no act of bullying is right. Truth be told, Michael didn't need to worry about the reason why bullies picked on her and he didn't know why he was dwelling on it so much because he had a plan to shield her from bullies no matter the reason. But he continued to think about it anyway.
Michael couldn't stand bullies any more than Sarah, but he didn't know why he was so worked up about Irena's situation. Maybe it's her distant and secluded attitude that sparked a drive to shield her from the bullies, or that he genuinely cared for people. It can possibly be both, but maybe there was something more. Irena did pique his interest. Her silence spoke volumes.

Michael's thoughts were interrupted when he looked out the window as his dad drove the car by a park and saw a group of kids, both boys, and girls, kicking around an open satchel and laughing at a girl in a secluded part of the park. None of the passing kids walking home seemed to intervene or look concerned. The by standings kids simply ignored the situation altogether. As Steve maintained his focus on the road and started to pass by the scene, Michael recognized the girl to be Irena. He saw the young girl squatting down with her hands covering her ears as the group of kids picked on her.

As Steve slowed the car down at a stop sign by the park, Michael threw open his car door and ran out into the park. Steve quickly called back to his son, "Michael! Michael come back!" Michael didn't listen and continued to sprint, faster than any kid ever seen, toward the group of kids surrounding Irena. Steve put the car in park at the stop sign, turned off the car, and stepped out of the vehicle, waving to the cars behind him to go around and pass him. Steve looked into the car, "Sarah, Angela, stay here!" He ran into the park after his son before Sarah or Angela acknowledged what he said.

The two Rogers girls watched their father run into the park with confused looks across their faces. Angela looked at her big sister, "Sarah?"

"Yeah?" Sarah responded.

"Is Michael in trouble?" She asked innocently.

Sarah shrugged, "Maybe."

Outside, Michael charged at the group of kids picking on Irena, "Hey!" he called out to them. "Leave her alone!"

One of the boys hovering over Irena saw Michael, "Dang it! It's Michael, run!" The group of kids quickly scattered and ran away, leaving Irena alone.

One of the other boys yelled to the group as he ran away, "He's trying to be a hero, what's he going to do about it!"

"If he doesn't beat us up, he'll surely tell the school! Just keep running," called one of the girls.

Michael reached Irena and watched as the bullies dispersed in multiple directions away from him. The bullies did their best to hide their faces from him, so he wouldn't be able to tell a teacher or an adult who was bullying Irena. Michael had a gut feeling who it was but didn't have proof. Even with the gift of good eyesight, he couldn't see the other kid's faces as they ran away from him. Michael sighed and looked down at Irena who still remained in her position of staying squatted down with her hands over her ears. He could hear light whimpers from her who seemed to be afraid to stand back up, scared to see bullies still standing over her.

He frowned and began to quickly gather up all of Irena's books and papers he could get before the wind took them, and put them in her bag. Steve caught up to his son and stopped a few yards behind him and gave his son space and watched quietly. Michael slowly approached Irena and gripped her shoulder, "Irena?" he asked as he gently placed her packed school satchel by her feet. "Irena? It's me, Michael. It's okay," he said softly.
Upon hearing her name, the second time, Irena slowly lifted her head up and saw her bag with all her things in it. She sniffled and wiped away her tears then looked up to see Michael standing over her with a friendly smile. She slowly stood up, grabbing her bag as she got up, and didn't say anything. Irena made eye contact with Michael but remained silent, unsure what to say or do.

Michael pressed slightly, "Are you okay?" Irena suddenly became distant and emotionless and bolted away from him. "Irena, wait!" he called out to her but refrained from chasing after her. He sadly sighed as he watched her disappear on the path through the thick park trees.

Michael turned around and saw his father standing a short distance away from him with a sad look on his face. "Sorry," Michael said apologetically.

Steve walked up to his son and placed an arm around him, "It's okay. Let's go home."

Father and son got back to their car parked at the stop sign without saying a word to each other after what they saw. Steve turned the car back on and resumed the drive home. The car ride began in uncomfortable silence as Michael, Sarah, nor Angela wanted to say a word. After a while, Steve sighed, "Michael." Michael didn't respond and turned his attention to his father. "Do you know that girl? The one who was getting bullied back there?"

"Yeah," He began. "Well…I'm trying to get to know her."

Steve glanced at his son, "It's not your job, but…if you can… look out for her." He sighed again, "It's tough being bullied relentlessly like that. And from what I just saw, it looks like she's been going through it a lot."

"I'm trying to help her, dad."

What started off as a task just to befriend her to keep her from being alone and being bullied became extremely personal for Michael. He wasn't trying to be a hero, but he was trying to do the right thing to protect another kid from the others. Without a doubt, Michael knew that bullying is the cause for her distancing herself from people and her silence. He became determined not to let Irena fall victim to bullying again. If that means he has to suck in his pride and make a fool of himself trying to befriend her, then he will.

Steve glanced back over at his son, "Remember, teachers are always there in case you need to report bullying." He shrugged, "But, they don't see everything, so do what you have to do," he said giving Michael responsibility to do what his son thought was right.

Michael understood, "I know."

"But do me a favor."

Michael nodded, "I know, show restraint so I don't give away that I have super strength."

Steve laughed, "That's not it. I wanted to say, warn me next time when you want to get out of the car."

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**Steve & Margaret Rogers Residence, Scarsdale, NY**

It's after dinner and still early in the evening, the sun cast it's golden rays down through the clouds and into the Rogers house, turning the atmosphere into a bright fiery red-orange glow. The glow of the setting sun brought the scent of memories of springtime's past. It's been a beautiful evening with family time and a home cooked meal prepared by Steve, but now with dinner done and the dishes
clean, the Rogers relaxed together for a bit in the family room. While Steve and Peggy sat together on the couch reading different books, Sarah and Michael were sprawled out on the floor doing their homework, Angela busied herself with doodling in her sketchbook on the coffee table, and little John played with his toys in front of his siblings. It's just another pleasant evening for the family.

Sarah closed her book and put her papers away in her folder, "Done with my homework!" she exclaimed excitedly.

Peggy closed her book on her thumb to keep her page she's on, "Did you do everything, darling?"

Sarah sat up and crossed her legs, "Yup! Did everything. It was easy."

"Good," Peggy said with a smile. "Now run upstairs and put your homework with your school stuff so you don't forget it. We still have a couple hours before Lone Ranger comes on."

Sarah stood up and grabbed her things, "Okay," she said as she ran out the room.

Steve chuckled at his daughter's excitement for the "Lone Ranger" TV series and didn't look up from his book. Peggy leaned back into her husband's side, "How are you doing with your homework, Michael, sweetie?"

"Almost done with my last math problem," Michael responded quietly as he continued to work hard.

"Let me know if you want either your dad or me to help, okay?" Peggy said with a smile as she opened up her book again.

"Okay, mama."

The family lapsed back into relative silence as they resumed their own activities once again, with the only sounds being the hard doodles of Angela's pencil on her sketchbook and the sound effects from John playing with his toys on the floor. Peggy smiled and kissed Steve on the shoulder as she continued to read her book, comfortably positioned against her husband's frame.

After a moment, Michael stood up with his notebook and textbook, "Done. Dad, can you look over my math homework?"

Steve bookmarked his page and put his book down on the coffee table by Angela's drawing, "Sure can." Michael stood up and walked over to his parents sitting on the couch and handed his father his notebook and textbook. Peggy smiled at her son and sat up to give her husband space to work with their son.

As Steve began to look over Michael's homework, he heard Sarah call him from upstairs, "Daddy!"

"What do you need, sweetie?" Steve said as he looked over Michael's homework.

"The toilet's broken!"

Steve and Peggy shared a knowing look for a moment then both smiled at each other. Steve knew there's no way he can convince his wife to deal with the toilet and the possible mess their daughter may have caused. He chuckled, "I'll take care of it, hon. Mind taking over looking at Michael's homework for me?"

Peggy grinned and nodded, "I can do that. Have fun with the mess our daughter may have made," she said bookmarking her page and putting her book down by her side. Steve kissed Peggy on the cheek and handed her their son's notebook and textbook, then stood up and left the family room.
As Peggy took a moment to look over Michael's math homework, Michael hopped onto the couch and sat patiently next to his mother. After a while, Peggy flipped to the last page of her son's homework and checked remaining problems. Satisfied of her son's homework, Peggy closed the notebook and textbook, "Everything is good, darling. Good job!"

Michael smiled, "Thank you, mama."

"Here, run upstairs and put your homework away for tomorrow," Peggy said handing her son his things back.

"Okay," Michael replied gripping his notebook and textbook. "Um," he began.

"What is it, sweetie?"

"I saw Irena after school. And she was being bullied in the park," Michael said nervously.

Peggy nodded, "I heard. Your father told me what you did." Michael looked down, trying to think what to say. "What is it, darling?" Peggy asked softly picking up his hesitation.

Michael shrugged, "I'm not trying to be a hero, mom," he began, remembering what one of the bullies said after running away when Michael approached them. He sighed, "I just want…"

"You don't want to see her being bullied. I know. That's commendable, sweetie. You're father and I feel the same way you and your sister do about bullies," Peggy replied calmly. "You may not see yourself trying to be the hero and only see yourself as trying to do the right thing for someone who seems powerless to protect herself. But others may see you as trying to be a hero which can be good or bad." She gave her son a gentle smile, "It doesn't matter what other people think in the end. Do you remember what I always say to you?"

"Know your value," Michael responded calmly.

"And that means you understand how much of a difference you have made in any situation with the contribution you have made. Who cares what others think about what you're trying to do for that girl. You know you're doing the right thing and know you're making a difference with her and that's what matters. You don't need acceptance from others, but you do need to accept yourself above all." Peggy spoke calmly, "You shouldn't be discouraged if someone is calling you a 'hero.' Because heroes fight for good and are admired for courage and noble qualities."

"Like you, mom? You have all those qualities," Michael responded calmly.

Peggy smiled, "If you think I'm a hero then I am a hero." She wrapped an arm around her son and brought him close to her, "And you have all those qualities too. You may not see yourself as a hero but you might very well be one to that poor girl for standing up for her, and that's not bad either." She kissed him on the hair, "Darling, you're a good boy. You're doing the right thing for trying to look out for her." Peggy smiled down at her son, "I see why you want to befriend her so bad."

Michael nodded, "Yeah. Well, it was originally because she was always alone. I knew she was getting bullied but I didn't think it was that bad."

"Now you know, darling. Look out for her and continue to try befriending her."

Michael nodded, "I will, Mama." He cocked his head to the side, "Mama, can I walk home with my friends tomorrow?"

Peggy smiled, "You're going to try and walk Irena home aren't you?"
Michael nodded, "Yeah. I'm going to try." It didn't take a spy or a genius to know what he wanted to do.

"Of course you can, darling. Just don't be late for supper. I hope she lives close by." Peggy smiled, "Do you know how to get home?"

Michael nodded, "Yup!"

"Make sure you tell your father okay?" Peggy asked with a smile.

Mother and Son were interrupted by Steve and Sarah walking into the family room together. Steve chuckled, "Took care of the toilet."

Peggy looked over at her husband, "What happened to it?"

Sarah put her head down with a grin as Steve spoke up, "Our daughter flushed too much toilet paper down again."

Peggy laughed, "Goodness, darling, what did we say about that?"

Sarah sighed, "Sorry, mama."

Steve walked over to the couch and sat down next to Michael, "So, Lone Ranger?"

Peggy chuckled, "That's not until an hour or so." She nodded at her son, "Oh, Michael, go and put your homework with your school stuff before you forget."

"Okay, mama," Michael said as he got off the couch. "Thank you!" he said as ran upstairs.

Sarah trotted past her parents and sat down by her little brother and began to play with him while she waited with her family for Lone Ranger to start. Peggy and Steve shared a loving glance with each other as they relished in this family moment together.

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**Fox Meadow Elementary**

At the end of school when the final bell rang, Michael immediately gathered his things and prepared to leave class as fast as possible to chase after Irena who always seemed quick to disappear. As he slung his school satchel over his shoulders, Brandon spoke up, "Hey, Michael, we're going to the hideout, want to come?"

Michael shook his head, "Can't, going to try and walk Irena home," he said as he began walking to the door. "See ya!" he said waving his hand as he ran out.

Rhys grinned as Michael left the classroom, "Wow. He's getting more confident with her."

"He's always been confident, but when it came to Irena he seemed pretty lost," Riley replied humorously. "He totally has a crush on her," he said with a light laugh.

Brandon nodded, "He totally does."

"Just want to be friends, he says," Rhys said with a grin. Eva sat back at her desk silently with a neutral expression across her face as her friends joked.

Outside the school building, Irena walked silently by herself along the main path as dozens of other kids walked passed her, utterly oblivious to her. Irena continued on her way alone, keeping to herself
as usual. Suddenly she heard a boy call her name, "Hey, Irena, wait up!"

Irena stopped and turned around and saw Michael running up to her. She spoke up in a neutral tone, "Michael? Don't you have a ride to catch with your parents?"

Michael stopped in front of her, and shrugged, "Not today. I told my mom and dad that I'll be walking home." Irena looked away from him and didn't show any emotion toward him as silence fell between them. Michael didn't want to bring up what he saw yesterday, and he was sure Irena didn't want to either. "I meant what I said. I want to be friends," he said breaking the silence.

Irena turned toward him, "I know what you're doing, Michael."

"Huh?" he said confused.

"You're just pretending. Pretending to be nice and worrying about people." She shrugged, "It's not bad or anything. I just can't tell what you're really like." Irena looked away, "That sounds funny coming from me."

Michael stepped forward, "I do care about people. I learned to like people from my parents and my siblings. They taught me all about loyalty and caring." He smiled, "I know it seems like I'm faking because I'm very selective of who I let in to be friends, but my care for people especially my friends and siblings are real." He spoke confidently, "But I know want to care about people, but you pretend not to." Irena looked at him in the eye and listened intently without betraying any emotion. Michael smiled, "I know it's hard to like people sometimes and be friends with others. But to get what you want you, have to make an effort. Have to try new things and keep inspiring yourself. That's how things change."

Irena sighed, "Do you know what I really am?"

"I think you can be anyone you want to be." "Maybe in your world, but doesn't happen in mine," Irena said plainly.

Michael smiled, "Change your world. My mom always says know your value as a person, and never care what others think of you. She always says you don't need acceptance from others, but you need to first accept yourself." He sensed that Irena is pretending that she doesn't care about anyone or feel anything. She's only ten, and consistently being bullied makes her think she's not strong enough to change her situation.

Irena finally cracked a small smile, "You seem like you're okay. It's easy talking to you."

"I want to be honest with you." Michael didn't want to mention that he saw her getting bullied yesterday because he feared it scare her off. Well, he didn't want to say it right now.

Irena blushed and looked away from him for a moment. Michael smiled, "Tomorrow, hang out with me. The guys and Eva would love to have you around too."

"I..." she began softly.

"Hey, if you don't want to talk to them that's okay too. They're good guys, and you'll get to know them eventually. Perhaps even like them." He chuckled, "but if you're shy, just stick by me. I'll keep you company." He took another step closer to Irena, "Cool think about my group of friends, is that we look out for each other. We really do, and we just don't say it." Michael made a confident smile, "So? Want to be friends?"
Irena nodded quietly, "Okay."

"Can I walk you home?" Michael asked trying not to sound awkward. Irena blushed and didn't respond, but she also didn't turn away or run from him. "We can talk and get to know each other."

Michael chuckled, "I can also promise that no one will bug us. If they know what's good for them."

Irena nodded, "Okay," she said softly.

"Great! Lead the way!" Michael exclaimed excitedly.

Steve & Margaret Rogers Residence, Scarsdale, NY

By the time Michael got home, it was nearing dinner time. As he walked through the front door of his house, he hoped his parents wouldn't be bad at him for being out later than he thought, or worse missing the start of dinner. Michael knew that his mother would chew him out for missing the start of supper, especially when she told him not to miss it. Once he set foot in the foyer, the smell of home-cooked food wafted over him which gave him a slight chill of fear of being late to dinner. He closed his eyes and bit the bullet, "I'm home!" he called out preparing for his mother getting upset at him.

"What are you doing, darling?" Peggy said humorously on the stairs.

Michael opened his eyes and saw his mother standing in a lavender colored short sleeve spring dress. He grinned, "Um… I thought I was late for dinner."

Peggy laughed and walked down the steps, "Not yet. Though I think your father is almost done cooking." She walked over to her son and gave him a hug, who he happily reciprocated. Peggy then bent down and kissed his cheek, "How did it go? Walk Irena home?"

Michael nodded, "Yup. I think we're becoming friends. Slowly."

"Did she get bullied today?"

"Not that I know of. No one bothered us on the way to her house," Michael said with a shrug.

Peggy smiled and hug her son tightly, "I'm proud you wanted to help her and happy she wants to be friends with you. We all need friends, sweetie."

"Thanks, mama," he said happily. He frowned, "She gets picked on by the richer kids because she's poor. That's one of the reasons."

Peggy frowned, "That's terrible. I'm sorry, darling." She cocked her head to the side, "Do you know anything about her family at all?"

Michael shook his head, "Nothing. She didn't say much. Almost like she wanted to hide it."

"Give it time, sweetie. She'll open up eventually," Peggy said with a reassuring smile. She nodded, "Your father and I should introduce ourselves to her parents. See if we can help a little."

"Really? That be awesome!" Michael said excitedly.

"Slow down, honey. We can't make them rich, but we can help them with other things if they need it. But, it's also entirely up to them," Peggy said gently.

Michael smiled, "You're the best, mama," he said hugging her tightly. Peggy smiled and kissed the top of his head.
Suddenly, Steve calling from the kitchen brought them back to reality, "Dinner!"

Peggy looked at her son, "Hope you're hungry. Daddy made your favorite. Spaghetti."

Michael grinned, "Yes!"

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**Hope you enjoyed this chapter!**

**Inspirations drawn from the show "Erased"**

I know, heavy on the dialogue and heavy between Peggy and Michael.

Shout out to all those who reviewed, favorited, viewed, and read this story. You as the audience keep this story and my joy writing this alive.

If you enjoy this, feel free to share it on the interwebs!

To be continued with Michael's blooming friendship with Irena.

Steve and Peggy aren't done dealing with Hydra yet. They'll be more drama to come. Keeps things interesting.

But as always, fluff will be around.
Chapter 38 Sarah's Surprise

Steve & Margaret Rogers Residence, Scarsdale, NY

April 8, 1957

The heat of the day devolved to a comforting warmth as the sun approached the horizon. The sun glowed bright yellow-orange and blossomed the sky with vivid color as it set. In the backyard of the Rogers home, Peggy hunched over a blooming flower in her garden with a small smile across her face, hard at work and taking great joy in her hobby. She didn't just smile because she was gardening, Peggy smiled because her youngest, John, sat comfortably on a picnic blanket and played happily with his toys as his mother gardened. On the other side of the house in the front yard, Michael and Angela played energetically with the other neighborhood kids. Inside the house in the family room, Steve sat on the couch enjoying the evening news before he started dinner. It's a typical evening for a not so average American family.

"Mama, look!" John called out to his mother.

Peggy turned around, "Yes, my darling?" she asked with a loving smile.

John raised his hand which had a monarch butterfly perched on it, "I got a buttafwy, Mama!"

"That's wonderful, sweetie! Be careful not to scare it off," Peggy said with a smile. She put her trowel down in the dirt and wiped the sweat off her brow. She gave a loving grin at her youngest son as he entertained himself with the butterfly on his hand.

As John tried to pet the butterfly, the small inspect became startled and flew off. "Oh, no!" John gasped. "Mama, the buttafwy flew away," he frowned.

Peggy chuckled as she stood up and dusted herself off her hands and dress from the soil and dirt then quickly turned around and scooped her son up in her arms. Peggy smiled at John's sad mood, "What's the matter, darling?"

John watched the butterfly flutter around in the garden, "Why doesn't the buttafwy like me, Mama?"

"Oh, honey, it's not that the butterfly doesn't like you, it's that the butterfly is thirsty," Peggy said softly.

"Oh," Michael responded, feeling reassured. "What do buttafwy's drink, Mama?"

"They drink from flowers," she replied with a smile.

"Oh. They're pretty."

Peggy kissed her son on the cheek, "Mhmm. Indeed, they are." Peggy undoubtedly found great satisfaction in the work she does in SHIELD, and proud to make a beautiful home for her family. But these types of evenings are like medicine for the soul. If she could live life over again, she'd start on an evening much like this.
"Are you getting hungry for dinner, darling?" Peggy said with a smile as she adjusted John in her arms.

"Yup!" John smiled happily.

Peggy chuckled and turned for the house, "Me too. Let's get Daddy to start cooking for us."

"Okay!" John cheered.

In the family room, Steve relaxed comfortably on the couch while enjoying some downtime with the evening news before he started working on dinner. Steve honestly wasn't paying much attention to the television and just enjoyed unwinding for a bit after a long day at work. As Steve leaned back on the couch, his oldest daughter strolled in, and greeted him.

"Hi, Daddy," Sarah said as she walked into the family room.

Steve sat up, "Hey there, Sweetie."

"Can I talk to you?" Sarah asked politely as she walked up to her father.

"You never need to ask. But this sounds serious." Steve nodded to the TV, "Can you turn off the TV for me while you're up?" Sarah nodded and walked over to the TV and turned it off for her father before heading to the couch. As Sarah sat down next to him, Steve gave her a reassuring smile, "What's up? What do you want to talk about?"

Sarah frowned, "Mama's birthday is tomorrow, but I haven't figured out what do for her yet, and I want to surprise her. I need help, I've been trying to think of something for a whole week."

Steve grinned, "Is that what's bothering you, sweetie?" Sarah nodded sheepishly. Steve laughed, "Little last minute, don't you think?"

Sarah looked down ashamed, "Don't laugh, I tried thinking about what do for a few days, but I didn't think of anything."

Steve chuckled and hugged his daughter, "Don't worry about a thing, Sarah. I'm always up for surprising your mother." He smiled down at her, "We'll give your mom a surprise she won't soon forget! We just need to think of something quick."

Sarah smiled happily, "I knew you would help, Daddy."

Steve chuckled, "Hm. Time to brainstorm a plan for the surprise." Sarah leaned back on the couch and looked up at the ceiling and thought long and hard about what to do for her mother's birthday. "Well, we know we can't throw a big party," Steve began.

"Why?"

"Your mother doesn't like having big parties for her with loads of people giving her all the attention." Steve chuckled, "Your mother is just humble like that."

It wasn't that Peggy hated people throwing parties for her, it's just that she preferred not being the subject of the party and the absolute center of attention. Though Peggy always attracted attention in parties by her looks and physical features, the focus tended not to last for more than a few moments most of the time. She's rarely the subject of the party and often felt uncomfortable in those circumstances. Peggy wouldn't be rude and would enjoy herself, but if she had a choice, she wouldn't want a big party thrown for her. It was just how Peggy was.
After a quiet moment of the pair thinking what to do, Sarah quickly sat up excitedly, "I got it!"

Steve grinned, "Let's hear it!"

"If Mama doesn't like big parties thrown for her with loads of people, but what if we throw her a big party with just us!" she said happily.

"Hm. I'm listening," Steve replied unsure.

Sarah beamed with excitement, "We just have a family party! Surprise her with music and dancing! Make dinner and a cake that we all make ourselves!"

Steve smiled, "I like it!" He chuckled and rubbed the top of Sarah's head, "See? You didn't need my help to think up an idea after all."

"But I don't know how to cook. I can't make food like you, Daddy."

Steve laughed, "Well, I can help with that. I'll teach you and your brother how to cook and you two can make your mommy a great big dinner!"

Sarah bounced happily in her seat, "Yay! I'm so excited! Mama is going to be so happy and surprised!" She smiled up at her father, "What's her favorite food that we should make?"

Steve rubbed his chin, thinking on the answer, "Hm. Your mom does like a good lamb roast. It's a pretty simple, but I'm sure we can do it if you're up for it. It shouldn't take too long to make either."

Sarah smiled, "We can do it!"

"Then it's settled! We'll make her a lamb roast with all the fixings," Steve exclaimed happily.

Sarah thought for a moment, "But we need to distract mama cause I don't want her to come home too soon before we're ready." She cocked her head to the side, "Is she working on her birthday?"

"Yeah, she is. It's a weekday, but she'd probably be home at the usual time if there aren't any emergencies."

"That doesn't give us a lot of time to prepare everything though," Sarah said sadly. She frowned, "But wait. Dad, do you have work tomorrow too?"

Steve nodded, "I do, but I'm sure I can talk to your Uncle Howard into letting me have the afternoon off, so I can go to the grocery store and get everything prepared before mommy gets home."

Sarah grinned, "Yay!"

Steve chuckled and leaned into his daughter and spoke softly, "So to keep your mom from coming home too early, I got friends at her work that can keep her there for as long as we need."

Sarah chuckled, "This is going to be fun!"

"Hey!" Steve and Sarah jumped in surprise when they heard Peggy's voice from the kitchen area.

Steve turned around and saw his wife standing by the back door with John in her arms. He quickly composed himself, "Yes, honey?"

"What are you two whispering about over there?" Peggy eyed the two.
Steve smiled and spoke part of the truth, "Just talking about your birthday tomorrow."

Peggy continued to eye her husband and daughter suspiciously, "Hm. You didn't forget did you?"

"Me? Forget? Never!" he said defensively.

"Never, Mama!" Sarah also said as she leaned forward to look at her mother.

"Hm. Okay then." Peggy put her weight on one hip, "Darling, are you about ready to start making dinner?"

Steve nodded, "Was just about to get started. Should be done around six or seven."

Peggy smiled, "Great." She looked at Sarah, "Sarah, honey, can you run outside and tell your brother and sister what time dinner will be finished."

"Yup!" Sarah said as she stood up and ran out of the family room to tell Michael and Angela who were still playing outside.

Steve stood up from the couch and walked into the kitchen as Peggy watched him suspiciously. Steve smiled, "What?"

Peggy glared at her husband, "You aren't planning to throw me a birthday party are you? You know I hate it when people throw me parties."

"I'm not planning anything," Steve said raising his hands defensively.

Peggy smiled, "I can tell you're lying, darling, because you never were any good at it."

Steve shrugged and shook his head, "We aren't planning anything other than the usual take you out for your birthday for a family dinner to a restaurant of your choosing."

"We?" Peggy chuckled, "I know you aren't telling me everything, but I'll play along for you, my darling."

"I'm just going to stop talking," Steve said with a sigh as he walked over to the refrigerator to start getting dinner ready.

Peggy laughed, "Probably for the best." John didn't know what was going on but laughed along with his mother when he heard her laugh. "See, darling? John agrees," Peggy said bouncing her son in her arms.

Steve looked over his shoulder as he opened the fridge, "Traitor," he said with a smirk.

April 9, 1957

The open curtains let the orange glow of the morning light enter the master bedroom of the Rogers house unopposed. The sunrise continues to be perfect with each passing day and creates a pleasant aura. The morning sun shined on Peggy's sleeping form under the covers causing her to stir under the covers and slowly wake up. She hummed in content as she opened her eyes, long before her alarm would go off to wake her to get the kids ready and get dressed for work. But before Peggy got up to start her day, she laid in bed for a moment longer, enjoying the morning sun. Peggy smiled at the warmth of the sun as it reminded her of her and Steve's honeymoon at a resort in the tropics. A beautiful memory of the ocean view from their room occupied her mind, watching the ocean emerge
and tumble under the golden shimmer of the tropical sunrise. For a moment, Peggy's mind manifested the rhythmic waves, soft on the sandy shore. She breathed in deeply. It's her birthday, but it's still just another start of a new day.

Peggy rolled to Steve's side of the bed to kiss him "good morning," but to her surprise, he wasn't lying in bed with her. Confused, Peggy propped herself up on her elbow and called out to him, "Darling?" She paused and looked around the room for any sign or response from him. "Steve?" Peggy called out to him again, but got no response.

She sat up in bed and immediately noticed something was off. The curtains were closed before she went to bed which means her husband opened them when he got up before her. Explains why she woke up before her alarm. Peggy smiled to herself, Steve was probably preparing something sweet to start her birthday. She couldn't help but be surprised that she didn't wake up when Steve got up early in the morning. Peggy usually wakes up when Steve gets out of bed, but tends to go back to sleep, like when he wakes up before the sun rises to run. This time, however, Peggy didn't wake up or recall him ever leaving their bed.

Suddenly, her bedroom door swung open and in came Sarah carefully carrying a breakfast tray accompanied by Michael, Angela, and Steve carrying John in his arms. Sarah greeted her mother first, "Surprise! Happy birthday, Mama!"

"Happy Birthday, Mama," Michael and Angela both echoed Sarah.

Peggy smiled happily, "Awe, thank you, my darlings!" She leaned back against the headboard, "Mmm, Smells good."

Sarah carefully carried the breakfast tray over to her mother and gently placed it down on her lap. The tray had all of Peggy's favorite foods. Bacon, fried eggs, fried tomatoes, sausage links, buttered toast, and mushrooms, a complete English Breakfast. "Here you go, Mama," Sarah said excitedly. "Hope you like it!"

Peggy smiled as the aroma of good food filled her nose, "Oh, I'm sure I will. Smells delicious. Did you all help make me breakfast?" Michael and Angela joined their sister by Peggy's side of the bed and stood by her smiling, "What?" she asked confused.

Steve joined his kids while still holding onto John, "Actually, they did all of the cooking. I just helped them." He shrugged, "Well Sarah did most of it. It was her idea after all."

"Really?" Peggy said smiling at her kids.

Sarah nodded, "Yup!"

"Happy Birthday, Mama!" Michael and Sarah cheered.

Peggy chuckled and picked up the fork to eat her breakfast, "Thank you, everyone." As she took a bite of her eggs and sausage, she was overwhelmed by the wonderous taste. "Wow! This is amazing! Good job, kids!" Peggy said with a wide smile.

Sarah rocked back and forth on her heels, "We wanted to make sure you had time to have a great big breakfast before you go to work."

"Hope this wasn't too early for you, honey," Steve said affectionately.

Peggy shook her head, "No, this is great. Thank you so much! An excellent start to my day. A lady can get used to this," she said with a light chuckle. Peggy took another bite, "Was this what you and
Before Steve can answer, Sarah spoke up, "Yup! I wanted to make you food for your birthday, so I asked Daddy to help me." Sarah may be young, but she knew her mother well enough to know that her mother would see straight through whatever response her father would say other than the absolute truth. She and her father still plan on making her mother dinner and throwing her a surprise family party. Breakfast in bed was just a bonus to keep the true surprise hidden from a very observant woman.

Steve patted Sarah on the back and smiled, "Yup," he said plainly, thankful for Sarah for answering for the both of them.

Peggy cocked her head to the side in a mock suspicious manner, "Hm." Satisfied with Sarah's response, Peggy smiled, "This is truly wonderful, darlings! Thank you so much for breakfast."

Steve grinned, "Happy Birthday, hon. We'll give you your presents when you get back home."

Peggy chuckled. She felt like a kid again with the idea of presents, but that wasn't exactly a bad thing. "Great," she said as she continued to eat.

Steve patted Angela on the head, "Okay, kids. Breakfast then get ready for school. I'll do the cooking this time."

Angela nodded, "Okay, Daddy."

Michael climbed up to the bed and hugged and kissed his mother, "Happy Birthday, Mama." He then hopped off the bed and ran off. Like her older brother, Angela climbed up on the bed and kissed her mother on the cheek then ran off after Michael.

Sarah kissed her mother on her cheek and smiled, "Enjoy your breakfast, Mama."

"Oh, I will, darling," Peggy replied. She chuckled, "Can you give your father and I a moment. He'll be down in a second to make you breakfast."

Sarah smiled, "Okay." She looked up at her father, "Daddy, want me to take little John downstairs with me?"

Steve nodded and put John down, "Sure thing, kiddo." He smirked, "If he wants to walk down, let him, okay?"

Sarah took John's hand, "I will!" She looked down at her little brother, "Breakfast time?"

John grinned, "Bbreakfast time!" he cheered excitedly.

As Sarah and John left, Steve bent down next to Peggy and smiled, "So? How did the kids do at making you breakfast?"

Peggy smiled, "I'm serious, it's very good."

Steve chuckled, "It was Sarah's idea. She did most of the work while Michael and Angela aided her. I just guided her."

Peggy giggled, "You're quite the teacher." She smiled lovingly at her husband, "Thank you, darling."

Steve shrugged, "Thank Sarah. This was all her."
"Oh, I will." She whispered, "Come here." Steve leaned toward Peggy and the two shared a deep kiss for a moment. After a while, Peggy broke the kiss and smiled, "I love you."

"I love you too," Steve replied softly as he tucked a strand of Peggy’s brown hair behind her ear.

"I didn't hear you get out of bed this morning. Now that's a real surprise," She said with a smirk.

Steve chuckled, "Trust me. It was a long and complicated process to not wake you."

"Oh, I'm sure, honey." The couple both shared a chuckle. Suddenly, the moment ended when they heard a loud commotion downstairs which signaled the kids were already getting rowdy. Peggy rolled her eyes, "Better get down there and feed the kids before they wreck my kitchen."

"Yes, Ma'am," Steve said kissing Peggy on the lips before he stood up.

Just as he got to the door, Peggy called out to him, "Darling!" Steve stopped and looked back at his wife with a questioning look. "Again, thank you for this," Peggy said with an affectionate smile.

"Day's not over. Happy birthday, Peggy," he said as he left his wife to her breakfast.

Downstairs in the kitchen, Sarah and Michael sat at the table loudly discussing who was the better comic book superhero while Angela read her book and John enjoyed his siblings' loud conversation on his booster seat. Steve entered the kitchen and chuckled, "Glad all of you are so full of energy. You kids hungry?"

Michael put aside his difference with his sister, "Yup! Pancakes?"

Sarah agreed, "Yeah, Pancakes!"

"I made you pancakes a few days ago. Can't always have pancakes," Steve retorted as he entered the kitchen. He heard a collective disappointed sigh from his kids causing him to laugh at their antics.

Steve opened the refrigerator, "How about breakfast sandwiches instead?"

Angela was the first to agree, "I want one!"

"Me too!" Michael agreed.

Steve didn't hear a response from his other daughter as he grabbed a carton of eggs and closed the fridge. "Sarah, how about you?" he asked as he walked over to the stove.

Sarah nodded, "Yup! I want one too."

"Breakfast sandwiches it is!"

Sarah hopped off her chair and approached her dad who was stooped down in a cabinet to get a pan. "Hey, Dad?" she asked softly.

"What's up, sweetie?" Steve said as he grabbed the pan he wanted and stood up.

"Do you think Mama knows about what we plan to do tonight? She looked at us with suspicion last night," Sarah asked nervously.

Steve laughed, "I think we're good. You're quick thinking to do this breakfast with your brother and sisters was a good save." He patted her hair, "Great idea to cover up your true master plan."
Sarah grinned, "It's 'Our' master plan, Daddy. It'll make Mama happy!"

"Well, it was your idea in the first place, and the breakfast in bed for your mother was your idea too. Got to give credit where credit is due, sweetie." He chuckled, "I'm so proud of you. You think quick on your feet, just like your daddy." Sarah beamed happily upon hearing that she was like her father. Steve chuckled, "Also nice cover earlier when mom asked us about the surprise."

"I did my best. I knew she wouldn't believe you, but she'd believe me," Sarah replied with a wide grin.

Steve laughed, "Glad you figured that out." He patted her on the back, "Alright. Let me cook. Got to get breakfast started so I can drop you off at school in time." Sarah nodded and walked off back to the table to rejoin her siblings.

Steve couldn't help but smile at the fact that his daughter, Sarah, was a lot like him. She's so much like him it's almost frightening. Sarah not only possessed his fighting spirit and intolerance to abuse and injustice, but she also has his quick thinking and decisiveness as shown by her surprise "breakfast in bed" idea for Peggy to cover up the true birthday surprise. She also had his uncompromising selflessness, for wanting to make her mother happy on her birthday. It wasn't her wish to make her mother happy on her birthday or the surprise that made her selfless, it was the fact that she spent days trying to figure out how to make her mother's day on her birthday. For a little girl her age, Sarah is extremely aware of others and tends to be more selfless than the majority of kids her age.

As Steve cooked breakfast for his kids at the stove, Michael called out to him, "Dad, how old is Mama turning?"

Steve chuckled, "What do you mean 'old,' son?" He looked over his shoulder, "Does your mother look old?"

Michael raised his hands defensively, "I-I didn't mean it like that."

"What are you saying then, Michael?" Sarah said with a grin.

He rolled his eyes, "I want to know what Mama's age is."

"Should never ask a woman her age, darling," the kids jumped in surprise when they heard their mother from behind them.

Michael slowly turned around and smiled at his mother who wore her pink and black robe, and carried the breakfast tray in both of her hands. "Hi, Mama," he said sheepishly.

Peggy smiled, "Hello there, Michael." She walked into the kitchen and placed the breakfast tray on the counter by the sink.

Sarah spoke up, changing the subject, "Mama, Daddy is making breakfast sandwiches! Want one?"

Peggy looked over her shoulder and smirked, "No thank you, darling. The breakfast you made was more than enough for me."

Steve finished another sandwich and carefully placed it on a plate with his spatula. At this rate all his kids should be fed within the hour, plenty of time before leaving for school and work. "Hey, Hon?" he began as he started another sandwich.

"Yes, my love?" Peggy responded as she began cleaning her dishes.
"I'll drop the kids off at school and pick them up today too, so you don't have to worry about it."

Before Peggy could respond, Sarah stood up and spoke up after her dad, "Mama, Angela, Michael, and I can do the dishes!" Angela lowered her book and silently nodded in agreement with her older sister.

Michael stood up, "Yeah! We can do it for you!" he said more eagerly than his sister.

Peggy laughed, "Goodness, you're all spoiling me." She waved her hand and Steve, "I can pick up the kids from school since you're driving them. It's not a problem." She chuckled, "Besides that's the deal."

Steve smirked, "But it's your birthday."

Peggy groaned, "Darling, you and the kids have done enough for me and it's not even midday yet."

"I insist. Just humor me, please?" Steve begged.

Before Peggy could respond, Sarah chimed in, "Yeah, let Daddy pick us up and we'll see you at home, Mama," she said more eagerly than she wanted. Big mistake.

Peggy paused then looked over at her daughter suspiciously, "Why are you so eager to have Daddy pick you up?"

Sarah froze for a second before quickly thinking up an answer, "Because… Daddy is taking me to the store to pick up your birthday gift." She wasn't exactly lying. She looked at her brother, "Michael and Angela already got your birthday gifts, but I couldn't think of a special one from me until last night. So, I asked Daddy to take us shopping after school." Sarah told the truth but omitted key details to keep the big surprise from her mother.

Peggy produced a warm smile, showing no suspicion to her daughter, "Aw, darling…"

Sarah frowned, "My brother and sister have gifts for you, but I don't. I'm a little late…"

Peggy turned off the sink and walked over to her oldest daughter and kissed her on the top of her head. She bent down and smiled at her, "Darling, I appreciate the honesty. I know you tried. But gifts aren't super important in the grand scheme of things. I have my family and that's all that matters to me."

Sarah played along, "But I want to get you a gift, Mama."

Peggy chuckled, "Go ahead and get me one. I'll appreciate anything you give me, darling." She kissed Sarah on the cheek, "I love you. No matter what you give me."

"I love you too, Mama."

Peggy smiled and stood up to return to washing the dishes. As she got to the sink she looked back at the kitchen table, "Kids got everything ready for school today?"

Michael nodded, "Got everything."

"Yup!" Angela chimed.

Sarah smiled, "Ready."

Steve walked over to the kitchen table with a breakfast sandwich on a plate in each hand, "Chow
time!" The kids' faces all lit up with excitement as Steve set down the first two plates of food, first to Angela and Sarah. Steve returned to the stove to grab two more plates and walked them over to the table to give Michael and John theirs. He smiled, "Okay, kids. We have plenty of time before school. So, if you want seconds just let me know."

Sarah smiled, "Thanks, Daddy."

"Thanks, Dad!" Angela said.

"MMM, MMM!" Michael said with his mouth full.

"Darling, don't talk with your mouth full," Peggy instructed as she walked over to Steve. She grinned and wrapped her arms around his neck, "Thank you for a wonderful morning."

Steve nodded, "Always." Peggy smiled affectionately at him and pecked him on the cheek. "So tonight, when you get home, we go out to your favorite restaurant for your birthday dinner," he said with a smirk.

"Sounds like a good plan to me," Peggy replied with an affectionate smile.

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**Fox Meadow Elementary School**

The final bell rang throughout the school, ending another full school day for the kids of Fox Meadow Elementary. Kids were quick to flood the halls and pour out of the school and crowd on the grass and sidewalks, eager to go home and play. Sarah and her three friends, Hannah, Amy, and David, walked through the crowded hallway together, enjoying a pleasant conversation.

Since Sarah got into that fight protecting David in March, David had recently started hanging around the three girls. Sarah didn't mind and welcomed the shy boy into the group, but it took Amy and Hannah a while to warm up around him. But after a while, the two girls opened up to David, and everyone slowly became friends. Turns out, David wasn't that weird and that much different to the three girls which made becoming friends nearly a seamless process. Though David gets bullied from time-to-time, he always had Sarah, Hannah, and Amy watching out for him when they're around. Many of the boys in Sarah's class were surprised that Sarah and her two friends welcomed David to hang out with them. He was often listed as a loser from many of the boys in school, but when he started hanging out with one of the prettiest girls in the class, suddenly all the boys became jealous of him. But David didn't care and was just happy to finally have a group of friends to be with, regardless if they were all girls. He owed Sarah a deal, but Sarah didn't want anything in return other than friendship which he was happy to provide.

"Anyone want to come over today? Think my mom would be okay with it," Amy said as the group of friends finally exited the school building. The unbearable heat and humidity of the spring afternoon immediately greeted the group as they walked out of school. Though the day was uncomfortable to be outside, the kids were just happy to be done with school for the day.

Hannah shook her head, "I can't today. Sorry."

David answered shyly, "Um. Do you want me to come over too?"

Amy rolled her eyes, "Yes, dum dum."

"Oh, I'll have to ask my mom, but I don't think she'd let me though," he replied. He didn't know if it would be okay if he went to Amy's house since she's a girl. He didn't know what either his or her parents would react to him going over.
Amy turned to Sarah, "Sarah?"

"It's my mom's birthday today, so I can't. But tomorrow, I can!" Sarah said with a smile.

Amy nodded, "I'll ask my mom about tomorrow then." She looked at Hannah and David, "I'll just tell her a group will come over and you can come by if you want."

Hannah nodded, "Okay."

David stuck his hands in his pockets, "Would you mom be okay if I came over too though? Since I'm a boy," he asked shyly.

Amy waved her hand, "Relax, I'm sure my mom will be okay with it. I'm sure I can convince her," she said reassuringly. She smiled at her friend, "Just tell your mom that your friends with us and I'm sure she'll be okay with it."

"Okay," David said, this time with more confidence in his voice.

Amy cheered, "Great! I'll ask about tomorrow!" With that, she, Hannah, and David turned and started to walk down the path to meet up with their parents waiting at the curb.

Amy didn't go far when she realized Sarah didn't walk with them. She stopped and turned around, "Hey, Sarah, you coming? Isn't your Dad here to pick you up?" She asked curiously as Hannah and David stopped to wait for their friends. Amy then pointed to a red and black car parked down the road, "Isn't that him?"

Sarah waved her hand, "I'm waiting for my brother and sister. Go on ahead, I'll see you guys tomorrow!"

"Oh, right," Amy said with a nod. "Well, see you tomorrow, Sarah!"

"Bye, Sarah!" David and Hannah said in unison with a wave as they started to walk away.

Sarah smiled and waved at her friends as they walked away. She stayed in place by the door waiting for her little brother and sister to come out, figuring they haven't left yet since she didn't see them outside, however. After a moment of waiting and other kids excitedly walking by, she saw Michael, Irena, and Angela walked through the front doors and missed her. "Michael, Angela!" Sarah called out to her siblings as they walked passed her.

"Hey!" Angela said excitedly, changing direction to walk over to her sister.

Michael and Irena stopped and turned around to face Sarah. "Hey there, Irena," Sarah said with a warm smile, greeting her before Michael.

Irena waved, "Hi, Sarah," she replied with a rare small smile.

Even though she and Sarah aren't in the same class, the two girls met each other through Michael not too long ago, and they occasionally run into each other in the hallways. But though Sarah met her, seeing Irena smile is still a rare occurrence and only ever does around Michael. Sarah doesn't know what to make of that fact, but she's proud of her twin brother for befriending this girl.

Sarah made a warm smile then looked to her brother, "Michael, walking Irena home again? Not joining us to set up Mama's surprise?"

Michael shook his head, "I promised Irena I'd take her home, but I'll help set everything up when I
get back. Sorry," he said apologetically. He shrugged, "It was your idea anyway, but again, I'm up for helping you if you aren't done when I get home."

Sarah understood, "I know, don't worry about it. I just thought I'd ask." She chuckled, "Besides, you already have a present for mama, anyway."

"Yeah, that's true." He began to walk again, Irena turning to follow, "Anyway, I'm going. Hopefully, I should make it home before mama does, depending on how long dad's distraction lasts."

Sarah chuckled, "Okay. Hopefully, Mom doesn't get through it quickly. Anyway, have fun!" she called out to them. She looked over at her little sister, "Angela, ready to help out?"

Angela grinned happily at her older sister, "Yup!"

"Let's go," Sarah said excitedly. With that, the two girls raced off the path onto the grass, making a beeline to their dad's car.

Steve smiled at his daughters running toward him across the grass as he leaned against his car in the sun. It was always good to see his kids smiling and even better when they're laughing together. Seeing his kids smile and laugh was an everyday gift and joy that'll never get old to him. Steve selfishly didn't want his kids to grow up and wanted them to be small and energetic forever, and he knew Peggy felt the same. But they both knew they couldn't stop time. They just had to hold onto these small and simple moments of laughter and joy.

Before Steve knew it, his two daughters reached him without breaking a sweat. He chuckled, they sure can run fast, no doubt since they inherited the serum. It only took his girls a split second to get to him. His girls weren't even out of breath. Steve smiled at his daughters, "Hey, girls!"

"Hi, Daddy!" Sarah and Angela said in unison with big smiles.

Steve smirked, "Good day at school?"

"Yup!" The two girls said in unison again.

"Ready to go home and get the surprise ready for your mother?" Steve said with a smirk.

"Let's do it!" Sarah exclaimed excitedly. With that Steve and his daughters quickly piled into the car and headed home.

As Steve quickly drove home, Sarah, who sat in the front seat, looked at her father, "Mama isn't coming home right now is she?" she asked curiously.

Steve chuckled, "That problem should take care of itself. We got a lot of time." He smirked at Sarah, "I got all the groceries after work and prepared the kitchen. So, we can save time and get started right when we get home." He turned around briefly to his youngest daughter, "Angela, ready to help out?"

Angela smiled wide, "Ready for work, daddy!"


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**Time Square, New York City, SHIELD: AEGIS HEADQUARTERS**

Peggy stood in her office by her desk packing up her things, getting ready to go home for the
evening. Earlier in the day, everyone greeted her happy birthday, and as per her request, no one threw her a party or made a big occasion out of it. She did, however, welcomed the kind gestures of her subordinates and agents wishing her a happy birthday, and especially welcomed the Operations Center staff and the Major Cases Response Team for singing to her earlier. Though Peggy didn't like parties for her, she appreciated the small gestures and the fact that many of her agents and subordinates who saw her took their time to wish her happy birthday.

It was another pleasant but usual busy day at work, and Peggy was glad it was over. As long as no emergencies popped up like last week, she'll be home around her usual time. Though as director of an intelligence agency, she's never really off the clock. Intelligence gathering is constant and can be referred to as a living breathing organism. Always changing and adapting to complete the mission.

As Peggy packed the last of her things, she heard a knock on her door. Without looking, she called out to her visitor, "Come in!"

Rose walked into the office, "great, you didn't leave yet."

Peggy stopped what she was doing and turned to her friend and secretary, "How can I help you, Rose?" she asked with a smile. She stood up straight and fixed her business suit to remove any wrinkles in her appearance.

Rose walked over to Peggy and revealed a small envelope, "I know you didn't want anything but the ladies in the office and I got together and picked this up for you. Happy Birthday, Peggy."

"Awe, thank you, Rose. You shouldn't have," Peggy said with a friendly smile as she took the envelope from her friend.

Rose shrugged, "We wanted to, it's the least we could do for your birthday."

Peggy smiled and hugged her friend, Rose happily returning the hug. "You're all so sweet," Peggy said while holding the hug. She then let go, "Thank you. I'll tell the ladies I say, 'thank you' tomorrow."

"Not a problem. The girls know you well enough that you'd be deeply appreciated of the simple gift," Rose said with a smile. She chuckled, "Also, the ladies wanted to get you something from them to thank you for all the work you've done, and enforcing gender equality in SHIELD."

Peggy nodded and took a moment to open the envelope, removing a birthday card and $100 worth of cash. Peggy looked up at Rose, "one hundred dollars? Rose this is too much."

Rose waved her hand with a smile, "It was from the ladies in the office. Most of them pitched in, so if you think about it, we only provided two to five dollars each."

Peggy nodded, "Okay, okay." She opened the card and read it briefly. The card was signed by the majority of the women and some men in the building, and everyone tried fitting some sort of nice birthday message for her to read. She smiled at the card, and cherished the card more than the money they gifted to her. Peggy chuckled and looked up at Rose, "Couldn't get all the men to sign it?"

Rose chuckled, "They were doing their own thing. Besides, we just wanted the ladies to sign it."

Peggy smiled, "Fair enough." She turned serious for a moment, "Everyone deserves a shot if they can meet the standards. If the person can do that and help our overall mission, the person can be green and a fairy for all I care, and I'll have it go to the field." She chuckled, "I'll give credit where credit is due."
Rose nodded, "Trust me, Peggy. You've done a lot for women here."

Peggy waved her hand with a smirk, "We don't need to get into that."

Rose changed the topic, "Curiously. If you don't mind me asking, from woman-to-woman. How old are you now?"

"Thirty-six," Peggy said with a smirk.

"Thirty-six?" Rose gasped. "For thirty-six and four kids you look really good!" She laughed, "You don't look a day over twenty-five, and I'm telling you the truth."

Peggy laughed, "Sure."

"No, I'm serious," Rose pushed.

Peggy nodded, "Okay, okay. I believe you," she conceded. She turned back to her desk to grab her stuff, "Anyway, thank you for the gift, Rose. I should be heading home."

"Family's waiting?" Rose asked with a knowing smirk.

Peggy grinned, "Mhmm. They've been great today. I even had breakfast in bed today thanks to my kids. But it was Sarah's idea," she said proudly.

"That's so sweet of them." Rose smiled, "How about your husband?"

"Oh, he's been fantastic. He helped the kids make breakfast, drove the kids to school, picked them up, and probably taking us all out to dinner today." Peggy laughed, "knowing him, he probably got me something really nice too. He's great."

Rose laughed too, "I am pretty jealous of your family, Peggy."

"You'll get there someday, Rose. I'm sure of it," Peggy reassured.

"Sure," Rose said with a grin.

Peggy picked up her purse and slung it over her shoulder then picked up her briefcase off her desk and was about head out when there was another knock on her door. "Yes?" Peggy called out as she walked toward the door with Rose close behind.

The door opened, revealing, Howard, "Peg…"

"Howard, you're here awfully later than usual. What's up?"

"We got a situation," Howard said in a serious tone.

Peggy sighed, "What is it?"

Howard nodded toward the hallway, "Follow me to lock-up. I'll explain on the way."

Peggy sighed in mild frustration then looked at Rose, "Guess, I'm not going home yet." Rose smirked in response.

As Steve turned the car down another road on the way home, Sarah and Angela continued to sing happily along to a rock-n-roll song on the radio. Steve smiled and hummed with his daughters as he
cruised down the road, just as excited as his daughters to get the surprise ready for Peggy. In addition to helping Sarah, he also got Peggy something nice from him a week earlier and now planned to give it to her after the kids go to bed later in the evening.

Steve looked over his shoulder briefly, "You kids got an idea of decorations you want to put up for your mother to see when she gets home? I bought a few so we have options."

Sarah smiled, "I got an idea, but we'll see when we get home." She looked ahead at the road and saw a small black figure on the middle of the street, "Daddy, what's that in the street?" she asked curiously.

"I don't know. Let's stop and find out, shall we?" Steve said as he spotted the small figure too. He gently applied the brakes of the car and slowed it down gradually, keeping a distance from the thing on the road. The road wasn't busy and was void of motor traffic, so he didn't have to worry about getting rear-ended while he slowed down in the middle of the road. But regardless, Steve pulled the car over to the side of the street in case of oncoming traffic from behind.

Steve put the car in park then looked ahead and focused on the small black figure in the middle of the street. He saw it skitter to the curb and lay down in the gutter, but he still didn't know what it was. Suddenly, the thing moved to the side and Steve spotted a small tail and two pointy ears sticking up. "I think it's a dog," he said unsure.

Sarah looked at her dad, "A dog? In the middle of the street?"

"A puppy I think," Steve responded again. Even with his enhanced vision, he couldn't tell what it was exactly because of its all black coat.

"A puppy?" Angela chimed in curiously as she leaned forward in her seat to look through the windshield like her father and older sister.

Sarah looked at her dad, "Daddy, don't you think we should go get it? It's in the middle of the street. We can't just leave it there. It can get hit by a car."

Steve nodded, "You're right." He opened the door and stepped out the car, but stood still and observed the "puppy" making sure it was a puppy and not a random muddy raccoon or something. He peeked into the car again, "Girls want to come with me?"

Sarah nodded, "Yup." With that Sarah and Angela pushed open their doors and stepped out of the car and joined their dad outside.

Father and two daughters approached the small animal cautiously, making sure not to startle it in case it was scared or nervous. But as the trio closed the distance, the small animal got up and started to quickly trot toward them. Angela stopped and stepped closer to her dad and gripped his shirt nervously. Steve stopped with his youngest daughter and draped his arm over her shoulder and gripped her reassuringly. As the animal got closer, Steve saw without a doubt that it was a small puppy with all black fur coat and pointy ears.

Steve chuckled, "Definitely a puppy." The puppy trotted toward them but made a beeline toward Sarah. As Sarah continued walking and approached the puppy, Steve called out to her, "Be careful, Sarah. He might bite, and he might have some diseases we don't know about."

Sarah nodded, "Okay, Daddy," he said stopping to let the puppy run to her.

The small puppy ran up to Sarah and sat down in front of her and looked at her curiously. Sarah slowly bent down and lowered her hand with her palm up in a nonthreatening posture, and before
she knew it, the young German Shepard came up to her hand and sniffed and licked it. Sarah giggled and saw the puppy rolling to her side to expose it's belly to her. Sarah carefully picked it up and held her close, "Daddy, it's a girl puppy."

Steve walked over to Sarah, keeping his arm draped over Angela, and got a better look at the dog. "Not just a girl, but a German Shepard too. A pure black coat German Shepard puppy without a collar."

Sarah looked at her dad, "Can we… can we keep her?"

Steve sighed, he knew that was coming. Steve shook his head, "I don't know. We don't know if this puppy belongs to anyone. We also need to make sure she has no diseases and got her shots. And last, but not least, we need to make sure your mother is okay with adopting a puppy."

Sarah frowned, "We can't leave her here. She'll be hit by a car. We have to do something. But what do you say?"

"Obviously, we won't leave her here, and I wouldn't mind adopting a puppy to be honest. But again, we have to ask your mother," Steve said plainly.

Sarah gently pets the dog on her head, the puppy leaning her head back into Sarah's arms, sticking her tongue out lazily. "Daddy, can we just take her with us?"

Steve smiled, "How about this. Hopefully, we got time. But let's stop by the vet, get her some medical treatment, if any, and see if anyone is missing a puppy because all black German Shepard's are rare." He shrugged, "And if no one is claiming this puppy then we'll talk to your mother about it when she gets home, okay? But mind you we have to wait 30-days before the dog can be legally ours if your mother approves."

Sarah nodded, "Okay," satisfied with her dad's response. Her and Michael always wanted a dog, but she didn't think they'd end up finding one in the street. In their town of all places. So as much as Sarah wanted the dog, her main concern was making sure the small little puppy was safe and off the street.

Steve smiled and his daughters, "Alright, let's go. We got to hurry and get this done because we still got dinner to make for your mother." Sarah nodded and joined her father and sister on the way back toward the car.

As the three of them walked back to the car, Steve looked over at Sarah and saw her gently petting the puppy every so often and heard her speaking in soothing tones to calm the now confused looking pup. Steve smiled at the display of gentleness and compassion Sarah showed to the innocent little dog. Even Sarah's actions toward the small puppy reminded him so much of himself. Steve was almost looking back at a mirror every time Sarah acts like him. Of course, anyone would be gentle to a puppy that size, but kids generally aren't that gentle to small dogs, but how Sarah was interacting with her was what set her apart from the rest of the kids. She pet the puppy gently, didn't force attention, held her correctly, and spoke in soothing tones. Sarah wasn't forceful at all with the young German Shepard in any way.

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**Steve & Margaret Rogers Residence, Scarsdale, NY**

The sun nearly entirely set by the time Peggy got home with the orange hue fading away to the horizon and replaced by the stars in the night sky. It was a cool evening, and the sky was crystal clear from clouds, letting the moon take its turn to dazzle the heavens. Though it was a pleasant
looking evening, Peggy didn't feel pleasant because she was frustrated by an earlier situation caused by Howard's incompetence.

Howard accidentally broke the vault security door system, causing the blast door to be permanently locked so no one can access any of the crucial documents or material inside. What made it more bothersome was that he insisted she stay with him to help supervise the technicians while they fixed it. They didn't fix it for hours, and it turns out, Stark only needed to restart the security system. By the time the door was repaired, it was already getting late, and Peggy feared it would be too late to go out for her birthday dinner with her family. If it was a real emergency or work situation, Peggy wouldn't be frustrated and would work for however long to complete the task, but the vault was pure Howard incompetence which irritated her completely. He took away precious time from her family which made her very cross with him.

Peggy sighed in annoyance as she walked up the small steps to the covered porch and approached her front door. As she got closer to the door, she could smell the wonderful scent of good food and home cooking through the door causing her to relax a little and smile. Looks like they aren't going out tonight for her birthday, Peggy couldn't blame Steve, it was already getting late.

As Peggy pushed open the front door, she automatically called out to her family, "Darlings, I'm home!" But instead of a response from her family, her ears were filled by one of her favorite songs, "Beyond the Sea," playing from the family room. "Steve, honey?" Peggy called out curiously as she closed the door behind her. She then slowly walked toward the kitchen, "Sarah, Michael!?" she called out to them over the music but got no response.

As Peggy cautiously stepped into the kitchen, she nearly jumped in surprise at the sound of birthday poppers. "Happy Birthday!" her family cheered in harmony as the colorful confetti rained over her.

Peggy brushed the confetti off her hair and grinned the biggest smile at the sight of her four kids and her husband standing behind them, "Oh, darlings…" she began.

Steve patted Angela on the head, "Angela, sweetie, can you turn down the music for me, please?"

"Okay, Daddy," Angela said as she ran off to turn the volume down on the turn table on one of the cabinets in the family room.

Peggy looked past her family and saw the kitchen table with plates of food over a decorative table cloth. "Did you all do this?" she began with a proud smile.

Steve tapped Sarah on the shoulder, signaling her to step forward. Sarah smiled up at her mother, "Daddy and I wanted to surprise you for your birthday. So all of us made your favorite dinner, lamb roast!"

Peggy bent down and hugged her daughter tightly, "Oh, Darling! This is the best birthday surprise ever." She kissed her on the cheek and signaled the rest of her kids to join the hug. Angela, John, and Michael quickly jumped in and hugged their mother tightly. "Thank you so much, my darlings. I'm so sorry I was late to come home. You must've waited so long!"

Steve smirked, "Um. Don't be mad."

Peggy let go of her kids and picked up John as she stood up, "At what?"

Steve nodded, "Well, I the reason why you're late is because I told Howard to distract you."

Peggy raised an eyebrow, "You asked him to keep me at work?" she asked in a serious tone.
Steve nodded again, "Yeah…didn't say how, but the fact you look irritated means he must've really made you mad."

"You could say that," Peggy glared.

Sarah tugged on her mother's shirt, "Mama, don't be mad at Daddy. We wanted to make sure you didn't come home before we were done cooking."

Peggy relaxed and smiled at her daughter, "Oh, sweetie, I'm not mad at Daddy. I'm just messing with him. It's only fair."

Steve laughed, "Cruel woman."

"And I love you, Steve," Peggy said with a smile. She then kissed John on the cheek and grinned at him.

"Sarah, is there something you want to tell your mother too?" Steve told his daughter.


"Who's Athena?" Peggy asked curiously as she stared into the family room.

"You'll see," Steve said with a smirk.

Sarah looked up at her mother, "Be right back." With that she ran off.

Peggy took this opportunity to kiss her husband on the lips. After a moment, she broke the kiss, "So, what did you and kids make for dinner?"

Steve grinned, "Can't you smell it? It's your favorite. Lamb roast with all the fixings."

"I just wanted to double check in case my eyes and nose were deceiving me," Peggy responded humorously.

Sarah reappeared, and to Peggy's surprise she was carrying a small all black puppy in her arms. "Darling? Why does our daughter have a puppy?" she asked Steve, staring at Sarah.

Steve smirked, "That's the other surprise."

Sarah stopped in front of her mother and gently pet the puppy on the head, "Mama, this is Athena. Daddy and I found her in the middle of the street on our way home from school."

"We're adopting a puppy?" Peggy asked in surprise.

Steve shook his head, "No, not yet. We took her to the vet to make sure she's healthy and doesn't have any diseases then checked if she belonged to anyone. Since the puppy is a rare all black German Shepard, we figured someone owns her, but we got no word of someone missing this puppy, so we took her home with us as opposed to the shelter." He nodded, "And, to adopt her, we need to wait for 30-days before she's legally ours and do everything in our power to find her 'owner' during that period."

Sarah nodded, "But we want your permission to keep him even after the thirty days." Peggy remained silent as she stared at the curious little puppy. She looked at her husband with a raised brow as she thought about her answer. "Please?" Sarah said almost begging.
Peggy looked back at her daughter and smiled, "I don't see why not."

"Yay!" Sarah and Angela cheered together.

Michael jumped happily with his fists clenched, "We're keeping the dog?"

Peggy raised a finger, "Wait. On one condition."

Sarah looked up at her mother, "Anything."

"You and your siblings will handle much of the care of the puppy. It's a lot of responsibility, but that's the condition, okay?" Peggy said sternly.

Sarah nodded with a grin, "Deal!"

Steve chimed in, "But, remember, we can't adopt her until the 30-day period is up, so just be aware of that."

"We know, Daddy."

Steve clapped his hands, "Great! Now, who's hungry? The food is warm, and it smells good!" It didn't take much to get his kids to go to the table, the kids were especially hungry after they worked so hard cooking dinner for their mother. Michael and Angela raced into the kitchen table and took their seats before anyone knew it. Sarah took a moment to put the puppy down before excitedly joining her brother and sister.

Peggy gripped John in her arms and smiled up at her husband, "Dinner looks fantastic, darling."

Steve wrapped an arm around his wife as they walked over to the table, "Breakfast was just a dress rehearsal for tonight."

"So this was what you two been hiding," Peggy grinned.

Steve nodded, "Yeah." He felt Athena bumping into his ankles causing him smirk, "But the dog wasn't part of the plan."

Peggy chuckled, "I do like dog, darling. I just didn't know if I wanted to deal with a dog and four kids at the same time. But I think she'll be a good addition to our big family."

"Me too." Steve nodded to the table, "Come, the kids are waiting."

After Peggy put John down in his booster seat, she sat down at the table at her usual seat and smiled at her kids, "This looks and smells wonderful, kids."

Steve smiled, "Happy birthday, hon."

"Happy birthday, Mama!" the kids cheered in unison.

Steve raised his glass, "A toast!" The kids and Peggy mirrored him by raising their glasses in the air. "A toast to a wonderful birthday and many more to come!" Everyone smiled and leaned forward and clanked their glasses together.

The evening was fun and eventful as planned by Sarah. After dinner, Steve brought out a cake, and the family sang Peggy "Happy Birthday," before she blew out the candles and cut the cake. Though the original plan was to bake a cake at home, Steve didn't think they'd have time after picking up
Athena and going to the vet, so he and the kids swung by the store to get a cake instead to maximize time to cook dinner. Peggy, of course, didn't mind. The evening was wonderful and relaxing for her after a long day at work. After Peggy opened her birthday presents, the family turned on music and danced with each other in the space between the kitchen and family room for much of the evening.

After hours of dancing, laughter, and photos, the kids have gone to bed for the evening, and Sarah took it upon herself to let Athena sleep in her room. With the house now peaceful and quiet, Peggy cuddled on the couch with her husband, his arm draping over her side, keeping her nice and close. Peggy smiled, "This has been a wonderful birthday, Steve."

"I'm glad you enjoyed yourself," Steve replied softly. "No matter what Sarah says, this was all her idea." He chuckled, "You'd read through me in a heartbeat if this was my surprise."

Peggy giggled, "Sarah is truly your daughter, darling. She gets her sense of the overly dramatic from you." She kissed his chest, "This was truly a great evening."

Steve sat forward and extracted himself from Peggy, "Evening isn't done yet."

"Oh?"

Steve revealed a small box he was hiding in the couch cushion behind him, "Happy birthday, gorgeous."

Peggy carefully took the box and slowly opened it, revealing the most beautiful earrings she ever saw. They were a pair of pear-shaped blue sapphires with shimmering white sapphires accents bordering the sterling silver teardrop frame. "Oh my God," Peggy gasped. "Darling, these…"

Steve shrugged, "I know, they're sapphires and you're birthstone is a diamond, but they looked pretty. And yeah, not an original birthday gift idea and I know you got lots of jewelry in…"

Peggy crushed her lips to his in a way to physically show her appreciation of the gift. After a long deep kiss, Peggy broke the kiss and smiled affectionately at her husband, "Darling, I love them. They look gorgeous." She chuckled, "You chose well." Peggy leaned forward to the coffee table and placed the jewelry box down, "But there's one last thing."

"And what's that?" Steve asked curiously.

Peggy pushed Steve back onto the couch then straddled his thighs, "this," she said as she started to kiss him deeply.

As the couple passionately kissed on the couch and their tongues dueled, Steve slipped his hands to the small of her back and worked his way down to her rear, Peggy moaning with pleasure into the kiss. After a long moment of frenzied kissing, Peggy broke the kiss and hastily removed her suit jacket and threw it on the floor. Steve instantly sat up and quickly unbuttoned her blouse while she did the same to his shirt. In a blink of an eye, Steve finished unbuttoning her blouse allowing Peggy to take it off entirely.

"Like what you see, darling?" Peggy said with a grin as she saw Steve staring at her chest. She leaned into Steve and kissed him again and finished unbuttoning his shirt without looking. She then ran a hand under his white undershirt and felt his firm torso. Peggy broke the kiss and leaned back to allow Steve to remove his collar shirt. Peggy grinned removed a bra strap off her shoulder, "You know this bra could be ditched."

Steve grinned, "I couldn't agree more." He suddenly stood up with Peggy still on his hips, causing Peggy to laugh. She locked her legs around his lower back and wrapped her arms around his neck,
anchoring her body to his. Peggy then returned to kissing Steve as he held her effortlessly.

"Upstairs?" Peggy said after she broke the kiss.

"Definitely," he responded as he leaned into her again to kiss her.

"Better lose that shirt too, Steve," she whispered, referring to his white undershirt.

"I shall when…"

"Daddy?" the sound of Sarah's voice from the foyer gave Steve such a shock that he nearly dropped Peggy on the floor. Only by squeezing her legs against Steve's body did Peggy prevent herself from being dropped.

Steve quickly but carefully lowered himself and the nearly half naked Peggy on the floor before addressing his daughter. Steve let go of his wife and peeked over the couch, quickly composing himself, "Hey, Sarah. Why are you out of bed?" he asked as Sarah stopped at the entrance of the family room.

Sarah smiled, "I just wanted to say, thank you for helping me with mama's surprise."

"You're very welcome, sweetheart."

"Is Mama here too?" Sarah asked innocently.

Peggy scooted out from underneath her husband and peeked her head over the couch but not enough to expose her nearly bare chest. "I'm here, darling," she said softly.

"Did you have fun?"

"Of course I did, sweetie. That's a funny question. Thank you so much for tonight," she said with a chuckle. "Now go to bed. It's late."

"Okay, night mama, night daddy, Love you!" Sarah said skipping away, heading back to bed without any hassle.

Peggy laid back down on the floor, and Steve turned his head to meet her gaze, both looking at each other for a few seconds. Then suddenly the couple burst into uncontrollable laughter. "Wow, that was close," Steve said calming down. He scooped up Peggy, bridal style earning a gasp from his wife, "She's sweet. Always thinking of others."

"She had a good teacher," Peggy said wrapping her arms around Steve's neck. She chuckled, "She couldn't be more like you if she tried."

As Steve carried Peggy into the foyer, he grinned at his wife, "But, I was right about one thing though."

"And that is?"

"Having sex in the family room and anywhere downstairs is a bad idea."

Peggy laughed and leaned her head against Steve's chest, "Well, Captain America, get your wife upstairs so we can continue. We'll get our clothes later."

"Yes, Ma'am."
Another Fluffy chapter. But don't get too comfortable, drama and adventures to come.

Perhaps a Christmas story since I missed Thanksgiving lol

Loosely inspired by a picture of Haley Atwell and a dog.

Chapter wasn't too heavy on Sarah since Chapter 36 was heavily focused on her.

Hope you enjoyed.
Chapter 39 Expo

I don't own Captain America

Dialogue heavy.

May 1957

Steve & Margaret Rogers Residence, Scarsdale, NY

"Honey, you almost ready?" Steve called out to his wife as he put on his dark blue suit jacket on in front of the full body mirror in the corner of the master bedroom. "Howard is sending a car for us and should be here any minute," he said while he looked himself over. Steve sported a dark blue suit and matching tie with a white pocket square folded into a neat triangle in his breast pocket, polished black shoes, and a fancy silver wristwatch gifted to him from Peggy to complete his suave look.

"Almost ready, darling!" Peggy called through the closed bathroom door. "Is April here yet?"

Steve shook his head, "Not that I know of!" He then looked at his watch and read "5:45" which meant that the car should be here in roughly fifteen minutes.

As he waited patiently for his wife to get ready, he looked out the open window to the evening sky. It's another Spring Friday evening, and the sky is painted in a brilliant orange hue without a single cloud in sight. The setting sun shined rays of orange through the open windows and colored the room in the same shade as the sky, and produced a homey feeling in the place. It felt like just an average evening in New York. But it wasn't another Friday evening for the Rogers, tonight is date night. Sort of. Tonight, Steve and Peggy are heading to the first night of the annual Stark Expo, and Steve has to be on stage with Howard to present and reveal new Stark technologies on the main stage of the Expo. Even so, he and Peggy are still going to make a date out of it and enjoy a night just the two of them.

After a few minutes, Peggy finally stepped out of the bathroom in a long red form-fitting evening gown with off the shoulders straps and notched sweetheart neckline. She wore more makeup than usual with cherry blossom colored lipstick and wore her long brown hair down in her typical elegant waves.

"Wow," Steve began as he looked at his wife. Peggy smiled as she headed over to the body mirror while putting on her last sapphire earring, the same earrings Steve gave her on her birthday. "Peggy… you look…incredible," he managed to say while he was taken back by her beauty.

"Sexy?" Peggy said with a smirk as she looked at him through the mirror.

"Very much so," he replied with a smirk.

Peggy finally finished putting on her earring and turned around to face her husband, "You always get tongue tied when I doll up. Never gets old."

"You've always been beautiful, Peggy, but when you doll up words fail me, and…" Peggy cut him off by stepping forward and grabbing his tie and bringing him into a passionate lip lock.

After a moment, Peggy broke the kiss, "You're always so sweet. What did I ever do to deserve
you?" She smiled and kissed him again.

Steve smirked and took a step back and fixed his suit, "My turn. How do I look?"

"Looking rather dashing, darling," she replied with a wide smile.

Steve chuckled, "You know? Your smile has got to be one of my favorite features." He winked, "One of them."

Peggy rolled her eyes, "Always a smooth talker."

The sound of the doorbell and the puppy barking interrupted their conversation. Steve kissed his wife on the cheek, "I'll get it."

Peggy turned back to the mirror to fix her appearance, "I'll be down in a minute." With that Steve left the bedroom, closing the door behind him to keep the privacy for his wife.

As Steve walked out of their bedroom, he glanced over the railing to the foyer below and saw Angela walking to answer the door with Athena hot on her heels. Athena, the young all black German Shepherd, became theirs legally earlier in the month after no one claimed the puppy and the Rogers waited for the mandatory 30-days before adopting her. Everyone was excited, especially Sarah, and even Peggy. Athena fit right in with the family, and the kids loved her. With the puppy in the family, the Rogers became a family of seven, especially since Athena is a lot like another child since she's still being trained.

Angela walked up to the door and opened it and instantly saw April, their young Filipino-American babysitter, "Hi, April!" she said happily. Athena barked loudly and wagged her tail energetically behind Angela's leg.

April smiled at the little girl, "Hi, Angela!" she said over the puppy barking.

Angela stepped aside and let April in and felt Athena pushing against her leg. "Athena, down! Down, girl! It's only April!" she told the dog.

April chuckled as she walked in, "It's okay, girl. It's only me," she gently said, leaving the front door open as Athena continued to bark at her. She bent down slowly and offered her hand causing Athena to calm down and relax, continuing to hide behind Angela's leg. After a few seconds, Athena stepped out from behind Angela and cautiously approached April and sniffed her hand. April smiled, "Don't worry, Angela, she's used to me. She's just overly excited is all." She was right. After a moment, Athena sat down at her feet and allowed April to pet her head and scratch the back of her ears. "You have such a beautiful puppy, Angela," April said with a smile.

Angela smiled, "Thank you. She's a cute, puppy, isn't she?"

April then stood up and spotted Steve walking down the stairs. She greeted him with a smile, "Hi, Mr. Rogers."

Steve smiled, "Good to see you, April," he said stepping off the stairs and walking over to his daughter and the babysitter. "Thanks for coming to watch the kids tonight."

April smiled, "Not a problem. Always happy to babysit these cuties."

"Kids, come here and greet April!" Steve said turning toward the family room.

After a few seconds, Michael walked into the foyer followed by Sarah holding John's hand. "Hi, Ms.
April!" Michael said happily as he approached the group.

"Hi, Ms. April," Sarah echoed after her brother.

April grinned, "Hey there, kids! Hugs?" Without hesitation, Michael and Sarah rushed forward and happily gave her a big hug. She then let go of the twins and turned to Angela, "Hug, Angela?" Angela nodded and stepped forward and hugged April tightly. After a moment, April let go of Angela after a moment and picked up John and greeted him with a big smile, "And how are you, John?"

John grinned, "Good!" he said happily.

April chuckled, "That's good to hear." She turned to Steve, "Have date night tonight?"

Steve chuckled, "Well, its Stark Expo night and it's more or less work related, but Peggy and I will make the most of it. Start off as work but fully intend to end the evening as a date."

"That's got to be nice. The Expo is always a good time, so I'm sure you'll enjoy yourselves," April said as she bounced John in her arms.

Steve turned to close the front door and spotted a small column of three cars pull up to the front of his house, the middle being a white limousine and the first and third cars are black sedans. He turned around and looked up the stairs, "Honey, the cars are here!" he called to Peggy still in their bedroom.

He then quickly turned to April, "So before we go, the kids haven't had dinner yet, Athena hasn't either, but the kids can take care of that, the kids also did most of their homework, but other than that, there's not much else to know about tonight." He chuckled, "I'm sure Peggy will find something to add. But as always, enjoy yourself, the kids love having you here, and we'll see you later tonight."

April smiled, "Got it. Thank you." She grinned at John, "Looks like we're going to have a quiet evening." John smiled happily at the young woman holding him.

"April!" Peggy called from the top of the stairs, her voice echoing in the open foyer.

April smiled, "Mrs. Rogers!" she called up to Peggy. "My you look so beautiful!" she complimented upon seeing Peggy's dress as Peggy quickly made her way down the stairs to greet her and join the rest of the family.

Peggy reached April and gave her a hug then the two women exchanged kisses on the cheek. "April, thanks for coming to watch the kids tonight," she said with a smile.

April nodded, "My pleasure, Mrs. Rogers." She smiled and looked Peggy up and down, "You look incredible in that red dress."

Peggy bowed with a smile, "Thank you, April."

"Enjoy yourselves tonight."

Peggy grinned, "Don't worry, we will. Did Steve tell you that…"

"He told me everything," she replied before Peggy could finish her asking her question.

"Great! Just make sure the kids don't feed Athena any cookies, sweets, or anything like that," Peggy added.

April nodded, "I'll make sure of it."
Steve wrapped his arm around Peggy's waist, "Hon, we got to get going if we don't want to be late."

"Right."

Angela stepped forward and hugged her father. Steve kissed her on the top of her head, "I'll see you later tonight, sweetie." He then looked up and smiled at his kids, "We'll be home around midnight. Be good, okay?"

Peggy took her time and kissed each of her kids on the cheek and gave them hugs, save for John who was still being held by April and only kissed him on the cheek. She turned her attention to Sarah and carefully bent down to be eye-level with her, "Sarah, darling," she began.

Sarah smiled, "Yes, Mama?"

"It's your turn to be in charge of your siblings. Make sure you treat April politely," Peggy instructed. She didn't really need to tell her kids to be polite since they all have good manners and discipline, but it was more for the sake of verbal confirmation and peace of mind to tell them.

"We will, Mama!" Sarah replied.

April smiled happily, "They're always so good, Ms. Rogers."

Peggy chuckled, "I know." She walked over to April and leaned forward and kissed John on the cheek one last time. "We'll be back tonight, sweetie," she said gently stroking his son's short blonde hair.


Steve wrapped his arm around Peggy's waist, signaling her that it's time to go, and together they finally started to make their way out of the house. As the two of them stepped out onto the porch, Peggy turned around one last time and waved to her kids, "Bye! I love you, children! See you when we get home!"

Steve smiled and waved at his family, "bye, kids!"

Michael and Sarah both waved, "Bye, Mama, bye daddy!" they said in unison.

"Say hi to Uncle Howard for us!" Angela called out.

"We will," Steve said with a smile as he turned around and leaned back into the house to close the door.

Peggy chuckled, "Always seems like a process to leave. But do I love our children."

Steve returned to his wife's side, "I sure hope you do." The two of them both laugh. "Shall we?" he said offering his arm to his wife. Peggy lovingly smiled up at her husband and linked her arm with his then they both stepped off the porch together and walked down the path to the waiting cars.

As Steve and Peggy walked down the path to the white limo, they saw SHIELD agents Jack Thompson, Kathryn Ottis, Rick Ramirez, and Mike Li standing by the lead car and four other agents standing by the last car, acting as the Rogers security team for the night. All the agents wore black suits and ties, except for Kathryn who only wore a black suit and coat with a white blouse. Since tonight is a highly publicized event, agents were assigned, under orders from Deputy Director Sousa, who took charge of the security plans, to follow and protect Peggy and Steve. Though Peggy didn't want to draw attention to herself with a large entourage, she understood the need for Sousa's security
plans and accepted them.

But as the Rogers got closer to the limo, they got a pleasant surprise when they saw the driver step out to greet them. Edwin Jarvis, Howard's trusted butler, stepped out of the driver seat of the limo and quickly made his way around the long body of the car to the right rear passenger door and opened it just as the couple reached him. "Good evening, Mr. and Mrs. Rogers," Jarvis greeted cheerfully.

Steve smiled, "Good Evening, Mr. Jarvis," he greeted.

Peggy smiled at her friend dressed in his usual suit, vest, and tie, "Mr. Jarvis, I didn't expect Howard to send you."

Jarvis bowed his head slightly, "I volunteered to drive you and Mr. Rogers to the expo and drive you home. It's always a pleasure to see you two. I feel like it has been a while since we last saw each other, hasn't it?"

Peggy nodded, "It has."

Steve grinned, "It hasn't been that long since you and Ana last saw us." He shrugged, "Maybe a month or more."

"Truly, but I always do enjoy your company."

"Feelings mutual, Mr. Jarvis," Steve said with a friendly smile.

Peggy turned her attention to Thompson and her former team, "Jack, I appreciate your team volunteering to head security for us."

Thompson waved, "Wouldn't want anyone else watching your back."

Ramirez chuckled, "No offense to the other agents, but they don't know you like us. We know how to work with you." He shrugged, "Plus, going to the Stark Expo on Friday night for work isn't too bad. We get in for free."

Peggy smiled, "Just make sure you remember you're working tonight." Ramirez laughed and waved his hand.

Kathryn walked over to the Rogers, "How are the kids, Director?"

Peggy smiled, "They're doing good. You should stop by and say hi to them. I know it's been a while, but Sarah and Michal still remember you."

"Really? Wow," she said surprised.

"They've grown a lot since you last saw them. I also don't think you ever met Angela or John yet, have you?" Peggy asked cocking her head to the side.

Kathryn smiled and shook her head, "Not yet. Only saw pictures and they look so cute."

Peggy chuckled, "They look so much cuter in person. Not to mention bigger," she said proudly. "You should swing by one of these days. We'll happily welcome you."

"Thank you, Director. I think I'll take you up on that offer one of these days," Kathryn nodded.

Jarvis spoke up and gripped the car door, "Mr. and Mrs. Rogers, I believe it's time for us to go. Don't
want to be late."

Peggy nodded, "right." Steve wrapped his arm around his wife and let her into the car first then got in after her.

Jarvis closed the door behind the couple then walked around the limo to the driver seat. At the same time, the SHIELD agents got back into their cars and got ready to make the drive to the Stark Expo.

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1957 Stark Expo, Queens, New York City

The Stark Expo, an exposition that rivals the World's Fair, that brings minds together from around the world and combines them to try and develop new inventions to improve quality of life for the world and the future. The Stark Expo, located in the heart of Queens, is massive and looked like a city in of itself and built with the idea of a bright utopian future. Though not a real city, the expo functioned much similar to a theme park like Disney Land. It contained its own transit system via monorail, restaurants, various stores, attractions, theaters, buildings, and its own internal security. At the center of the sprawling park is a long reflecting pool that spanned the width of the park from front to back. Towards the front of the park at the beginning of the pool is a large steel globe structure at the center of another fountain pool, and at the end of the reflecting pool is the newly built towering circular main Stark Expo pavilion that functioned as an amphitheater, and the adjacent three Astro-View towers.

The Rogers’ limo pulled up to the drop-off area of the expo and stopped at the beginning of the red carpet that leads to the VIP entrance within a tall modern building that looked to be made entirely of big panoramic windows. The narrow red carpet is flanked by chrome stanchions with a velvet rope, and thick crowds of press, paparazzi, and fans of celebrities behind them. Much like the World's Fair, the Stark Expo is world famous, and thus the VIP entrance is reserved for dignitaries, celebrities, the rich and famous, and those who can afford the special tickets with the extra perks, hence, the red carpet entrance. Steve and Peggy never have to pay for the VIP tickets since Howard provides them with a pair every year. Perks to working with him, saving his life and reputation, and being close friends.

Before Steve and Peggy stepped out of the limo, the SHIELD agents from the lead and tail vehicles stepped out and walked down the red carpet to post security for the couple's entrance. Thompson and Kathryn posted by the passenger door while the other agents posted incrementally throughout the length of the red carpet. As the SHIELD agents, clad in all black suits and ties, briskly got into position, the crowd watched curiously for who was in the limo that demanded so many bodyguards. The press and paparazzi, especially, waited impatiently with their cameras to take pictures of whoever stepped out of the car.

After a brief moment, the SHIELD agents were ready and in position. Thompson nodded at Kathryn which signaled her to open the rear passenger door of the limo. The moment the door opened, camera flashes erupted as Peggy got out of the limo first. Once Peggy stepped out of the limo, the press and crowd got a good look at her beauty. Dressed in a form-fitting red dress, Peggy completely mesmerized the crowds with her sheer beauty. Peggy smiled her gorgeous smile and waved at the cameras.

The majority of the crowd was calm and stared at her with interest and curiosity, but the press and paparazzi were having a field day and created the most commotion. They enjoyed this brief moment to take hundreds of pictures of the only woman to lead a government agency. Peggy as the first woman as a government espionage director tended to draw attention to herself in these largely publicized events. Her reputation as being exceptionally tough, firm, and resilient, painted the illusion
that she looked more masculine. Even though Peggy's face has been seen on TV and in newspapers, many people still expected her to look masculine from the stories of her. Words are a powerful tool. So, seeing the tough SHIELD director dressed in a lovely gown and look her natural feminine self than what her reputation perceives always peaked the press' interest.

After a few seconds, Steve stepped out of the limo, and suddenly the crowd erupted in cheers and more camera flashes. He happily joined his wife's side and wrapped his arm around her and brought her close. Peggy relaxed in his grasp in the middle of all the public attention, and she didn't care. The couple both smiled and waved at the crowds. Both of them are at ease in the middle of all the attention and cameras since they were both used to the limelight in some way. Steve has the most experience in the public since he was in show business.

Though years after the wars he fought in, Steve remained a public figure, much to his disapproval. He remained a public figure as Captain America, not because of his actions as a soldier, but because of the romanticized depictions of his exploits as Captain America in war and against the Soviets and Hydra by various forms of media. Unlike other soldiers awarded for heroism, Steve remained in the public eye and to be forever known as Captain America. No matter what he does, Steve can't seem to leave the title and that life behind him. At least Steve is happy to enjoy some aspect of a normal life, and that's all that matters.

Peggy then linked her arm with Steve's, and together they began their walk down the red carpet arm in arm with Thompson and Kathryn close in tow as their escort. As the Rogers walked down the long red carpet, people continued to wave, cheer, and take pictures of them. Peggy leaned into her husband and gripped his bicep with her free hand, "Did I ever tell you that you look handsome?"

Steve chuckled as he waved to the crowds, "I don't think people are looking at me during this," he said referring to Peggy's beauty. Peggy smiled and pushed her body closer to Steve's as they walked down the rest of the red carpet.

When the Rogers finally got to the end of the path, they briskly entered the grand entrance of the large glass building and were immediately welcomed by live swinging music, marble floors, and almost futuristic luxury interior design. In the central part of the glass building, where they entered, the second floor had an open plan so guests can look from the top level down to the first. The entire building seemed to be designed with the future and luxury in mind. It looked like a building created out of the Golden Age of Futurism.

Steve' jaw dropped upon seeing the luxurious things and nearly futuristic architecture. "Wow. Fancy," he whispered to himself.

Peggy looked around and noted a lot of people within the building, not to mention the mass of people outside around the red carpet. There was even a band with a singer playing music for the hundreds of VIP guests. Peggy gripped Steve's arm and looked up at him, "Sure a lot of people here. More than the last time we went to one of these things. Which was what? Two years ago, with the kids?"

Steve nodded, "Yeah, I'm sure it has to do with Howard's vague announcement about the future of Stark Industries and technology."

"Right. I remember now," Peggy said with a warm smile. "With this many VIPs, I wouldn't be surprised if we run into some Hollywood actors or politicians."

"Me neither," Steve replied as he walked with Peggy further into the building with their arms remaining linked. "Can't help but be amazed by the design of this building," he said with admiration, changing the subject. "This building has to be new."
"I'm betting it is," Peggy agreed.

As the couple walked through the crowd, they didn't see Howard Stark in the middle of the mass of people. Howard Stark is neatly dressed in a silver suit and held a glass of champagne in one hand and a lovely blonde woman in a formal dress to his side. As the host of the expo, he was entirely at home in this environment. The Rogers didn't seem to notice him as they walked along. Howard smiled at his female companion, "You see that man and the beautiful woman in red?"

The blonde lady nodded and smiled, "Oh my, is that Captain America? And is that, the Director of SHIELD?"

Howard nodded, "That's them."

"Wow," the blonde woman managed to say, trying her best to keep her excitement down. "I always wanted to meet them." She smiled up at Howard, "Is there a way to meet them?"

Howard chuckled, "Definitely. Remember, I told you that I'm good friends with them?"

"Right. I remember," the young blonde said.

Howard smirked, "You know, the Captain's a married man, right? And the Director of SHIELD is his wife."

The woman rolled her eyes and slapped his chest playfully, "Mr. Stark, what kind of woman do you think I am?" Howard smirked humorously in response. The blonde calmed down, "So are you really going to introduce me? I'm quite a fan of the two of them," she said with an excited smile.

"Only for a little bit. The opening ceremony for the expo is about to begin and I need him for it."

Howard nodded toward the Rogers, "Shall we meet them?" The young lady nodded excitedly.

A waiter in a white suit carrying a tray of champagne glasses approached the Rogers and bowed, "Champagne, sir and ma'am?"

Steve nodded, "Please," he said grabbing two glasses for him and his wife.

Peggy nodded to the waiter, "thank you." With that the waiter bowed again and left the couple to serve other guests. Steve then handed Peggy the glass, "thank you, darling," Peggy said taking the glass in her hand.

Steve smiled and slightly raised his champagne, "To us."

Peggy smiled, "To us," she repeated and clinked her glass with Steve's. With the toast, the couple took a sip of their champagne at the same time.

Howard and his lady friend approached the Rogers. "There you two are," he greeted pleasantly to his friends. "Thought you were going to be late."

Peggy smiled at Howard, "And why would you think that?" she asked humorously.

Steve nodded, "Howard, good to see you," he greeted.

Peggy chimed in and addressed the young women in front of her by Howard's side, "So, who's your friend?" She asked as she leaned into her Steve's side to show her possessiveness over her man.

Howard smiled and looked to his right, "This is Maria."
Maria, a young, bright blonde woman in an elegant violet dress, smiled and shook both Peggy's and Steve's hand. "Maria Collins Carbonell," the young woman greeted. She grinned, "Wow. This is a real honor to meet both of you." She paused and shook her head in amazement, "Both of you are amazing." Maria turned to Steve first, "And may I say, Captain, thank you for repeatedly saving this country from our enemies. Thank you for all you've done. And may I also say that you look a lot taller and handsome in person," she finished with a smile.

Steve nodded, "Um. Thank you," he unsurely said. It's been years since he retired from being Captain America, but people still remembered who he was and his actions during and after World War II. Having comic books and TV and radio shows made about him always kept Steve in the spotlight of the American public. Though many of his exploits are exaggerated or fictional, the public forever loved him as their hero. Steve smiled at Peggy, "Anyways, my time as Captain America is long over. If you want to meet a real hero, I'm not sure if you know, my wife is the Director of SHIELD and is responsible for saving not only the President but thousands of lives."

"Steve," Peggy whispered with a small smile across her lips.

Maria excitedly turned to Peggy, "Oh, I know who you are, Mrs. Rogers. I'm a huge supporter of your position and I think your swell," she said excitedly. She turned serious, "But, if I may say so, Ms. Rogers. I honestly think this country needs more people like you."

Peggy smiled at the young woman, "Thank you… Maria was it?" Maria nodded with a pleasant smile. "Those kind words mean a lot."

Howard nodded at Peggy, "Peg, was all these men in black agents your idea?" he asked referring to the numerous SHIELD agents in black suits scattered throughout the building, not to mention the large security detail attached to Peggy and Steve's side.

Peggy shook her head, "No, it was Daniel's. I put him in charge of security for me."

Howard nodded and looked around the lobby at the SHIELD agents. The agents stuck out like a thumb since all of them wore black suits and tended to have serious looks across their faces. He chuckled, "That makes sense since he's the one who's been hounding my people the past month." He turned his attention to Steve, "Steve. Are you ready?"

Steve nodded, "Ready."

"The opening ceremony starts in 45-minutes. We should head over to the pavilion right now."

"Sounds good," Steve nodded.

Howard turned to Peggy and Maria, "Ladies, if you follow us, we'll walk you over to the pavilion and drop you off at the Astro-View towers. The view of the park and the stage is to die for up there," he said with a smile.

Peggy smiled, "Lead the way."

Howard smiled and offered his arm to Maria who stepped forward and happily linked hers with his. The couple then turned and began to lead the way out of the glass structure. Peggy smiled up at her husband as she took his hand in hers, then together, they followed Stark and Maria toward the exit. When the two couples, with an entourage of SHIELD guards, finally exited the glass building they were welcomed by the futuristic atmosphere of the Stark Expo.

Outside, Steve, Peggy, and Maria were immediately immersed in the electric climate of the expo. Everything looked futuristic and clean. From the architecture of the buildings to the decorations, and
to the neon lighting, everything was created with the dream of the techno-utopian of tomorrow that American futurists, such as Stark, had to offer. The dark spring night sky really brought out the futuristic feel in the Exposition.

Steve smiled, "Never gets old," he said in admiration. Steve always liked the idea of the bright technological future and going to the Stark Expo always made him feel like it's not so far in the distant future. That's the artist and idealist in him talking.

Peggy smiled up at Steve and pressed herself up to his side prompting him to let go of her hand and instead wrap his arm around her body. "You're excited," she whispered up to him, seeing the spark of inspiration in his eyes.

Howard looked over his shoulder briefly, "Welcome to the 1957 Stark Expo." From there spot outside of the glass building, they could see the three Astro-View Towers and the circular Stark Expo Pavilion. Howard pointed to the towers, "The shortest tower is where we're heading. Reserved for VIP's to see the show and has two levels." He smirked back at Peggy, "And don't worry, SHIELD agents are in the Astro towers too."

Peggy chuckled, "Trust me, I'm not worried about my safety. I'll let my husband handle that." Steve looked at her in surprise. Peggy smirked and lightly jabbed his ribs jokingly.

Howard turned around and nodded to the glass building. "So, after the expo we'll return here to this building, The Expo Gallery, for a Stark Industries party with all the VIP's. An annual celebration for all of our accomplishments the past year." He smiled at the Rogers, "So, I encourage you to come."

Steve nodded, "You know we will."

Peggy chuckled, "Yeah, I want to celebrate my husband's accomplishments, and all those times he worked late in the office for you, Howard."

Howard rolled his eyes, "He makes his own schedule and he, on average, leaves earlier in the day on most days to pick up your kids from school and make dinner." He pointed a finger at Peggy, "he doesn't work that late all the time."

Peggy laughed, "That's true, but he still worked late for you."

Howard rolled his eyes, "Let's just go. Not getting into scheduling issues with you, Peggy, over your husband." As Howard started walking, Maria turned around and smirked at Peggy.

At the top level of the tallest Astro-View tower, Peggy and Maria, with drinks in hand, walked out onto the balcony to get a spot to see the Expo opening ceremony in the pavilion. The two ladies walked over to the railing and looked over the side to judge their view and saw that they had an excellent spot of the entire stage within the Stark pavilion. Though the tower is a little high, they had a perfect view and angle of everything.

The towering, open air, Stark Expo Pavilion below was built in an enormous circle with one long central archway for guests to enter and leave. The stage took a quarter of the circular pavilion and had colorful backdrops that showed images of the idea of a technological future. The structure also had an upper balcony that circled the entire circumference of the pavilion, so guests can see the stage in a variety of different angles. The circular structure also had fourteen equally spaced columns, accented with neon lights, to support the ceiling of a massive moveable awning, much like the velarium of sails used in the Roman Colosseum to shade guests. Through the space of the columns, only one of the Astro-viewing towers can see the stage, and that was the shortest tower that was only
From Peggy's spot on the balcony of the tower, she could see how packed the pavilion is with thousands of guests filling every available space in the amphitheater. Even the VIP Astro-tower is filling up with guests trying to get a view of the stage. Peggy took a sip of her drink, thankful for the lucky spot she and Maria found in this crowd of people. All there is left to do is drink alcohol and wait patiently with Maria for the Expo to start officially.

Maria took a drink, "If I may say so, Ms. Rogers, you're very beautiful in person. You probably hear that all the time." Peggy shrugged modestly in response. "If it wasn't for the TV or the papers, your reputation alone would make me think you looked more…"

"Masculine," Peggy said finishing her sentence.

"Yeah," Maria responded.

Peggy shrugged, "I get that a lot. Believe me."

"Well, people shouldn't think your masculine now. You turn a lot of heads wherever you walk here," Maria said complimenting Peggy. She looked around at the crowd, "Men are staring."

Peggy shrugged again, "I know. I don't mind people glancing at me or giving me short looks when I walk by, but I do, however, don't enjoy people ogling at my… assets."

"What's the difference?" Maria asked raising a brow.

Peggy took a sip of her drink, "The difference is, you can appreciate beauty tastefully. The very fact that people openly stare at me or you is not tasteful. They're staring lecherously which I don't appreciate. Short looks and glances are tasteful and appreciative, and that isn't bad."

"I see," Maria responded. "I understand."

"Besides, the only one who I enjoy and allow to stare at me in any sexual fashion is my husband. And that goes without saying," Peggy said with a smirk.

Maria nodded, "So," she began to change the subject. "You knew Howard for a long time?" Peggy noted she used his first name.

Peggy shrugged, "Since the start of the war. The Second World War. So yes, you can say we knew each other for a while."

"Wow. Been friends a long time."

Peggy smiled, "Yes, we've been through quite a lot over the years. He's one of my closest friends." She cocked her head to the side, "How long have you known him?"

"Little less than a month," Maria replied.

Peggy nodded, "I see."

Peggy thought to herself that Maria might be one of Howard's conquests as a womanizer which explains why she's a VIP in the Expo. She also looks really young and didn't deserve to be used in part of Howard's sexual exploits. Maria seemed like a bright girl and deserved better, and Peggy didn't want her to go through the drama and possible heartache as a result of Howard's habits. Of all the things Howard is, Peggy hated his womanizing trait the most for obvious reasons but by no
means did she hate or dislike him.

Peggy had to ask, "Maria," she began. Maria raised her brows in response to hearing her name. "If I may ask, how old are you?"

"I'm 23," Maria responded calmly with a warm smile.

Peggy flared her eyebrows, "You look so young. How long have you known Howard?"

Maria shrugged, "Only for a few weeks. We met when he visited my job in the city. I work as a secretary at a business firm." She sighed, "It's menial stuff, but it pays well." She smiled, "He was nice and asked me to attend the Expo with him. Naturally, I accepted."

"Howard does have a way with words," Peggy responded evenly.

"But, I know what you're thinking," Peggy raised a brow in curiosity. "You're thinking I'm one of his conquests, but I assure you I'm not. I know his reputation as a ladies' man, and I told him if he wants to be with me, he has to be serious. No games," Maria said evenly.

"Wow." Peggy smiled, "Way to tell him. So… You and Howard…"

Maria giggled and waved his hand, "Oh, heavens no. I know he would lie out of his teeth just to get me into bed. It's platonic, and he surprisingly still invited me as his date. Crazy, right? To think he'd find another woman instead of me to go with him."

Peggy laughed, "That is surprising, to say the least." She was right, Maria is bright not to mention steadfast. Peggy could be friends with her if they got a chance to get to know each other.

Maria smirked, "Since you asked me. How old are you?"

"I'm 36," Peggy responded as she took a sip of her drink.

"Kids?" Maria asked as she leaned against the railing.

"Four. Two boys and two girls," Peggy said with a smile.

"Four!" she gasped in surprise. "Four and you look like that? Wow! You look super fit and not to mention youthful for a gal who has four kids," Maria said with a big smile.

Peggy smirked, "I'm also the youngest agency director in the government. The average age of the men I work with are late fifties and early sixties." She chuckled, "They like to use their age on me a lot, but it never works."

Maria smirked, "Cheers, to Director Rogers," she said raising her glass.

Peggy raised hers and clinked it with Maria's then the two ladies took a sip of their respective drinks. As Peggy lowered her drink, she heard Angie's usual charismatic voice, "English!"

Peggy turned around and saw the Sousas approaching her arm in arm. Angie wore a floor-length beautiful bright blue satin evening gown with a long V-neck and open back. Her long wavy brown hair framed her face perfectly, and she wore makeup to accent her natural beauty and give her an elegant look. Angie looked absolutely stunning, and the famous actress turned heads as she approached Peggy. Her husband, Daniel Sousa, wore a well-pressed black suit and blue tie to match his wife's dress and limped by her side with his cane.

Angie gripped her husband's arm, "There you are, English. We've been looking all over for you."
Peggy grinned, "Angie, Daniel, you made it."

Thompson stepped in front of the couple with a sly smile, "Halt. You two look awfully suspicious."

"Jack, what are you doing?" Peggy asked rolling her eyes.

Daniel smirked, "Being a pain in the ass."

Thompson stepped aside and let the couple through, "Good to see you too, Boss," he said humorously. The other agents of the Major Cases Response Team chuckled along with Thompson.

Angie let go of Daniel and quickly walked over to Peggy and embraced her best friend then the two women exchanged kisses on the cheek. Angie took a step back and grinned from ear-to-ear, "sorry we took so long. We got kind of sidetracked with all the exhibits and attractions."

Peggy chuckled, "Understandable. It's wonderful to see you, Angie."

"Likewise, English. It beats waiting for the next time we get tea and coffee," Angie replied with a warm smile.

Peggy shrugged, "I agree. We should set up another get together. It's always good to see you."

"There's nothing going on tomorrow if you want to meet up for coffee, movies, and shopping."

"I'd like that," Peggy replied with a smile.

Angie clapped her hands, "Oh, I almost forgot. Thank you for the VIP tickets."

Peggy smiled, "Not a problem. I know you could've pain for them, but they're pricey. Besides, my husband and I know Howard, so it wasn't a hassle to ask for two extras."

Angie waved, "Thank you anyway." She smiled, "These fairs are always so inspiring with all these images of a bright future."

"It's nice to think about the future. I do it often actually."

Angie chuckled, "Because of work or because of family?"

Peggy took a drink from her glass, "A little bit of both. Sometimes one more than the other, but it depends."

Angie chuckled, "I understand. Ah kids… they're my world."

Peggy smirked, "Mine too."

Peggy looked to her side and saw Maria taking a sip of her drink as she looked out into the park. "Oh, where are my manners," Peggy began. She turned to Angie and waved her hand over to Maria, "Angie, this Maria Collins Carbonell." She noted Daniel was off conversing with Thompson and the other SHIELD agents for a moment.

Angie smiled and shook Maria's hand, "A pleasure."

Peggy smiled at Maria, "And Maria, this is Angie…"

Maria interrupted Peggy, "Wait a minute! You're Angela Sousa! The famed Broadway actress and singer!" She jumped excitedly, "I'm a huge fan! I've seen a lot of your performances and even have
some of your records!"

Angie smiled, "Well, thank you for being a fan."

Maria looked at Peggy and Angie, "I'm in the presence of two great women." Peggy and Angie shared a pleasant glance with each other.

Over by the SHIELD agents, Sousa talked with Jack Thompson and the Major Cases Response Team. "How's security, Jack?"

Thompson shrugged, "So far the only threats are men eyeballing the boss-lady. So, you know the usual when we go to these social functions."

"I'm sure she knows," Sousa responded.

"Yeah."

Li laughed as he remained in his position in the ring of security around Peggy, "Jack just wants an excuse to fight someone."

"Not surprised in the slightest," Sousa responded with a smirk.

Kathryn sighed from her spot, "But the reality is that whenever we go to these things, there's always the inherent threat of some nut job taking a shot at the Director, or even the Captain for that matter. The Director has a lot of enemies."

"No doubt," Thompson responded.

Ramirez chuckled, "she always looks so relaxed and calm about everything."

Thompson shrugged, "That's Peggy for you," he said as the team of agents scanned the crowd for anything suspicious, particularly people.

Over by the ladies leaning on the balcony railing, Angie laughed loudly, "It always seems like we always talk about our families when we manage to see each other."

Peggy smirked, "It's not a bad thing. We just love our families." She chuckled, "We're a couple of independent women who love our jobs and our families."

Angie smiled, "That's true. But you know what we should do later?" Peggy raised an eyebrow in response. "We should set up Daisy and John together when they get older. Wouldn't that be great?" Daisy was short for Angie's youngest daughter, Margaret Gabrielle Sousa. Since Angie and Peggy are best friends, Angie didn't want her daughter to have the same nickname to confuse her daughter possibly.

Peggy sighed, "Oh no. Angie, I'm not ready for that yet. I'm not even ready for Sarah or Michael dating yet."

"You're so much like an old maid sometimes, English," Angie responded humorously.

Suddenly, loud music started to play over the speakers in the Stark Expo Pavilion, drawing the attention of everyone in the immediate area. Angie turned around, "Daniel, it's starting!" Daniel immediately excused himself from the SHIELD agents and joined his wife, Peggy, and Maria by their spot on the balcony. Daniel limped over and leaned on his cane as Angie linked her arm with his and leaned her cheek against his shoulder and smiled. Everyone in the VIP Astro-viewing tower
is ready to enjoy the show.

At the Stark Expo Pavilion, a group of showgirls wearing half suits, leggings, and top hats walked out to loud music and performed a series of synchronized dance routines for the crowd in part of the opening ceremony. The crowd whistled and cheered as the showgirls performed their numbers to the sound of swinging music. At the end of the last song, with an eruption of cheers and applause, the girls all stepped in line and faced the crowd with big smiles on their faces. After a moment of waiting, one of the showgirls on the end of the line was handed a microphone from backstage then which she walked to the middle of the stage while accenting the sway in her hips.

Once the lovely young lady got to the middle of the stage, she smiled, "Ladies and gentlemen. Put your hand together for Mr. Howard Stark!" With the announcement of Stark’s name, numerous fireworks rockets were launched and exploded in colorful assortment in the sky. Over the loud booms of fireworks, the crowd erupted in thunderous cheers and whistles.

Howard suddenly appeared from backstage as the music started to play over the speakers. He waved and smiled at the crowds of people who cheered for him as he walked onto stage. Howard walked over to the performer with the microphone then gave her a peck on the cheek before being handed the mic. The young lady smiled and bowed then stepped back to her position in the line of showgirls. Howard smiled and waved with both of his arms causing the crowd to erupt once again. He smirked, "Ladies and gentlemen!" he said over the thunderous mass of people and the distant booming of fireworks. "Thank you, thank you."

As the crowd settled down, a young woman's voice was heard screaming, "I LOVE YOU, HOWARD!"

Howard chuckled, "And I love you." With that everyone laughed. He smiled, "Now, ladies and gents, thank you for coming to tonight's Stark Expo opening night to get a glimpse of the future with me, and the future of Stark Industries." As he spoke, a large white projector screen lowered over the backdrop directly behind Howard and the line of showgirls. "But before I show you this vision of the future, it is my honor and privilege to welcome my colleague and greatest friend, Captain Steven G. Rogers, retired, formerly known as CAPTAIN AMERICA!" The crowd once again erupted in thunderous cheers, applause, and whistles.

Steve appeared from backstage to the sound of cheers that drowned out the music playing on the speakers. He smiled and waved to everyone as he made his way over to Howard on stage. At the VIP Astro-viewing tower, Peggy smiled and clapped proudly upon seeing her husband walk on stage. Angie glanced over at Peggy and smiled, seeing joy and pride in her eyes.

Steve walked over to Stark and shook his hand with a warm smile. Howard turned back to the crowd, "Now if you've been wondering what the famed war hero Captain America has been doing since the war, let me tell you." He paused for effect, "He's been working for me at Stark Industries as a Senior Manager of the Civil Technologies Division." The crowd again cheered and clapped. "I know right? And he's really good at what he does." He smiled to the people, "Stark Industries has expanded and grown over the years. From starting as a simple industrial company with a questionable future to being a massive tech conglomerate and weapons company for the United States military, Stark Industries has sealed its place in the American framework, and it's here to stay." The mass of people again cheered and clapped enthusiastically. Howard smiled, "But, to assure the future remains bright, this company needs effective leadership to guide this company in our journey. And ladies and gents, I can't do this alone." He chuckled and briefly glanced back at the showgirls, "As you can see, I got a lot on my plate." Everyone laughed.

Howard turned back to Steve, "Steve, you've risen quickly through the company and have recently
been promoted to a Senior Manager position. But, I need your help running this company, and I couldn't think of anyone I trust more other than you." Steve looked at Stark with complete surprise. "After much deliberation… the board and I elected you to be President of Stark Industries. You will be my second in running this company." He stuck out his hand to Steve with a smile, "Congratulations, Captain." The audience immediately all clapped and cheered in support of Howard's announcement.

At the VIP Astro-Viewing tower, Peggy gasped and leaned back from the railing in equal surprise as her husband. Angie looked at Peggy with a wide smile, "Wow, Peggy."

Peggy shook her head, "Wow is right. This is…"

"Wonderful?" Maria spoke up.

"A big shock for me and even for him," Peggy said leaning forward on the railing again. "That's my husband," she said with a prideful whisper.

On stage, Steve took a moment before shaking Howard's hand because he was in complete shock at the news. Howard never hinted of him being promoted again, and such left Steve in complete astonishment. Steve climbed the ladder in Stark Industries incredibly fast, much to his surprise, and never intended on being anything more than his current job. After returning from the Korean War, Steve only ever wanted to work a normal and well-paying job and support his family which Howard happily provided. Steve only intended to give his best in the work he grew to love and has thrived in every position he's been assigned. But now being promoted again, it looks like Steve is going to have a lot more on his plate when it comes to being an executive officer of a multimillion dollar company.

Steve graciously shook Howard's hand and made sure to smile. Howard handed Steve the microphone before stepping back to give Steve the stage. "Ah," Steve began. He laughed as he glanced over at Stark, "If I knew I was being promoted and being promoted on stage, I would've written a speech or something. Am I supposed to make a speech?" The audience laughed. Steve took a short glance up at the VIP Astro-viewing tower, though he couldn't see Peggy, he knew she was watching. Peggy knew who he was looking at and gave him a small smile, understandably knowing he couldn't see her.

Steve looked back at Howard, "Well…Thank you, Howard and the Board of Directors for this prestigious position. I'm honored to be your second."

Howard was handed another mic from one of the showgirls and rejoined Steve's side at the front of the stage. He patted his friend on the shoulder, "No one on Earth can do what you do, Steve." He smiled and turned to the crowd, "Now, Steve, shall we tell the crowd why we're really standing on this stage?"

Steve nodded, "Let's."

Howard smiled, "Here at Stark Industries we aim to shape tomorrow. Everything is achievable through technology, better living, robust health, and the first time in human history, the possibility of world peace." He started to pace along the stage and with his strong voice, he captivated the audience. "Technology couples with imagination holds infinite possibilities, and one day cure society of all its ills. Soon, technology will affect how you live your life every day."

Steve began, "Stark industries is at a breakthrough of a new source of power. A potential unlimited form of energy. Taking what we know and further developing nuclear energy. A cleaner and safer form of nuclear power." The audience smiled with interested curiosity.
Howard waved his hand over to the large projector screen behind him, "Ladies and gentlemen. I give you the concept of the Arc Reactor." On cue, a slideshow of conceptual images of the arc reactor was projected on the screen.

The slideshow was created in the 1950s futurism art style with colorful pictures and extraordinary detail of what the future can look like. But the primary focus of the slideshow was on the arc reactor concept and the vision of the design. The design showed to the public called for a large silver spherical shell for internal confinement of energy that attempts to initiate fusion energy as opposed to fission used in all nuclear reactors.

Howard smiled, "Though this is just a concept, we plan on replacing fission energy with more efficient fusion energy, and replacing the commonly used Uranium-235 and Plutonium-239 with a new element that we at Stark Industries are trying to find that is a far safer and a more powerful substitute." He smiled, "Many of you will think this is farfetched. But it's not. We have harnessed the power of the stars with nuclear power, and that alone should show that anything is possible if we believe in it and work at it. We as a people can do anything, and with technology everything is possible."

Howard nodded and the slideshow on the screen started to show more futurism art with cities of the future, complete with monorails, sprawling cities, and fancy cars with fins. "Imagine a world once thought the realm of science fiction. A world where you don't have to put gas in your car. Infinite energy to continue our journey of progress. With all the potential applications of the energy we can create with the Arc Reactor, we may have more time, leisure activities, and enjoying the sweet life." He turned to Steve.

Steve picked up where Howard left off, "This is the way of the future by harnessing fusion energy and controlling the power of the stars. What was first used as a means to bring Armageddon, is now bringing something miraculous." He waved his hand to the projector, "An unlimited source of power. And with continued research and development, make it safer."

Howard smiled, "Things aren't without setbacks. What did Thomas Edison say when he was making the light bulb? 'I haven't failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that don't work.' And he just needed to find one way to make it work. So, we will continue to work at this concept." He nodded, "And as we continue through the night, and you see and listen to other expositions, we hope here that you embrace the idea of progress through technology and innovation." He waved, "Stark Expo and Welcome." With that the crowd erupted, once again, in thunderous applause and cheers.

On the balcony of the VIP Astro-viewing tower, everyone cheered and clapped at Howard and Steve's presentation and the first show of the Expo. Peggy leaned back and smiled, "wow," she whispered under the thunderous applause. "That's my husband down there. The charming, sexy, and confident man I know and love."

Angie leaned into Peggy, "Careful, people might see that you're drooling over your man," she said humorously. Peggy shot Angie a mock glare but soon started to laugh along with her friend Maria laughed, "That paycheck will be astronomical."

Peggy smirked, "That's not what I'm interested in. Besides, we've never been concerned with money." She shook her head, "I'm just shocked. That's two big promotions in two years."

Daniel shrugged, "Stark must see something in Steve to appoint him as his second. That or Steve is a really dedicated employee which I'm sure he is."

"I don't know the reason. Whatever the case, I'm so damn proud of my husband," Peggy said with
pride as she looked down at the stage where her husband stood waving at the crowds with Stark. She chuckled, "Knowing him. He probably doesn't want that prestigious position. Always the modest one."

Angie laughed, "Sounds like your husband."

Peggy nodded, "He works hard, and he went through a lot to get here." She crossed her arms over her chest, "Watching him take all those classes and work hard all those years...not to mention going to war again, put a lot of stress on us and the family. I'm just so glad it's paying off for him." She chuckled to herself, "I'm so proud."

"You should be," Daniel said with a smile.

Peggy shrugged, "Still a surprise he got promoted again. And in front of everyone. Begs the question why did Steve get the President position for the company so fast and suddenly."

Maria spoke up with a smile, "You are very suspicious, Ms. Rogers."

"I'm always suspicious of Howard's actions," Peggy said jokingly. "I'm not trying to take away my husband's promotion, but rather am curious as to why he got it so fast."

Angie shrugged, "Can always ask Mr. Stark when you see him tonight at the gallery."

"Oh, I suppose that's true, isn't it?" Peggy said flaring her brows.

"Speaking of... Shall we head to the gallery?" Daniel said as he wrapped his arm around his wife.

Peggy nodded, "Let's."

Angie laughed, "You're the director of SHIELD, English. You lead the way."

Peggy bowed, "Thank you. Don't mind if I do." With that Peggy left the balcony with Maria and the Sousas close in tow, and her SHIELD guards keeping a shallow bubble around the group.

**Stark Expo Gallery**

All the VIP guests gathered in the Gallery, enjoying complimentary food, open bar, dancing, pleasant conversations, and live swing music. It was a lively gathering with an enjoyable atmosphere. Peggy stood somewhere in the middle of the crowd with the Sousas and Maria in her circle of SHIELD agents, socializing with her friends with drinks as she waited for her husband to enter the gallery.

Peggy smiled at Angie, "So we got plans for tomorrow, but when's the next time you'll bring David and Daisy over to the house? The kids will love to see all of you," she said mentioning Angie's children. David Bradford Sousa was the oldest at the age of six, and Margaret "Daisy" Gabrielle Sousa was the youngest at the age of two. Daisy and John, and David and Angela get along great together, and the two pairs of kids are very close in age which makes it better for them.

Angie smiled, "I'll bring them over again soon the next time we come over. Besides, Daisy and John are so close. They need to see each other," she chuckled.

Peggy rolled her eyes, "Please, don't try setting up my kids at this early age."

"I promise," Angie said with a grin.
Suddenly, the band stopped playing which drew their attention, as well as all the guests, to the small platform. The band leader bowed and took the microphone in his hand, "Ladies and gentlemen, I hope you're enjoying the music, but it's time… I present Howard Stark and Steve Rogers," he said waving to the back entrance of the gallery. Everyone turned to the door just as Howard and Steve entered and immediately welcome the two men with thunderous applause.

As the two men walked in the band started to play a lively tune as the crowd continued to cheer and clap. Howard then nodded at Steve and split off, jogging toward the stage. Steve, instead, went the opposite direction and headed to the bar to try and find his wife. As Howard ran onto the stage, the band leader gradually stopped the band then handed him the microphone.

Howard smiled at the band leader, "Thanks, Bob." As everyone continued to clap and cheer for him, Howard raised his hand, "Okay, okay. Thank you so much for coming to the first day of the Expo. I want to say thank you to all those who donated to make this Expo possible. Because without you, this couldn't have happened without your generous donations." He waved his hands again and laughed, "I think I talked enough today. Now, enjoy the open bar and enjoy yourselves for the rest of the evening. But if you know what's good for you, don't challenge Captain Rogers to a drinking contest. I guarantee you'll lose." The crowd laughed loudly at the friendly joke, and Steve waved his hand with a modest smile in response. Howard smiled, "Enjoy the party." With that, he stepped off the stage, and the crowd in the gallery applauded him once again.

As Howard stepped off stage, the band returned to playing a lively tune, and the guests went back to mingling, dancing, and drinking heartedly. Steve leaned up against the bar and scanned the area in front of him for Peggy in her stunning red dress. After a moment of scanning, the bartender spoke to him, "Get you something to drink, Captain?"

Steve smiled, "Beer, please. The best you got on tap."

"You got it. Coming right up, Captain," the bartender said, moving to get Steve a pint.

As the bartender left, Steve suddenly spotted Peggy's beautiful figure in her red dress in the middle of the crowd, looking back at him with an ever so loving smile and holding a full champagne glass. Steve smiled at her, and she responded by gesturing her head to the side to signal him to come to her. He chuckled in return. Soon the bartender returned with the beer and placed it by Steve's elbow, "Here you go. Enjoy your night, Captain."

Steve nodded, "Thank you. You too." With beer in hand, Steve finally walked over to his wife.

Once Steve joined her, Peggy didn't hesitate and kissed her husband full on the lips for a long moment before he could do anything. After a few second, Peggy broke the kiss and wrapped her arm around Steve's frame, "Oh, darling, congratulations on the promotion!"

Steve chuckled, "Thank you, Peggy."

Daniel raised his champagne glass, "Yeah, congrats, Steve."

"Congrats!" Angie and Maria echoed, also raising their champagne glasses.

"Thank you, guys," Steve replied.

Peggy leaned into Steve and looked up at him, "I'm so very proud of you, Steve." She smiled, "I know you worked hard to get to where you are now, overcoming frustrations and setbacks. And I'm glad you realize the value in what you do and see your potential! This is wonderful! Howard wouldn't have promoted you so fast if he didn't see potential in you." Peggy kissed his cheek, "I'm so
proud, honey."

Steve smiled back, "Thank you, Peggy. I couldn't have done this without such a patient wife and family." Peguy leaned forward and kissed him on the lips.

Maria chuckled, "Are they always like this with each other?"

Daniel nodded, "Always." The Rogers broke the kiss and glared over at them with mock annoyance. "Give them a break. Steve just got promoted to President in Stark Industries," Angie said with a wide grin.

Steve chuckled and raised his glass of beer then took a swig. Maria chuckled, "I see Steve is a man of simple tastes," she said commenting on Steve's beer.

Peggy laughed, "He is, which makes it easy to get him things for his birthday and the holidays. He usually doesn't want anything, so that leaves it up to my imagination." The group chuckled in understanding.

As Angie, Daniel, and Maria started to engage in conversation, Peggy turned back to Steve and spoke in a hushed tone just loud enough for Steve to hear, "We have to bring the kids to the expo. I think Michel and John would especially love it."

Steve chuckled, "We should. The fair lasts for months so we got plenty of time to take them. But, tonight, it's a good night for us."

"It is," Peggy said with a warm smile as she leaned into her husband.

Howard appeared in the group and smiled at everyone, "How's everyone enjoying themselves?" he asked wrapping his arm around Maria, earning a smile from the young woman.

Maria grinned, "Very well. I quite enjoyed your opening of the ceremony."

"Well, how are you liking the expo so far?" Howard smirked.

Maria shrugged, "It's alright I guess," she said jokingly. Howard chuckled and shook his head.

Daniel spoke up, "Arc Reactor, huh? That's the way of the future."

"Mhmm. What's on your mind about it?" Howard asked.

"Well. Fusion is more powerful than fission hence the creation of the more powerful H-Bombs, but it's harder to control. How do you plan in controlling the reaction and the subsequent temperatures to achieve fusion power?" Daniel asked.

Howard smiled, "That's an excellent question and one I'm still working on solving. But the point of the confinement system is to heat and compress the fuel target. My biggest concern is the energy delivery, controlling the imploding fuel, preventing premature heating of the fuel, and preventing premature mixing of hot and cool fuel by hydrodynamic instabilities. Are you following me?"

Daniel, Angie, Peggy, and Steve stood with blank stares. Only Maria stood with a fascinated grin on her face, enjoying Howard's intellect. Howard chuckled, "Anyway, this reactor won't be made tomorrow or next month. It'll take years for it to work. And lots of trial and error. Also, not to mention it sure as hell isn't going to be small."

Daniel chuckled, "Well… best of luck."
Angie looked at her husband, "What did you expect the answer to be? Simple?" Daniel rolled his eyes.

Maria laughed, "I didn't follow it either, but I know Mr. Stark will figure out the problems. Because let's be honest, if he invents something, it'll work."

Howard hugged Maria, "She's got a point."

Peggy eyed Howard, "Howard," she called.

"Yes, Pegs?" Howard replied.

"Um. Curiously. Steve is doing very well working for you, no doubt, but two promotions in two year?" Peggy asked with a smile.

Steve nodded in agreement, "It is kind of odd."

"I'm not saying to take away my husband's promotion, but I don't know. It seems hasty," Peggy replied.

Howard nodded, "Understandably it's a big surprise. But Steve has a knack for business. He's good with personnel management, accounting, and excellent in communication, and an enthusiastic leader. He proves it time and time again. Steve's an obvious choice for the board to choose him to be President. So, he doesn't need to thank me, it was just my word on the board." He chuckled, "He doesn't need to be a nuclear scientist, engineer, or an underwater basket weaver to be President. He just needs to be an outstanding businessman, and that he is."

Peggy nodded, "Well that answers that."

"Look, Steve is climbing up the corporate ladder whether he likes it or not. He works hard and continually shows a lot of potential. This job is for him. And I wouldn't want anyone else working beside me," Howard said proudly.

Steve raised his beer to Howard, "Well, thanks."

"Very welcome, my friend."

Suddenly, a good looking man roughly the same age as Howard with thick brown hair and a black suit called out to Howard, "Howard!" the man said, interrupting the conversation, but was stopped from approaching the group by Kathryn and Ramirez. The man looked at the two SHIELD agents confused, "I know Mr. Stark. We're close friends."

Ramirez looked back at Howard and Howard waved him in, "He's good. Let him through."

Kathryn and Ramirez stepped aside and let the man through. The man then approached the group, "Some security you got here for you, Howard. Almost like you're fearing for your life."

Howard nodded toward Peggy, "They're SHIELD agents assigned to protect the Rogers."

The man turned his attention to Peggy and liked what he saw, "Well...hello there, sweetheart," he said waltzing over to Peggy and Steve.

Steve raised a brow in question as Peggy looked at the man with cold eyes. "It's Director or Mrs. Rogers. I'm the Director of SHIELD," Peggy shot back. No matter what, Peggy hated it when men automatically called her nicknames or pet names for girls.
"Of course, Director," the man said offering his hand to Peggy. Peggy, out of respect, shook his hand. The man shook her hand a little too long for comfort, and smiled warmly, "I'm Obadiah Stane. A colleague of Howard's." Obadiah Stane is a good friend of Howard's and a brilliant businessman and engineer. He knew Stark for a while and worked closely together since Stark Industries inception.

"Margaret Carter Rogers," Peggy replied evenly as she got her hand back. She looked up at her husband, "And this is my husband, Steve Rogers."

Obadiah smiled and shook Steve's hand, "Oh, I know who he is. I'm quite a fan." He then stood straight and faced Howard, "Right, I almost forgot. Howard, may I speak with you in private?"

Howard nodded, "Uh. Sure. Not a problem. Follow me."

Obadiah nodded to the group, "Pardon my rudeness and intruding in your conversations." He smiled at Peggy and Steve, "Pleasure to meet you Director and Captain." With that Obadiah and Howard left the group to talk.

Peggy eyed Obadiah suspiciously before returning back to her husband and friends. She raised her glass and smiled, "A toast!" Daniel, Angie, and Maria raised their glasses with big smiled. "A toast to my wonderful and handsome husband, the new President of Stark Industries."

Everyone smiled and toasted to Steve and took a sip of their respective drinks.

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Howard and Obadiah walked off to a secluded balcony on the top floor of the gallery that overlooked the street and the red carpet entrance. The balcony was away from anywhere of interests for the VIP guests wandering and exploring the gallery, so they had a good measure of privacy from any prying eyes and curious ears. Regardless, Obadiah closed the double balcony doors behind them to assure privacy. Howard leaned against the railing, "So."

Obadiah leaned forward and put his hands on his hips, "You know what this is about, Howard."

Howard sighed, "Look, the board voted, and they chose Steve Rogers. And that was surprising to me too."

"Don't bullshit me, Howard, I know you're CEO and chairman of the board. Was my name even up for consideration?" Obadiah stressed.

"It was along with Steve's."

"Then what happened? A long time ago, you assured me a large piece of the pie. I worked alongside you, hand-in-hand, for years since Stark Industries inception. We're a team!" Obadiah frowned, "And suddenly, you started getting nice and cozy with Captain America and find myself off to the side. He's a god damn soldier not a businessman."

Howard frowned, "If you don't recall, Steve secured numerous business deals and expertly bids on getting resources for our projects without wasting money. He shows a lot of potential and isn't barred by conventional thinking nor enticed by money. He won't sacrifice his principles and the intent of this company. That's why the board elected him as president of the company."

"Damn it, Howard." He sighed and ran a hand coolly through his hair, "Steve Rogers is yesterday's hero. He may have been the super soldier during the wars we fought, but out here, he's just another vet in the civilian workforce. The wars are over." He closed the distance with Howard, "He doesn't belong with the upper class," he said sternly.
Howard frowned, "Do you not remember where I came from? Do you recall that I grew up in the Lower East Side? That my father sold fruit, my mother sold shirt wastes for a factory. Do you think a guy like that belongs in this high society with the upper class?"

"You promised me the position that Steve has!" Stane rebuked. He shook his head and raised his voice in anger, "I'm an experienced businessman and I'm an engineer. I can help this company change the world in ways Rogers can only dream."

"Deal is done, Stane," Howard shot back. "But your current position, which is really good, by the way, is ensured."

Stane sighed and shook his head, "It's not the one I'm shooting for. But, why do I have a feeling you're part of the reason Steve Rogers is President of the company instead of me. As Chairman, you have voting power," he said accusingly.

Howard sighed and crossed his arms, "The board's decision is made," he said refusing to give any details of the board meeting. He calmed down, "Look. You've been my friend for years, I need you with me on this for…"

"Are we?" Stane interrupted. "I blame you," he said angrily. With that Stane stormed off angrily to the balcony doors.

Howard turned to him, "Obadiah!" Stane stopped for a moment as he opened the door but didn't face him. "Don't do anything you'll regret!"

"Don't count on it," Stane said coldly as he walked out. Howard sighed and shook his head, perceiving a potential problem with Obadiah Stane remaining in the company.

As Stane walked back into the gallery, he passed Steve approaching the balcony. "Stane," Steve greeted, but Obadiah didn't say a word as he briskly walked by him. Steve looked back and could feel the coldness resonating off of Stane as he walked away. There was no sense getting involved, so Steve elected to mind his own business and continue toward Howard on the balcony.

Steve walked out onto the balcony and saw Howard leaning against the railing, staring off into space. "Hey," Steve greeted.

Howard looked back and quickly stood straight upon seeing Steve. "Steve," he replied. "Why aren't you inside with Peggy?"

Steve walked over to the railing and leaned against it, "She's having girl talk with Angie and Maria."

"I see," Howard replied calmly.

"You alright? Stane looked mad when I walked passed him on my way up here."

Howard nodded, "Yeah. Just dealing with drama with an old friend."

"First time I ever met him and he already hates my guts."

Howard smiled, "He's mad at me and jealous of you, greatness invokes that reaction sometimes. But don't worry about it, he'll come around."

Steve leaned his back against the railing and crossed his arms, "Well, I guess that leads to my question." He sighed, "Why did the board choose me?"
Howard smirked, "That's the topic of the evening, turns out." He leaned back against the railing, "First, you were elected, but it wasn't a unanimous decision. I voted for you, and you won by a mass majority to be President of the company."

"Um, thanks," Steve said, unsure what to say.

"As to why you were elected, it's because of the results you've produced in the past few years, your communication abilities, leadership, and your unmatched work ethic. You're incredibly smart, learn quick, and expert in dealing with people." He chuckled, "I would be lying if your reputation and service as Captain America had anything to do with it. A few used your service against you, but the biggest factor against you was your experience and age."

Steve shrugged, "Yeah, I'm young and only have a handful of corporate experience under my belt."

"Hey, I'm pretty young for CEO too, I'm only 40, so I don't think age should've played much of a role in their decision," Howard replied. He wasn't wrong, the vast majority of the chief executives in the world's biggest corporations are over 58 years of age, making Howard one of the youngest CEO's in the world.

Steve chuckled, "You created the company, Howard. You're different."

"Look, your results as Senior Manager, and potential in the corporate world is the reason why you're President. A gamble for much of the board, but a sure choice for me." Howard smiled, "I know you'll manage the company's day-to-day operations well and you'll do great in the job." He chuckled, "Plus, you get a bigger office at the top."

Steve shrugged, "Not a huge difference for me, but I appreciate it."

Howard stuck out his hand, "Steve, you'll do great. Plus, I need someone I can really trust to watch my back in the corporate setting."

Steve smiled and shook his hand, "You got it."

Suddenly the balcony door opened, revealing Peggy with a big grin on her lips. "Steve Rogers, come back inside and dance with the woman that loves you," she said playfully.

"Yes, honey," Steve said with a smile. He pushed himself off the railing and turned to Howard, "Thanks, Howard."

Howard nodded, "You're welcome." He nodded to Peggy, "Now dance with your wife. I'll join you guys downstairs in a few minutes."

Steve nodded and walked over to Peggy and wrapped his arm around her, but before they left, Peggy looked over to Howard, "Howard."

"Hm?" He hummed in response.

"Not like you to leave your date before the night is through," Peggy said with a cheeky grin. "You should come down and at least entertain her with your intellect."

Howard smiled, "I will in a minute, Peggy."

"Maria is a bright girl. She's young, but she's smart." Peggy nodded, "I like her." She then turned stern, "But if you mess up just a little bit with her, either physically or emotionally, remember…I can make people disappear." With that, Peggy smiled and turned back to her husband and the couple left
Howard chuckled, "Tough woman," he said to himself. Peggy may have been joking, but she's the type of woman who would carry out any threat she said.

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**Steve & Margaret Rogers Residence, Scarsdale, NY**

It was past midnight by the time Steve and Peggy got home from the Expo. The kids were already fast asleep, tucked into bed by April for the night. April was paid for her time and work babysitting the kids and the dog, and quickly left for home. It was an eventful and fun night for both Steve and Peggy, and now that their home, it's time for them to get to bed too. But, Steve wasn't tired nor was he ready for bed.

Steve sat alone in his small, cluttered office in the basement, still in his suit but without his tie, staring blankly at the wall in front of him. The wall he was absently staring at was full with an assortment of wall décor consisting mostly of his college degrees, family photos, and the only two picture of his Captain America days. One during World War II where he posed with Peggy, Bucky, and the rest of the commandos standing by a destroyed Tiger tank, and the other just before the Korean War. Steve's eyes diverted to the World War II photo, and his mind began to wander to today's events, particularly his surprise promotion. Steve couldn't help but feel like something terrible was going to happen because he got promoted, but couldn't tell what.

There were some obvious signs of friction between Obadiah Stane and Howard later in the evening. Though Steve never met Stane before tonight, Stane and Howard were obviously close if Howard referred to the other as an "old friend." It didn't take a trained investigator to tell that the private exchange between the two men ended poorly. No doubt the conversation ended severely over the subject of Steve's sudden promotion. Steve couldn't help but wonder if he was suddenly promoted to prevent someone else, someone like Stane, from getting the position, despite what Howard assured earlier. He didn't know anything about Stane, other than he was both angry and jealous of his promotion, so everything was pure speculation. His sudden promotion still didn't make much sense to him. Whatever the case, Steve didn't know what to expect as President of Stark Industries.

Suddenly, Steve felt a pair of arms snake around his shoulders and embrace him. Peggy, now dressed in her pink robe and with damp hair from her shower, hugged Steve tightly from behind and kissed his cheek lovingly. He returned back to reality and gripped one of Peggy's arms and smiled at his wife. Peggy smiled, "Hey."

"Hey," Steve replied calmly.

"What are you thinking about, darling?" Peggy said resting her chin on his shoulder.

Steve shrugged, "Hm. Thinking of what to expect as President of Stark Industries. I have no idea what I'm going to do."

Peggy smiled, "I'm sure you'll figure it out, besides, I'm sure Howard will walk you through the job. Sounds unreasonable for the board and Howard to just toss you into a new job and expect you to be perfect at it."

"Yeah. You're right," Steve said calmly.

Peggy hugged Steve tighter, "Hey." Steve looked at her, his lips close to hers. "I'm always right," she said with a smile before kissing him gently. Steve smiled and gave Peggy's arm an affectionate grip. "Nobody's perfect. Just do the best you can."
"Yeah. That's the plan," he said looking back at the old World War II photo.

Peggy furrowed her brows, "What's going on in there?" she asked referring to his distant look.

Steve sighed, "Just funny how things turn out."

"What do you mean?"

"Never expected to be a President of a company. Never saw myself getting to that point. I'm not saying I don't want the job. I'm just saying that it's a surprise." Steve sighed, "Feels like one minute I was in Korea, freezing, scared, and fighting… then the next minute I wake up and I'm home… with my family," he said quietly. "And now… less than ten years after coming home from war… I'm a corporate head. Sometimes, it just seems so fake… like I'm not really here." He frowned, "It's silly, I know, seems like this has nothing to do with what happened today. I think being promoted suddenly just surprised me more than I thought."

Peggy gave Steve an understanding smile, "It's not silly… It's human. Your mind is trying to make sense of what transpired in your life. Everything seems so perfect and calm since you returned home from war that your brain is suddenly thinking it's all a dream. You've been used of years of war and fighting, and suddenly you're back into civilian life without much of a transition." She stroked his hair gently, "You've been through a lot, Steve. And I know you struggled with the peace and the normal life after returning from Korea." Peggy smiled, "And I know it's sometimes hard to tell me your bad dreams and memories, but I appreciate you talking to me about them."

Steve smiled, "Yeah. I know you're trying to help and I appreciate your patience with me. You're so good to me."

Peggy kissed him on the cheek, "Keep your mind on us, darling. You're here, with me and our family that we made. And you're going to do a good job as President of Stark Industries. I know it." Peggy grinned, "And I'm proud of you. So very proud of you."

"Thanks, Peggy," Steve responded with a small smile as he relaxed.

"Always, my darling," she said affectionately. Peggy tugged on him gently, "Come. Let's go to bed. Let me help you relax," she said with a smile.

Steve chuckled, "Okay." He stood up and wrapped his arm around Peggy and the two of them left the room, shutting off the light as they left.

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Hope you enjoyed this recent installment. I know I said Christmas story, but I wanted to drive the story a little further.

Introduced Obadiah Stane AKA Iron Monger (later in the Iron Man Movie) Combining a bit of the comic and cinematics for his character. In the Iron Man Movie, Stane said to be a partner of Howard's since the inception of Stark Industries.

Since Steve Rogers didn't go into the ice, things have drastically changed so things will be different, but I'll stick to the timeline mostly.

For Steve becoming the Second highest corporate officer in Stark Industries, there's a higher reason and more story to it. More to come.

Also Intro to Maria Collins Carbonell aka soon to be Tony's mom
Christmas Day, December 25, 1956

Steve & Margaret Rogers Residence, Scarsdale, NY

It's early Christmas morning, and a thick sheet of snow rests on every inch of the neighborhood. All throughout the town, houses have thick blankets of white powder on their roofs and tree branches all hang low from the weight of the snow. The green of the trees is still barely visible under the brilliant white, contrasting to complete the image of a typical "winter wonderland." The white sky above gently dropped snow over the Rogers house, each flake swirling and dancing, as an icy wind carried it toward the large Christmas decorated house. The wind continued to whisper as the snow fell like confetti. The Rogers property, much like the town, is covered with newly fallen snow. The whole neighborhood was a sea of white. From snow-topped street lamps to snowfall blanketed sidewalks, it's indeed a winter wonderland.

In the Rogers family room next to the fireplace and mantel is a tall decorated Christmas evergreen tree with scores of presents underneath. In addition to presents under the tree, stockings weighed down by small gifts also hung over the mantel for everyone in the family. The Rogers, particularly Peggy, took it upon themselves to decorate the house in Christmas spirit. The house had everything from wreaths on doors, candles, poinsettias, Christmas lights, and pine garlands on the stair railings and mantel. It's the most wonderful time of the year, filled with joy and cheer, where everyone is surrounded by love and cared for by the most beautiful family, so Steve and Peggy, no doubt, had to decorate the house for such a time.

Michael, Sarah, and Angela, still in their pajamas, ran excitedly into the family room to open presents and saw that their Aunt, Uncle, cousins, Grandma, and Grandpa already waiting for them. Their grandparents occupied one of the couches while their Aunt Vickie and Uncle Ed sat on the other, and cousins Alex and Juliet sat on the floor reading and playing respectively.

"Merry Christmas!" the three kids cheered to their family.

Amanda Carter, dressed in a red sweater, belt, and long wool skirt, smiled at her three grandkids, "Merry Christmas, darlings!" she called from her seat.

Harrison, in a shirt, tie, and brown trousers, chimed in with a warm smile, "Merry Christmas, children!"

"And Merry Christmas from the Becks!" Victoria cheered to her nieces and nephews. Unlike her parents, Victoria Carter Beck didn't get out of her violet pajamas for Christmas morning. She could say the same for her family. The Becks mirrored the Rogers kids of not getting out of their pajamas for Christmas morning.

Alexander Beck, the older twelve-year-old cousin of the Rogers kids, put down his book and smiled at Michael, "Excited to open presents, cousins?" he asked excitedly.
Michael and Sarah sat down on the floor next to him, "Yes! I'm so excited!" Michael exclaimed in joy.

Sarah grinned, "I'm also excited for the food Daddy is going to make tonight. It's always so good and he always makes lots!"

Juliet Beck, the four-year-old daughter of the Becks, looked up to her mother from her stuffed animal, "When are we opening presents, Mama?"

Victoria smiled, "Not until, Uncle Steve and Aunt Peggy come down."

"Okay," the little girl replied as she went back to playing with her stuffed toy.

Ed turned to his wife, "Didn't your sister say we're expecting guests also?"

"Oh, yes. Their extended family from work," Victoria responded as she leaned into her husband.

Amanda smiled at Angela who was staring at the scores of presents under the tree. "Angela, want to sit with us?" she said scooting over to leave space between herself and Harrison. Angela nodded and trotted over and took a seat between her two grandparents. Amanda automatically wrapped her arm around her granddaughter and hugged her tightly earning a happy smile from the six-year-old girl.

"Sleep well?" Harrison said with a grin, fully knowing the response.

Angela shook her head, "No, I was too excited."

Amanda smiled, "Just between you and me, darling, your mother had the same problem. As did you Aunt." She chuckled, "Just don't tell them I said that."

Angela giggled, "I won't, Gramma."

"Where's your mother and father anyway? Not like them to be late?" Harrison asked curiously.

"Getting my baby brother," Angela replied. She chuckled, "He's excited for Christmas too."

"As he should be," Harrison said with a warm laugh.

After a moment, Peggy, dressed in her pink and black robe over her short nightgown, walked into the family room while carrying the little John in her arms with Steve close behind her. Steve, like most of the family, stayed in his sleepwear, he sported his old white SSR shirt and green sweats.

"Merry Christmas!" the couple called in unison.

"Merry Christmas!" the family quickly replied.

The Carters and Rogers take turns every year visiting for the holidays and this year is the Carters turn to visit. The Becks sometimes visit the Rogers on the holidays, but they mostly stay in England where they're closer to the Carters and Ed's parents. It's an expensive trip across the Atlantic, but Steve and Peggy are always willing to help both families pay the way over to New York. Having the family in one place together is worth the cost, and having them for the holidays means everything. Of course, the house is packed, and space is limited, but the house was big enough to house the extra guests. Thanks to the furnished basement with two guest rooms and pullout beds for kids, the Carters and the Becks live comfortable in the Rogers house.

Peggy walked over her parents with a big smile, "Good morning, mother and father," she said bending down and kissing both of her parents on the cheek.
Angela smiled at her mother, "Are we opening presents now, Mama?"

Peggy smiled at her youngest as she held John close to her body, "Not yet, sweetie. We're waiting on your uncles and aunt."

"Oh," Angela replied quietly.

Ed stood up from the couch, "oh, Peggy, Steve, come sit on the couch. I'll grab a chair from the kitchen."

Steve smiled, "Thanks, Ed, but you don't need to," he said, but his brother-in-law was already on a determined course to the kitchen.

Vickie also stood up, "Darling, you can sit on the armchair. I'll grab a chair from the kitchen."

Ed chuckled, "Too late. I'm already in the kitchen," he said continuing to walk away. Vickie rolled her eyes and walked over to the armchair and took a seat.

As Steve sat down, Michael looked over at his father, "When are they coming?" he asked about his aunt and uncles.

"They're supposed to arrive anytime now," Steve replied.

The sound of the doorbell ringing turned everyone's attention to the front of the house. "Speak of the devil," Peggy said with a warm smile as she stood by her parents.

Steve stood up, "I got it, Hon," he said, turning for the foyer.

Angela clapped her hands excitedly, "Yay! They're here!" Harrison chuckled and hugged his young granddaughter tightly.

Amanda looked up at Peggy, "Peggy, let me take John, and you can sit down." She chuckled, "I have a feeling you're going to be on your feet all day, knowing you."

Peggy smiled at her mother, "I can hold onto him for now, Mother," she said adjusting John in her arms.

"Let me hold him, darling. Let grandma have some time with him please," Amanda said in a commanding motherly tone.

Peggy chuckled, "You win, mother." She bent down and put down the young toddler and pointed to her mother, "John, want to sit with grandma?"

John nodded happily, "yeah!"

Amanda stuck out her arms and leaned forward, "Come here, darling!" John hopped over happily and allowed his grandmother to scoop him up and set him down on her lap. Amanda kissed John on the cheek, "Merry Christmas, darling. How is my littlest grandson?"

"Good, gramma," John said with a smile as he bounced excitedly. "How you?" he asked with a goofy grin.

Amanda chuckled, "Do you mean, 'how are you?' But to answer your question, I am doing very well. Excited for Christmas."

"Me too!" John cheered.
Peggy sat down on the couch, crossed her legs, and smiled at the family in front of her. Michael and Alex sat together on the floor talking about their favorite movies while Sarah, true to her caring nature, sat with Juliet and played with her. On the other side of the kids, her sister, Victoria, and her brother-in-law, Ed, sat by each other, laughing and talking while they waited for Steve to return. Peggy turned back to her parents and saw nothing but smiles as they spoke with her two youngest children. She could see her father listening intently with a warm smile as Angela talked his ear off about the book she's currently reading. Her mother held John close and was pointing at the tree, describing all the ornaments and decorations to the young two-year-old boy. Christmas day just started, and it's nothing but smiles. It's only going to get better.

Steve opened the front door, feeling a rush of cold air sweep over him, and saw the Sousas all bundled up in winter coats and clothing. Angie stood with a pleasant smile while carrying their young one-year-old daughter, Margaret "Daisy" Gabrielle, in her arms, both of their cheeks pink from the bitterly cold temperature. Standing next to her is Daniel, but Steve could barely see his face hiding behind a pile of gift-wrapped boxes. With both of Daniel's arm occupied with holding gifts, he managed to make it to the front door without using his cane to walk. Angie probably held him stable from the curb to the porch with her free hand. Between the two parents is David Bradford, the oldest son, stood between his mother and father while carrying a couple of gift-wrapped boxes.

"Hey everyone! Merry Christmas," Steve instantly greeted the family.

Daniel peaked around his pile of presents, "Hey! Merry Christmas, Steve," he greeted.

"Merry Christmas!" Angie and David said in unison.

Steve stepped to the side, "Come on in and get out of the cold. It's rough out there."

Angie chuckled, "White Christmas, no doubt. Total pain to drive in though," she said walking into the house with David and Daniel following close behind.

Steve closed the door behind them, "I'll never enjoy the freezing cold," he said subtly hinting of his time fighting in the brutal winters during both World War II and Korea.

Daniel nodded, "I get it," he said fully understanding Steve's position. As a veteran of World War II and the Battle of the Bulge, the same battle he lost his leg in, Daniel knew the disdain of the frigid temperatures and snow.

David looked up at Steve and smiled, "Hi, Uncle Steve."

Steve turned his attention to the boy, "Hey there, big guy. Good to see you," he said with a smile.

After greeting his uncle, he looked up at his mother with curious eyes earning a soft chuckle from her. Angie smiled down at him, "It's okay. You can go on and greet everyone."

David jumped with joy, "Yes!" he called as he sprinted out of the foyer and into the family room. The sounds of cheers and greetings echoed throughout the house from the family room.

"Don't throw or drop those gifts, sweetheart!" Angie called out to her oldest son as she adjusted Daisy in her arms.

Steve chuckled, "Need help with those?" he asked Daniel regarding his full arms.

Daniel nodded, "If you don't mind," he said adjusting his grip under the stack of presents.
"Not at all," Steve said gabbing the top few presents off the stack. Suddenly, the group heard the doorbell ring causing Steve to pause. "And that should be the last guest."

"Bucky?" Angie asked.

"Should be," Steve said. He turned to the direction of the family room, "Sarah, Michael, come greet your aunt and uncle. Also give them a hand with the presents."

Daniel smiled, "Thanks, Steve."

In a split second, Michael, Sarah, and David rushed into the foyer to help Daniel and Angie with the presents. "Hi, Uncle Daniel and Auntie Angie, Merry Christmas!" Sarah and Michael said in unison.

Angie giggled, "Merry Christmas, kiddos!"

"Merry Christmas!" Daniel said with a big smile. He bent slightly, "Michael, David, can you give me a hand with the gifts? Sarah, I think these two guys got it."

Sarah smiled, "Okie doke."

Michael went up on his tippy toes, "we got it!" he exclaimed as he grabbed two boxes.

David grabbed the third and last box off his Dad and turned to Michael, "Hey, Michael, have you seen..." "David, can you take these too?" Steve called out to David referring to the two presents he liberated from Daniel a few minutes ago.

"I got it, Uncle," David said walking over to Steve and allowing him to give the two extra presents to him.

Steve smiled, "Thank you," he turned to Daniel and Angie, "I'll see you guys in the family room."

"Sure thing," Daniel said. With that Daniel, Angie, Michael, and David made their way to the family room.

Steve turned back to the front door just as he heard the doorbell ring again, "Yeah, I'm coming," he called to the door as he walked over. He opened the door and saw Bucky dressed in winter clothing, a grey newsboy hat, leather gloves, and a box tucked under his arm that held an assortment of gifts. "Bucky! Merry Christmas!" Steve exclaimed happily.

Bucky smiled, "Merry Christmas, Steve. Thanks for having me over again this year." Steve stepped aside allowing him to enter the house.

Bucky scooped up his niece with his free arm and twirled her in circles earning a high pitch joyous laugh from the girl. "Merry Christmas little one," he said putting her back down. He grinned, "God, you gotten big. Get bigger every time I see you."

Sarah smiled, "You saw me on my birthday."
"That was a month ago. A lot can happen in that time period."

Sarah laughed. She began to tug on his metal arm, "Let's go, Uncle Bucky. We gotta open gifts!" she exclaimed excitedly.

Bucky chuckled as he allowed his niece to pull him to the family room with Steve following close behind. The moment Bucky entered the family room he was immediately greeted by the whole family. "Sorry I'm late, everyone," Bucky said with a warm smile.

Bucky spent Christmas with the Rogers almost every year since 1952. Everyone in the immediate family hesitated with welcoming him because of his Winter Soldier past and the situation in April 1949. Though Bucky was innocent of the event that earned him considerable news coverage, his past was exposed as an ex-Soviet assassin, which worried the Carters and Becks. The family was no doubt hesitant with meeting him. But after a few hours of talking and questioning from everyone in the family, everyone warmed up to Bucky, which was a massive relief for Steve. Now, Bucky is part of the family.

Steve wrapped his arm around his friend's shoulders, "Hey, since we're all here! Guess what?"

"Presents?" all the kids asked excitedly at the same time.

Steve smiled, "That's right! We get to open them now!"

"Yay!" the children all cheered.

Just as Sarah, Michael, David, Alex, and even the young Juliet got up to get the presents, Peggy leaned forward, "children, distribute the presents first, and then you can open them."

Sarah turned and smiled at her mother, "Okay, Mama."

Michael turned back to Angela who was still sitting comfortably with their grandparents, "Angela, want to help move the presents?"

Angela smiled, "Yup!" She then hopped off the couch and helped her siblings and all her cousins move the gifts. The only two children who didn't help was John who was with his grandmother, and Daisy who was on her mother's lap on the floor.

Steve walked over to the couch and sat down next to his wife, Peggy instantly leaning into him. He smiled and planted a kiss on her temple earning a soft chuckle from Peggy. Next to the couple sat Daniel, who preferred not to sit on the floor due to his prosthetic leg, and Angie who sat on the floor in front of her husband with their daughter.

Steve smiled, "Don't forget the stockings," he said as the kids walked through the family room dropping off presents to their respective owners.

Bucky sat down on the floor next to Steve and Peggy, now dressed in his long sleeve shirt and leather glove over his metal hand, and his coat folded neatly on the floor with his hat. He patted the cardboard box full of presents next to him, "Sarah, Michael, Angela, don't forget this box full of goodies too." Without a second of pause, Michael and Angela turned to him and started to distribute the presents from the box.

After a few minutes, all the presents were distributed to their rightful owners. Naturally, the kids have more presents than the adults, but regardless of the number, both children and adults are super excited to unwrap their gifts this Christmas. The feeling of anticipation tingled in the fingers the most
in all the children as they bounced and grinned in excitement. The few minutes of waiting made the kids impatiently sit as they waited for permission to open their Christmas gifts.

Finally, after building anticipation, Steve smiled, "Well? Open the presents! It's Christmas!" The adults laughed as they saw the kids dive into their presents and begin chaotically unwrapping their gifts.

Vickie looked over at Steve as she reached into her stocking, "I noticed you don't have a stocking, Steve."

Steve shrugged, "I don't really need one. I like to give more than receive, so I don't need a stocking."

Peggy chuckled as she picked up her stocking, "Typical of my husband," she said affectionately. Everyone laughed.

The sound of Michael cheering, "Woah!" got everyone's attention.

Vickie looked at her nephew, "What did you get, Michael?"

Michael grinned and held up a thick black book that read "Book of Codes, Ciphers, and Secret Languages, and how to make them."

Angie laughed, "That's got to be from your mother."

Michael bounced, "Thanks, Mama!"

Peggy chuckled, "You're very welcome, sweetie. If you want to be like me and know loads of secret codes then you have learn how to make them." She leaned forward and grinned, "Plus, we can make one together so we can joke about your dad and he won't ever notice," she said jokingly.

"Hey!" Steve exclaimed.

Michael nodded, "Yeah! Let's do it!"

"Traitor," Steve replied humorously.

Michael laughed as he put the codebook to the side and happily continued to open his gifts from Santa, his aunts, uncles, and grandparents.

"My own art kit!" Sarah cheered. It was her turn to be excited with her Christmas present. In her hands is a professional art kit in a wooden box, complete with a variety of pencils, graphite, charcoal, metal art knife, blending stumps, and much more. She turned to her Dad, "Thanks, Daddy!" Sarah has become quite the artist and took to drawing like her father. Though she's been drawing for fun almost every day since she was four, Sarah never had an art kit and only used regular pencils and erasers.

Steve smiled, "Mhmm. I know you always love to draw. But I think it's time for you to further your drawing skills."

She put the kit down and hopped onto the couch and gave her dad a big hug and a peck on the cheek. Steve smiled, "I'll teach you all the things I know and teach what all that stuff is used for, okay?"

Sarah nodded, "Okay, Daddy." She hopped off the couch and returned to unwrapping her gifts. Peggy smiled at her husband and looked at him with love and affection from the interaction with
their daughter.

Amanda bounced John on her lap, "Your daughter is quite the artist, you two." She smiled at Sarah, "Sarah, dear, I'd like another drawing for our refrigerator back home."

Sarah grinned at her Grandmother, "I'll make one tonight, Gramma!"

"Great!" Amanda replied happily.

Peggy snuggled closer to Steve, "Yeah, Sarah takes after her father a lot more than I'd like to admit, but it's cute. She likes to make things and play soldier."

Angie laughed, "Definitely like Steve. Complete with art skills and everything."

Harrison chuckled as he unwrapped his gift, "That's actually really cute that your daughter is like the father."

Steve shrugged, "Truth be told, Sarah takes after her mother too by proving she can do anything regardless of what other kids say to her."

Bucky chuckled, "Clearly the best of both of you."

"That can be a mess," Vickie replied with a smirk.

Steve looked at his wife, "So, what has Santa brought you?"

Peggy chuckled as she picked up a small gift wrapped box from her stocking, "Santa and my husband, right?"

"Right," he replied with a smirk.

Peggy smiled and looked at the tag of the present and read aloud, "To Peggy, From Steve." She then unwrapped the object and revealed a small fancy wood box. She slowly opened the box and saw the most beautiful watch looking up at her. The watch is a black Swiss Patek Philippe fashion wristwatch with real gold accents and bezel and a black and gold metal band. The wristwatch is clearly made for luxury.

Peggy gasped, "Goodness… darling… this is a Swiss Patek Philippe watch. This is expensive."

Angie looked back at the watch and her jaw dropped, "Wow."

"You can say that again," Vickie said from her seat.

Daniel laughed, "does that come in my size?"

Harrison laughed, "The first gift Peggy opens, and it's the super expensive one."

Steve chuckled, "Merry Christmas, Hon."

Peggy smiled at her husband, "It's beautiful. I love it. Thank you." She grinned and kissed Steve on the lips, "But I have to ask, how did you afford this?"

Steve chuckled, "Uhm… short and true answer. I know a guy." Peggy laughed and didn't ask anymore questions.

Bucky chuckled, "Still a celebrity. Especially in some places in Europe."
Peggy laughed, "Doesn't hurt to be Captain America sometimes."

"Sometimes," Steve replied quietly. He nodded to the watch in Peggy's hand, "Take out the watch and read the engraving."

Peggy did just that and gently removed the watch from its ornate box and flipped it over to look at the back. "Director of SHIELD: Margaret Carter Rogers," she read aloud. She looked back at her husband, "Darling, this is a gorgeous gift. I love it." She kisses him again, "I love you."

"I love you too," he happily replied.

As Peggy put the watch back into the box, she heard her sister speak up. "Hey, Steve. Any chance you can flex that Captain America title again for the family?" she asked jokingly.

Ed laughed, "Yeah, there's this nice Aston Martin I'd like." Peggy rolled her eyes with a smirk across her lips.

Angela opened her last present and saw she got a new green dotted leopard stuffed animal toy. "A new stuffed animal! Thank you," she cheered at her parents from her spot next to her grandparents.

Peggy smirked, "Wasn't us. Who's it from? Santa?"

Angela looked back at the label on the wrapping paper then ran over and gave Bucky a huge hug. "Thank you, Uncle Bucky," she said happily.

Bucky smiled, "You're very welcome." Angela happily trotted back to her seat and hugged her new toy. She had next to her a stack of new books she got for Christmas from her family since everyone knew she's a huge bookworm.

As the rest of the family opened their gifts, little John Steven Rogers opened his presents with the help of his grandmother as she held the young two-year-old toddler in her lap. The little boy got new toys, clothes, and various plush toys. He made it quite clear that he's excited and happy with his new Christmas gifts.

Vickie held out a violet cardigan and smiled, "Awe, I love this. Thanks, Peggy!"

Peggy hummed, "Mhmm."

Peggy grabbed another present from her small pile in front of her, this time a long and flat package. Another present from her husband. She carefully removed the rapping, and her face lit up instantly when she saw it. "Oh, Steve. You're pulling for a reward. This is beautiful." In her hands is a mahogany wood frame housing a lovely 18x24 colored photo of Steve, Peggy, Sarah, Michael, Angela, and John as a baby. It showed the whole family sitting on the couch, with John in Peggy's arms, Michael to her right, and Steve with his arms stretched around her and Sarah next to him.

Peggy grinned ear-to-ear, "This is stunning. Probably my favorite Christmas gift of all time."

Amanda couldn't see the picture from her seat on the other couch, "Peggy, what is it? We can't see it, darling."

"The greatest family photo ever taken," Peggy said flipping the frame around so the rest of her family can see it.

Vickie gushed with joy, "Oh my goodness, Peggy. That's such a beautiful photo of your family."
Peggy looked at Steve with a loving smile, "I love the watch, but this is truly the best gift, Steve. Thank you." She leaned into him and kissed him again.

"I knew you'd like it," Steve replied with a smile.

Juliet Beck leaned forward to the photo, "Why does Michael and Sarah look so different?"

Vickie chuckled, "That's because that photo is two years old. Your cousins were younger then."

"Oh," Juliet replied.

Daniel looked at Peggy, "That's a beautiful photo, Peggy. You two made a beautiful family."

Angie nodded, "Couldn't agree more."

"Thanks, you two," Peggy replied as she gently put the frame down by her feet.

"Where are you going to hang it?" Daniel asked.

Peggy nodded to the mantel of the fireplace, "Just above the fireplace. It'll take the center and attention of the whole room." She chuckled, "In fact, I'm going to hang it up there when we're done with presents."

"Excellent place to put it," Amanda replied.

Sarah pointed to a small box on the floor by Steve's foot, "Daddy, you missed one."

Steve leaned forward and saw the small gift-wrapped box with just his name on it. He picked it up and started to unwrap the gift as everyone in the room continued to chat away about their Christmas gifts and hold pleasant conversations. Underneath all that wrapping paper is a brown cardboard box. He slowly opened the box and revealed a small silver hipflask. He removed the flask from the box and read the engraving on the front that said, "Captain Steven G. Rogers: 'Captain America.'" Under the text was the engraving of his old shield. Steve then turned the flask around and saw another inscription that read, "You're Still A Punk-Bucky." Steve leaned back on the couch and laughed.

Peggy noticed his sudden burst of laughter, "What did you get, darling?"

Steve looked at his wife with a grin, "A flask from Bucky." He showed Peggy the back inscription of Bucky's message.

Peggy rolled her eyes, "You boys." Bucky grinned and chuckled.

Angela sat up, "What did Daddy get, Mama?"

Peggy laughed, "He got a little flask. A container to put drinks in."

"Oh. Like a canteen!"

Peggy smiled, "Something like that."

Steve turned to Bucky, "Jerk." Bucky replied with a cocky grin and a half-hearted salute.

Angie leaned her back up against Daniel's leg, "Hard to believe that Steve and Bucky were fighting each other not so long ago."

Daniel chuckled, "Let's not bring that up. There's still a pool in SHIELD of who would win in a
fight between them."

Peggy rolled her eyes, "We are not entertaining that thought, Daniel." Daniel and Angie laughed.

It's Christmas Day, and everyone is together as a family, and that was a gift in itself. The sight of smiling faces and the sound of joyous laughter from everyone filled the house. There wasn't a single long face present. How could anyone be sad in this atmosphere? The Rogers, Carters, Becks, and Bucky are all in one place together as a family and are happy. A perfect Christmas day.

After presents, everyone got dressed for the day, and Peggy cooked everyone brunch. Much of the day after was filled with family time, laughter, board games, music on the radio, cookies, and hot cocoa. Though Steve, Peggy, and Amanda spent much of the day in the kitchen preparing for the holiday dinner with a 30-pound stuffed turkey complete with all the fixings and home recipes. By supper time, the house was filled with the beautiful aroma of a delicious home cooked meal.

Peggy, dressed in a long red sweater and green swing skirt, finished setting up the long wood dining table that could seat 14-guests comfortably, but she managed to squeeze two more chairs and Daisy's highchairs to accommodate everyone. The dining room table was only used for special occasions such as holidays and parties hence the size. Peggy took a step back and looked over her handy work of setting up and decorating the table. Special holiday plates, napkins, and silverware were neatly placed at every seat, and a long snowflake pattern red runner went down the table lengthwise. The table didn't have much décor other than the runner since Peggy was preparing for the serving plates to occupy the majority of the tablespace.

Peggy smiled, satisfied of the presentation, "Dinner is ready!" she called to the family in the family room. She heard a gaggle of enthusiastic responses from her family in response.

Soon the family, minus Steve since he was finishing up in the kitchen, started to trickle into the dining room. Peggy waved at the table, "Sit anywhere you'd like. Kids, you can sit with your cousins if you want or your grandparents," she said with a warm smile. She pointed to the chair with a booster seat on it between head seat and hers, "Mother, John's booster seat is over here."

"Ah, there it is," Amanda said while carrying the happy little John in her arms. She walked over toward Peggy and lowered her grandson into his seat before finding hers next to Harrison.

Angie slowly walked in with Daisy while holding her hand to support the walking toddler. She smiled at Peggy, "I'm so excited. Holiday meals are my favorite."

Daniel laughed, "Mine too. Going to need a bigger belt after this."

Peggy pointed to the other highchair across the table, "Angie, I set up the highchair for little Margaret over there."

Angie smiled, "Thanks, English," she said as she pick up her daughter and placed her in the chair.

As everyone found their seats, Steve walked into the dining room, sporting a green sweater over his shirt and tie, and a pair of light grey slacks. "Hey, Buck," he greeted. "Can you give me a hand with the serving plates."

Bucky stood up from his chair opposite of Peggy's, "Sure, no problem," he said as he and Steve walked back into the kitchen. The family went back to their pleasant and cheerful conversations as they waited for the food to arrive.

After a moment, Steve and Bucky came back into the dining room with the first wave of serving
dishes, consisting of mashed potatoes, carrots, mixed vegetables, and deviled eggs, and placed them on the table then headed back into the kitchen for the remaining plates.

"Wow!" Vickie said with a grin. "Looks and smells good!"

David Sousa agreed, "Mashed potatoes are my favorite."

Angie smiled over at her son, "There's plenty, believe me."

Juliet looked up at her father, "Father, what's that?" she said pointed at the devilled eggs.

Ed smiled at his youngest, "Those are deviled eggs. They're super delicious."

The little girl smiled, "Oh. I want one," she said in an innocent tone.

Angela smiled at her cousin, "Juliet, you'll love them. I'm sure of it."

Steve and Bucky returned with more plates that contained a crown roast, gravy, biscuits, peppers, and stuffing. Once the plates were on the table, everyone gasped with delight, even Peggy couldn't contain her enthusiasm for the dinner. Steve patted Bucky on the shoulder, "I got the turkey. Take a seat, and I'll be right back." Bucky nodded and took his seat.

After another few seconds, Steve appeared from the kitchen with the large 30-pound golden-brown turkey. Everyone at the table gasped and let out a series of "oohs" and "ahhs."

Harrison smiled from his seat at that sight, "Oh, wow! Steve that looks delicious! You're one great cook."

Peggy stood up and helped Steve carefully place the turkey down on the table. Steve smiled at his wife, "Thanks." Peggy replied with a kind and gentle smile. He looked up at his father-in-law, "Just wait 'till you taste it all."

Peggy smirked, "Trust me. It's good," she said sitting down at her seat.

Sarah bounced happily in her seat, "Can't wait!"

Bucky laughed, "Someone's hungry."

"I'm a growing girl, Uncle Bucky. Mama says we need good nutrition," Sarah said with a goofy grin.

Amanda laughed, "Right you are, darling."

Michael looked up at his dad, "Are we eating now?" he asked excitedly.

"Almost," Steve replied. "Before we cut the turkey, let's say grace," he said as he took his seat.

Everyone automatically bowed their heads for the blessing.

It's now later in the evening and the day is winding down. It has been an extraordinarily jolly and pleasant Christmas Day in the Rogers household, and everyone in the family and extended family is happy and thankful for their presents and a good feast. The dining room table and the kitchen has been cleaned, leaving no more chores to be done, at least for today. Now, much of the family have settled in the family room playing games, listening to Christmas music, and singing carols to finish up such a good day. Everyone was in the family room except for Steve, Bucky, and Daniel who were
sitting outside on the benches of the front porch in the cold, drinking whiskey.

Steve heard an energetic Christmas song playing on the radio in the house and grinned at Bucky, "Come on, Bucky." Bucky raised a brow in question. "Show us a dance." Bucky glared at Steve.

Daniel laughed, "Come on, Uncle Bucky. Get up there. Show us a dance."

Steve smirked, "Sarah and Angela say you're quite the dancer." He leaned back.

Bucky finished his glass of whiskey, "I ain't dancing for you two jackasses," he grumbled under his breath. Steve and Daniel laughed in response. Bucky reached down and grabbed the quarter full bottle of whiskey, "Want some more?"

Daniel shook his head, "I think I'm done. Going to head inside and join the family."

Steve waved his hand, "Still got this to finish," he said raising his new flask.

Bucky put his glass down and stood up with the whiskey bottle in hand, "Well, I'm going to walk around and get some air."

"The porch light will be on for your return, Bucky," Steve said as he watched Bucky slowly walk across the porch and down the steps into the cold snow.

Bucky waved without looking back, "I'll be back," he said over the sound of his feet crunching the snow beneath him.

Daniel smirked and slowly stood up, using both the bench and his cane to prop himself up. He steadied himself on his cane then turned to Steve, "You coming in?"

Steve shook his head, "I'll be in a few minutes. Kind of enjoying the atmosphere and feeling. Not so much the cold though." Daniel nodded and patted Steve on the shoulder as he limped back into the house. Steve sat silently for a few minutes enjoying the sound of Christmas songs on the radio and the laughter from his family in the house. He stood up from his seat and walked over to the snow covered porch railing and stared out into the black sky, watching the snowflakes fall lazily to the Earth.

Steve took a deep breath and raised his flask in a symbolic toast, "Merry Christmas, guys… Merry Christmas, Jonathan," he said toasting Jonathan "Junior" Juniper and to those soldiers who died under his command in Korea. Steve toasted them every Christmas since November and December often reminded him of the battle of Chosin Reservoir. He took a long swig from his flask then poured the remaining contents on the snow below him.

As Steve closed his flask, he heard someone clear her voice behind him. He turned around and saw his mother-in-law standing by the door with her arms crossed to keep herself warm. Amanda smiled at him, "You okay, Steve?"

Steve smiled, "Never better. It's just something I do every year," he said not giving much details of his ritual.

Amanda nodded, "Okay. Well I wanted to talk to you about something," she said stepping onto the cold porch. "Oh, goodness, it's cold."

Steve raised a brow, "What's up?"

Amanda stood by Steve and gripped his arm, "I don't know if I ever mentioned this to you, but thank
"You're welcome? But for what?" Steve asked confused.

Amanda smiled, "All of this… Having us over for Christmas all the time, being a great husband to my daughter, and being a great father to the children." Steve didn't know what to say but just smiled in response. "Just wanted to say thank you for the wonderful day, and giving us a great big family."

Steve nodded, "You're welcome here anytime."

Amanda smiled and turned back to the house, "Well, I'm going back inside. It's too bloody cold out here." As she walked to the door, she turned back to Steve and smiled, "You two made a wonderful life together. Truly." With that, she walked back into the house.

Steve smirked and turned back to stare at the dark sky. Suddenly, he heard Peggy's voice behind him, "Steve."

Steve turned around and saw his wife leaning against the doorframe with a smile on her lips and her arms crossed over her chest. He smiled, "Hey."

Peggy approached her husband and shivered from the cold, "Goodness gracious it's cold out here. Why were you guys out here anyway?"

Steve shrugged, "Well, the whiskey kept us warm and the bench was close enough to the house that we got some heat from the inside."

Peggy smiled and tugged on his sleeve, "well, come back inside and sing and dance with your family."

"Okay," Steve said with a smile.

Peggy then stood on her tippy toes and brought him close and whispered seductively, "Then when everyone goes to bed, we can fondue."

Steve smirked, "Can't wait."

"Come on, the kids are waiting," Peggy said taking his hand in hers and guiding him back to the house.

Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays to all.

Also "It's a Wonderful Life" is an awesome movie. Not to mention, an American classic.

Hope you enjoyed! So many characters in one place, made it kind of complicated to show all of them Lol.

Inspired also by the end of Lawless.

I also don't know why when the site posts your reviews, some of the text is missing and I got a broken email or message. It's weird. But I appreciate all the reviews. THANKS SO MUCH.

And If I don't manage to post another chapter… Happy New Years.
After years of hunting down Hydra cells and splinter groups, S.H.I.E.L.D. has made the formal Hydra organization a shadow of its former self. Not quite the boogeyman they used to be, but left unchecked and unopposed, Hydra can return and become a significant threat once again. Though Many of their operatives and cells are still unknown and are left blowing in the wind, S.H.I.E.L.D. teams are still hunting and investigating them around the world. With over half of S.H.I.E.L.D. agents and assets overseas at any given time on various operations, the majority of Hydra cells are either always on the run or in hiding.

Though Hydra is in shambles, their influence still remains in the Soviet Union and some Eastern Bloc countries where the organization molded with the host nations government. So the remaining Hydra threat majorly exists within the Soviet Union and a few of its satellite states. Due to this, the President and Congress ordered S.H.I.E.L.D. to focus most of their attention to the Soviets and stopping the spread of communism than chasing after Hydra. Focusing more on the foreign policy of containing Communism or just known as "Containment." Peggy responded reluctantly but did as ordered. She instituted a new doctrine in the hopes of killing two birds with one stone. Since Hydra rooted itself in the Soviet deep science division known as Leviathan, and other Eastern Bloc nations, Peggy and her S.H.I.E.L.D. analysts figured any action against those Communist agencies and governments would damage Hydra and its goals. So, Peggy's new plan calls for diverting most of S.H.I.E.L.D.'s assets against the Soviets and the communist which will inevitably contribute to further the downfall of Hydra's organizational support and capabilities within its host countries. That was the idea since she was ordered to shift her focus more to the stop of Communism. In greater detail, her plan for S.H.I.E.L.D. operations against Leviathan, the Soviets, and in turn Hydra, consisted with the use of extensive espionage, sabotage, assassinations, bribery, corruption, and if possible direct action against viable targets. Peggy detailed her plans, ideas, and existing intelligence meticulously and it fell in line perfectly with current US foreign policy which pleased both Congress and the President.

What was different from Peggy's previous operational thinking is that she diverted the majority of S.H.I.E.L.D.'s resources and assets to focus on the Soviets and communists rather than splitting the resources evenly to hunt remaining standalone rogue hydra cells. Peggy believed her current S.H.I.E.L.D. teams in the field have enough available assets and nearby support to handle any potential Hydra cell they discover without direct support from headquarters. S.H.I.E.L.D. teams were given more and more decentralized command where S.H.I.E.L.D. teams relied on their own decisions and initiative to complete the mission under the intent of the regional director and the overall intent of S.H.I.E.L.D. headquarters. Unfortunately, S.H.I.E.L.D. needed to prepare for a prolonged clash with the Soviets while containing Hydra since everyone knew that stopping the spread of communism and toppling the Soviets power won't happen in a month, more like years.

June 1957

Novi Grad, Sokovia

Sokovia, a landlocked Soviet satellite state located in Southeastern Europe is a tiny and mostly impoverished country. The small communist nation is very much a second world country with worsening infrastructure and over-industrialization. The small state struggles with political injustice,
rampant corruption, and civil strife. Sokovia is a mountainous land with gorgeous panoramic views of tall mountain ranges, thick forests, and numerous large lakes pocketing the countryside and mountain ranges. But with this beauty, Sokovia has a handful of sprawling cities that are overpopulated and compact to fit within the rugged mountainous land. Most of the cities were built nearby the numerous lakes since they offered the most possible ground for construction and offered thriving natural resources. Though the country is poor, corrupt, and over industrialized, the Sokovian natural beauty is, nevertheless, breathtaking.

Thick storm clouds blanketed over the old capital city of Novi Grad with the dull grey clouds hanging low in preparation for the midafternoon mountain rains forming. The mountain mist filled the bustling city streets as people rushed to get their errands done in the market before the torrent of rain came. Inside one of the few nice apartments stood a middle-aged man watering his flowers at the window as he watched the ordinary people outside scramble to get their tasks done in the street below. The man hummed silently at the people below his apartment moved like ants in the road. His apartment was well furnished and had constant electricity, heating, and warm water, a sharp contrast to the majority of the city who lived in crumbling apartments and houses with intermittent electricity and no hot water.

The man turned around and saw his wife step out of the kitchen in an apron, "лапа (lá-pá), breakfast is ready."

The man smiled, "I'm coming, родная (rad-ná-ya)," he said as he turned for the kitchen.

As he walked into the wide kitchen, he spotted his young son already at the table. His wife smiled and wrapped her arm around him, "he helped me cook this morning."

The man chuckled, "That's my boy. Helping to take care of you when I fail too."

His wife laughed, "You never fail too. Now, come, let's have breakfast," she said pulling on his arm.

The man smiled and allowed his wife to guide him to the small kitchen table.

Just as the man sat down at the table, the front door was kicked open and in came three menacing men in leather jackets and a brown-haired woman with a stern look in a grey trench coat, frightening the man's wife and son. The man shot up from his seat, "What is the meaning of this?" he yelled angrily. His wife grabbed their son and held him tightly as the four individuals forced themselves into their apartment.

The four intruders stopped in front of the family, and the woman spoke in a thick South Eastern European accent, "Are you Adrian Novak?"

The man nodded, "I am. But I don't know what this is about?"

"You're under arrest for espionage and betraying the state," the woman responded coldly. She turned to her men, "Search the apartment. Find the leak of information." The men nodded silently and quickly spread out to search around.

"What? I've been nothing but loyal! I'm a member of the Ministry of State Security! Head of foreign intelligence!" the Novak protested. The man was no doubt a valuable member for the state since he lived in such comfortable conditions in a rare "luxurious" apartment. "I demand to speak to Director Kos, immediately!"

The woman smirked, "He's the one who sent me here. So you'll see him soon enough."

One of the men walked up to her with a paper bag and handed it to her. The woman looked in and
smiled, "So…you're claiming to be innocent right?"

"Of course I am!" Novak protested. His wife and son held each other tightly as they looked at the woman with fear. Though the woman never introduced herself, they all knew she was State Security, or often known as Secret Police. Secret Police, something no one ever wants to encounter.

"Then you're lying. Because either your embezzling money or you're being paid by the West for information!" the woman said dumping bundles of money onto the table.

"W-What? That's not mine! You have to believe me!" Novak protested again. He turned to his wife and pleaded, "лапа (lá-pá)! This isn't mine. I would never harm our family!"

The woman chuckled, "You can't lie to the state. The truth will come out eventually."

"But, I'm not lying!"

One of the other men came out of the bedroom with a briefcase, "Ma'am, we found the leak from the Ministry of State Security. Doesn't look like he had a chance to sell the information yet."

"Good," The woman said. She turned to the family, "Gag and put blindfolds on the wife and son. But leave them here for backup to handle them."

"What? You can't!" Novak called out in distress.

His wife cried, "We didn't do anything!"

The woman frowned, "Doesn't matter. We're not taking the chance." She turned to her men, "Call for backup and have them tear this place apart for any microfilm and copies of secret documents he shouldn't have in his possession."

"Yes, Ma'am," the men said.

The last thing Novak saw before he got a black hood draped over his head was his wife and son struggling against the secret police and heard the loud, frantic screams of his family. He couldn't help but cry under the hood and try his best to resist as the secret police moved him.

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**Steve & Margaret Rogers Residence, Scarsdale, NY**

It's another chaotic Wednesday morning at the Rogers residence with Steve and Peggy rushing to get ready for work and get the kids ready for school. At seven in the morning, the house was in a hectic atmosphere, especially with Michael, Sarah, and Angela hurrying around to get everything prepared for their day. Peggy, wearing a black women's business suit with a blazer, skirt, and white blouse, carrying John in her arms skillfully managed to put the last plate of breakfast on the table in front of Michael. With the meal served, the kids were quickly eating so they can get leave for school on time. Everyone seemed like they were running late today.

Peggy smiled and adjusted her son in her arms, "Eat up, children. Got everything ready for school?"

Michael and Sarah nodded with their mouths full and hummed in response. Angela looked up at her mother, "Mama, I can't find my shoes."

"Try under the couch, darling," Peggy said with a smile.

"Oh," Angela said quietly, feeling silly that she left them under the couch.
Peggy smirked then felt John starting to play with her wavy shoulder length hair. "Gentle, sweetie," she said looking at her youngest son.

Steve suddenly appeared from the foyer, dressed for work in a nice black suit and tie and carried a briefcase in his hand, "Running late for some meetings at work," he said rushing over to his wife.

Peggy looked at her husband confused, "Not going to stop and eat your breakfast?" She adjusted John in her arms again.

"I can't, I'm sorry. Running super late. Sorry," he said with a frown earning a disapproving look from Peggy. Steve wrapped his arm around his wife and kissing her on the cheek, "You said you can drive the kids to school today, right?"

Peggy nodded, "Mhmm. Are you going to be able to pick them up today or are you coming home just before dinner again?"

Steve shrugged, "I plan to pick them up."

"Well, let me know if you can't, okay?"

"I will." Steve kissed his wife again, this time on the lips. "Gotta go. I love you."

"I love you too. Have a good day at work, darling," Peggy managed to say with a warm smile.

"You too." Steve then stepped back and waved at his kids, "Bye, kids! See you after school! Have a great day!"

"Bye, Daddy!" the kids all said in unison as Steve walked out the foyer to get to work.

Since Steve got promoted to President of Stark Industries, the second highest corporate officer in the company, he has been swamped with work the past month especially since he's new to the job. He goes to work earlier than usual, leaving Peggy to drive the kids to school more often than not. Though he's busier at work, Steve still does his best to spend time with his kids and help around the house as to not leave all the household chores to his wife. As a dedicated family man, Steve tries not to let work affect his family life. But finding the balance between his new work and family has been a challenge for him, particularly when he has to stay at the office late or bring work home. No doubt, Steve has been feeling the stress of his new job and his family, particularly the kids, have sensed it too no matter how much he hides behind his smile and confident demeanor.

Peggy has also been busy at SHIELD especially since receiving worrying intelligence of possible Soviet action in the Western Hemisphere. But regardless of how busy she is, Peggy is much better at balancing work and family than Steve since she already knows how to cope with the high workload and spending time with family. Her excellent management between work and family is because she had time to figure it out throughout her three years of being Director. Of course, there's always a challenge at certain times, and Peggy also initially had trouble finding a healthy balance between her work and family when she first got appointed to Director. So, Peggy understood Steve's stress of trying to find the right balance between work and family. But, the important thing to her is that Steve is trying. However, Peggy could sense the stress in Steve when he leaves and returns from work. She couldn't help but feel worried that Steve isn't feeling fulfilled in his current job and possibly his career.

Peggy and the kids are happy, and she wants her husband to be satisfied too, and not feeling like his job is a burden. Peggy knew Steve, at least, enjoyed his last position as a Senior Manager because of the teams of people he worked with, but being President of Stark Industries is an entirely different
job. She knew her husband would rise to the challenge, but hoped Steve felt fulfilled in his work more than anything. Peggy didn't want him to work and sacrifice his time for a job he doesn't enjoy, especially if he feels like it's a burden to him. She sincerely hoped that Steve would find purpose in his new position and find equilibrium with work and family once again.

Once everyone heard the front door open and close, Sarah looked up at her mother, "Mama, how come Daddy isn't driving us today? I thought you take turns, but you've been doing it almost every day."

Peggy shook her head, "I know it's his turn, darlings, but he has a lot of important work to do today. He's the President of Stark Industries now, remember? He has a lot of responsibilities since he got his new job."

Michael looked up at her curiously, "But aren't you the boss of SHIELD? Why do you have time to drive us to school all the time and he doesn't? How come he works a lot recently?"

Peggy felt John kick and try reaching for the table and food, "Darling, are you mad at your father?" she asked as she walked over to John's booster seat next to Sarah and put her youngest son down so he can eat breakfast at the table too.

"No!" Michael yelled out in surprise. "I mean, no, we're not," he said in a quieter voice so he wouldn't get in trouble for raising his voice at his mother. "We're just curious why he's so busy lately," he said, running a hand through his short brown hair.

Peggy leaned on John's chair, "Well, what I do is different from your father's. I'm the boss at my work, so I generally make my own schedule. Well, usually if I don't have meetings with anyone or anything, but I generally know ahead of time unless there's an emergency." She smiled, "It's important and very busy work, but I'm very good with time management. Unlike some kids I know."

Sarah looked up from her food, "Hey," she said with a smile.

Peggy smiled at her oldest daughter, "I'm glad you're learning it more and more, sweetie." She then looked back at Michael, "But anyway, your father isn't the boss and is the second highest person in charge of the company, right under your Uncle Howard. And since your father got promoted, he's in charge of many things in the company your Uncle can't handle and answers to many people. But I can assure you, that your Daddy always wants to spend time with us. Never forget that."

"We won't, Mama. We're just curious," Michael replied.

Peggy smiled, "Daddy, just got promoted, so he's still adjusting to the new work. Give it time, and everything will settle, and he'll be back driving you to school and playing in the evenings with you again," she said hopefully.

Angela finally spoke up after staying silent the whole conversation, "Is Daddy happy?" she asked innocently.

"That's quite subjective, sweetie. Do you mean with you, us, or work?" Peggy asked raising a brow.

"Any of it, I guess," Angela said quietly with a shrug.

"He's happy with us, and don't ever second guess him on that."

Sarah nodded, "We'll never, Mama."

Peggy sighed and ran a hand through her hair, "But as for work, I can't say the same. He just started
his new position, so I guess time will tell. Your father enjoyed his last position, but I don't think he's
enjoying his new one right now." She sighed, "He works too hard sometimes, and no one cares more
than him."

Angela hummed, "Hm. Why does he want the job if he isn't happy, Mama?"

Peggy shrugged, "He just started his job, sweetheart. There's some adjusting he needs to do and then
he'll find a balance and be happy at work again," she said in a hopeful tone. She smiled, "He also
wants to provide for us. Much like I do."

Sarah spoke up, "Does he miss being Captain America?"

Peggy made a small smile, "He says he doesn't, but I know part of him does."

"Would Daddy go back to being Captain America again?" Angela asked innocently as she moved a
stray blonde hair away from her eyes.

Peggy frowned and shook her head, "I don't know, sweetheart. I don't want him to if he does."

"How come?" Michael responded.

Peggy smiled, "Because I like having him around. And I'm sure you kids love having Daddy home
to play with you and read you bed time stories, right?"

"Yeah, we do!" Sarah beamed.

"Well, that's why I don't want him to go back to being Captain America. If he goes back he has to go
far away for long periods of time, dangerous places, and we'll see him from time-to-time," Peggy
responded plainly to her children.

"Oh," Angela and Michael replied.

"That's just the obligation that goes with being Captain America." Peggy walked around the table
and placed her hands on Sarah's shoulders, "Besides," she began with a smile. "Your father loves
being home with us, so I doubt he would return as Captain America given a choice." She chuckled
and smiled at her oldest daughter, "But I'm glad you all think of Daddy."

Sarah looked up at her mother, "I want to be like him someday, Mama. A fighter." Of all the kids,
Sarah was closest to her father, and she admired his old profession as Captain America the most. She
idolized her dad, and both Peggy and Steve saw it. It wasn't bad, but it sometimes worried Steve.
Even with the worry, both Peggy and Steve will never deter their kids from their goals and
ambitions.

Peggy chuckled, "I know, darling." She leaned down and kissed her daughter on the hair. She
looked up at her kids, "But no matter how busy he gets at work, this goes for me too, know that we
want nothing more than to spend our time with you."

Michael smiled, "We know, Mama."

Angela beamed, "I love you, Mama."

"And Daddy!" Sarah cheered. She turned to John, "What about you, John?"

John smiled, "I love Mama and Dadda!"

Peggy chuckled, "And I love you." She looked at the clock and saw how late it was, "Shoot, lost
track of time. Time to go to school! Get your things, children!"

Sarah stood up from her seat, "Where's April?" Almost on cue, everyone heard a knock at the door. "Never mind."

Peggy turned to the counter to grab her things for work, "Michael, honey, can you get the door, please?"

"On it!" Michael called as he hopped off his seat and gathered his school stuff. Once he got all his things, he ran off to the front door to answer it.

Angela ran into the family room and stopped, "Mama, where did you say my shoes were?"

"Under the couch, darling," Peggy said as she slung her purse over her shoulder and grabbed her briefcase.

Michael called from the foyer, "Mama, April is here!"

"Great, bring her in!" Peggy looked over at Sarah and saw her standing with all her school stuff together. Peggy smiled, "Got everything, sweetie?"

"Yup!"

"Great. Once Angela is ready, we'll go," Peggy said as she walked over to John on his booster seat. She then bent down and gave him a big kiss on the cheek and smiled, "Darling, Mama will be back home later. April is here so be good." She kissed him again, "I love you."

"Bye, bye, Mama," John said with a smile.

Sarah waved at her little brother, "Bye, John!" Her little brother smiled and waved in response to his older sister.

Peggy stood up and started toward the foyer with Sarah close behind. As she got to the threshold, she turned to her youngest daughter sitting on the couch, putting on her shoes, "Angela, honey, you got everything for school?"

Angela finished putting on her last shoe and stood up, "Yup!" She then rushed over to the kitchen table, grabbed her things by her chair, and trotted over to her waiting mother and older sister. The Rogers kids are now ready for school.

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**Time Square, New York City, SHIELD: AEGIS HEADQUARTERS**

The elevator doors opened with a ding on the top floor allowing Peggy to step out into the wide waiting room. She noticed Rose, her secretary, wasn't staffing the desk which meant she was in her office. Without a second pause, Peggy quickly walked around Rose's desk and down the hallway toward her office, her heels clicking with every step. She was running late after dropping the kids off at school and needed to get her busy day started in the office. As Peggy approached her office, she spotted Rose step out of the room, carrying a black leather padfolio in her arms.

Rose wore a professional grey suit and business skirt, and instantly spotted Peggy approaching her. "Oh, there you are, Peggy," she said with a warm smile.

Peggy smiled, "Good morning, Rose," she greeted. "I'm running late. Had a late start dropping off the kids at school today."
Rose smiled, "It happens, Director."

Peggy walked past her friend and secretary and entered her office, "Anything, I need to know this morning before I give the morning brief?"

Rose followed Peggy into the room, "One big thing that you won't like."

Peggy chuckled as she walked over to her desk, "It's always something." As she put her briefcase and purse down on her desk, she looked up at Rose with a small smile, "Let's hear it."

Rose sighed, "The FBI Director, Mr. Hoover, cancelled his visit and meeting with you this Thursday. Again…"

Peggy sighed as she unbuttoned her suit jacket and sat down on her chair, "I can only imagine why," she said sarcastically. "It's not like it's the first time he will be traveling to have a meeting with me."

Rose shrugged, "Well, we both know why, he feels less important and less adequate about himself going to a meet a woman concerning his job."

Peggy sighed, "Men…"

Rose chuckled, "He'd rather you meet him than the other way around."

Peggy scoffed at the notion, "Because who visits who really means something." She rolled her eyes, "His pride and sexism is more important than the security of the nation."

"Hate to state the obvious, but it's because you're a woman in a dominant male profession. They'll always look down upon you for that fact alone," Rose said plainly.

Peggy sighed, "I know, Rose. I can never forget it in this job. After everything I've done, I'm scrutinized and criticized because I'm a woman. Even the small things SHIELD has done is under a microscope because of my sex." She shook her head, "My reputation is good, but, I'm still 'just a woman.' Which is all that matters sometimes." Peggy smirked at Rose, "You know how it is. It gets tiring."

"It does," Rose said in agreement.

Peggy turned her chair around and looked out the window, "Anyway, Hoover wanted to meet with me, so he's either coming here, or we aren't having this meeting," she said confidently.

Rose nodded with an approving smile, "Excellent idea, Peggy."

Peggy crossed her arms, "Our relationship with other agencies has always been shaky, even when Phillips was Director. We're all on the same side but can barely work together. But, at least we have Agent Witwer as our liaison from the FBI, so our communication with them regarding important intelligence and operations isn't completely terrible. Guess that's progress." She turned back around to face Rose, "Anything else I should know?"

Rose nodded to the desk, "You have a meeting with Ronald Burke, CEO of Titan International Weapons and Technologies at noon." Peggy raised a brow in question. "He called to set up a meeting to discuss potential contracts? It's in the city, but traffic might be bad around that time."

"Right, yes. I remember, thank you," Peggy replied with a smile and nod.

"I also put forms on your desk that you need to sign by the end of the day so we can have them sent
on time tomorrow. But other than the meetings and forms that's it."

Peggy nodded, "Got it. Thank you, Rose." she said putting her briefcase down on the floor and moving her purse to the side of her desk to get started on the paperwork.

Rose nodded, "No problem." With that she turned and began to leave the room.

But just as Rose was about to leave, Agent Jack Thompson walked in with a folder in hand, followed by a man by the name of Billy Meyers, an Operation Manager who works in the Ops Center of SHIELD, entered the room with a knock on the doorframe. Meyers is a tall lanky man with jet black hair and pronounced cheekbones, and wore a well-pressed black suit and tie like Thompson.

Thompson smiled at Rose as she walked by, "Hi, Rose."

Rose smiled, "Good morning, Jack," she said as she walked past the two men on her way out of Peggy's office.

Peggy looked up at the two men, "Gentlemen, what can I do for you?"

Meyers and Thompson walked over and stopped in front of Peggy's desk. Meyers then looked at Thompson and nodded, prompting him to speak first. Thompson stepped forward and handed Peggy the folder, "Got credible evidence on a possible Soviet spy residing in Brooklyn."

Peggy opened the folder and quickly skimmed the documented evidence on the spy as she listened to her head agent of the Major Cases Response Team.

Thompson stuck his hands in his pockets, "But we have reason to believe he's part of a larger spy ring and is merely the mule who routs information to the Soviets. We'll know soon enough when we pick him up."

Peggy nodded and closed the folder, handing it back to Jack, "Good. Go get him and pick his brain and find out what he knows."

Thompson nodded, "On it." With that Thompson turned and left.

Peggy turned her attention to Meyers, "Meyers, what do you need?"

Meyers spoke up in his usual confident but hushed tone, "Remember the SHIELD team we deployed to Sokovia to capture Adrian Novak?"

"Yes. Any word on the team there?"

"They captured him and are returning ahead of schedule. They're landing at Westchester Air National Guard Base. Last call in says the plane will be landing at noon."

"That was quicker than I anticipated. Great!" Peggy said with a smile.

"I'll get the SPU to pick them up." Meyers replied with a confident smile.

"Good. I want Dugan to handle transporting Novak back here personally," Peggy said in an authoritative voice.

"Expecting trouble on the way home, Director?"

"I'm always expecting trouble. My number one rule is, hope for the best, plan for the worst. As far as
I'm concerned, Hydra is still a serious threat and we know that they have embedded themselves in Sokovia. I don't doubt that they'll try something here to get Novak back or at least eliminate him to deny us from learning more about Soviet and Sokovian intelligence," Peggy replied in a serious tone.

Meyers raised a brow, "You think Hydra will try springing him?"

Peggy nodded, "The men on the hill might not agree with SHIELD's threat assessment on Hydra, but we dealt with them for long enough to know that they can appear anywhere. We know Hydra integrated into the Soviet Union and many other Eastern Bloc countries including Sokovia, so I don't doubt Hydra is a threat." She leaned back in her chair, "Novak is a good capture, and Sokovia will be feeling the loss. Make sure Dugan is aware of a very possible Hydra and Soviet response."

Meyers nodded, "Will do, Director. Will that be all?"

"One last thing. I got a meeting to attend to at noon, so Agent Ghillie, head of my security detail, will probably discuss the route we'll take with you," Peggy said plainly.

"I'll be on the lookout for him, Director." With that Meyers turned and left the office.

Peggy sighed and turned her chair around and stared out the window, deep in thought.

SHIELD Parking Garage

Few short hours later, the eight men of the Aegis SHIELD SPU Alpha Team lead by Captains Timothy "Dum Dum" Dugan and Sam "Happy" Sawyer got ready for their pick up mission at the airport and headed down to the garage via the cargo elevator. The majority of the men all wore the standard all-black combat uniforms, boots, SHIELD M69B bullet resistant/fragmentation protective body armor vest, helmets, and carried M1A1 Thompson Submachine Guns and M1918A2 Browning Automatic Rifles (BARs) with belts of ammunition pouches and grenades. The standard M69 vest, better known as a "Flak Jacket," became standard issue for the U.S. Marine Corps toward the end of the Korean War. However, SHIELD R/D (Research and Development) upgraded the standard M69 vest to be considerably lighter and be able to stop Soviet-made 7.62x39mm rounds, shell blasts, and rocket fragments. Thus, the M69B jacket became standard issue for SHIELD strike teams, though still relatively bulky and uncomfortable to wear, weighing about 15-pounds as opposed to the standard vests at 22-pounds. The standard SPU loadout with weapons, ammunition, and protective armor weighed roughly between 40-49.8 pounds.

The cargo elevator dinged at the garage level, and the large doors slid open, revealing the heavily armed SPU team. Dugan had his helmet tucked under his arm and had his usual bowler hat on in its place as he stepped out of the elevator and into the garage, ahead of his team. He immediately walked over to the three armored vehicles parked in front of them for the trip to the airport. The lead and tail vehicles were black four-wheeled SHIELD armored cars known as Armored Security Vehicles (ASV). With sloped armor, bullet resistant glass, and a closed top hatch intended for a mounted gun, these cars made an impressive show of force as well as provide security for SHIELD assets and personnel. The middle vehicle in the short column is a standard armored truck used to transport and protect personnel. The three armored vehicles seemed a little over the top for a simple pick up at the airport, but Dugan figured Peggy knew something he didn't.

Dugan turned to his team, "Mount up. Let's get rolling." The men of the SPU nodded in response and started to make their way to their assigned vehicles.

Gabe walked up to Dugan and chuckled, "Let's hope this mission is as easy as it sounds."
Bucky appeared next to the two men, "Peggy knows something we don't about a possible attack, and she's never wrong, so as simple as it sounds, stay alert." He was the only one not wearing a flak jacket, and instead wore a load bearing vest over his black uniform to carry his ammunition for his Thompson submachine gun slung on his back.

Sam "Happy" Sawyer opened the passenger side of the armored truck and turned to face the trio, "I learned to never question Peggy. Gabe, you should honestly know that by now."

Gabe sighed, "I wasn't questioning—"

Peggy's voice interrupting him from behind made Gabe jolt in surprise, "And you should never," Peggy said calmly.

Gabe turned around and saw Peggy carrying a black padfolio and walking over to them with an entourage of SHIELD agents in black suits following close behind her. "I wasn't. I'm just hoping we don't get into a firefight in the middle of the city," he replied, defending his position.

Peggy nodded as she stopped by him, "I know, Gabe. I don't know if Hydra or the Soviets are planning to attack you or not, but the possibility is genuine, and the likelihood is extremely high." She crossed her arms over her chest, "Adrian Novak is a department head within the Main Administration for Reconnaissance in part of the Sokovian Ministry of State Security. He's responsible for gathering and analyzing intelligence of foreign countries, and since Sokovian intelligence works closely with the Soviet Union, he is a wealth of information that'll give us an edge against the Soviets and the Eastern Bloc." She sighed, "As you well know it's hard for us to get spies into the Soviet Union, and it's harder now since Agent Ottis destroyed the Soviet formula and production of Nitramene a couple of years ago. Given some convincing, Novak will get us some much needed insider Intel."

Gabe looked at her confused, "Understood. But there's one question I have in mind. How does Sokovian intelligence have so much resources to spy on other countries if their country is so poor."

Peggy nodded, "Big picture: Sokovia may appear as a small and impoverished country, victim of communist rule, and an independent 'republic' outside of the USSR, but the government enjoys advantages of Soviet support both financially and militarily. They're under the influence of the Soviet Union, and the Soviets exercise control over crucial government department, such as the Sokovian Security Services."

Bucky turned to Gabe, "Essentially, the country as a whole is poor, but the government has funding from the Soviets to spy, specifically on NATO, and build and maintain the Sokovian People's Army. The Army is only there to crush resistance of Communist rule." He shrugged, "The Sokovian government is friendly to Moscow who has the real power. Hence why Novak is so important to us."

Peggy nodded, "Exactly."


Dugan nodded to Bucky and Gabe, "Alright, boys, load up. We got a time table to meet."

"Right," Bucky said as he turned and walked over to ride in the back of the armored truck. Gabe, inversely, walked to the lead armored car.

Before Dugan went to the lead car, he turned and faced Peggy, "Peg, why are you down here? Come to see us off?" He chuckled, "IF that's it, then I'm feeling some bad mojo for this mission."

Peggy chuckled, "Sort of, but I'm actually leaving for a meeting right now. So, it might as well see
you off before I go."

Dugan flared his brows, "OH. Sounds dull." He waved, "See you when we get back." With that he
turned and walked over to the lead car.

Peggy smiled, "Good luck, boys."

Agent Floyd, her usual driver, aid, and part of her security detail, stepped next to her, "Ready to go,
Director?"

Peggy nodded, "Let's get this over with," she plainly said as she leads the way to the row of parked
black government sedans behind the column of armored vehicles in front of her. As Peggy and her
security detail walked to cars, the parking garage suddenly erupted with a loud racket as the armored
cars and truck turned on their engines. The sound was almost deafening within the tight confines of
the subterranean parking structure. Other than the pickup of a captured Sokovian asset, it was just
another average day, and complete with meetings and all for Peggy.

**Lower Manhattan**

A half-hour later in downtown New York, Peggy's motorcade of three black SHIELD sedans inched
their way through the city traffic, only moving a few feet at a time and just moving no more than ten
miles per hour. The roads, especially in the heart of the city, were jam-packed with cars and bright
yellow taxi cabs. The city main roads and highways always seemed to be in a constant state of traffic
from 8 AM to 7 PM every day, an annoying nuisance for commuters and people driving throughout
the day. Good thing Peggy decided to leave for her meeting with the CEO of Titan International
around the same time as her SPU team left SHIELD HQ for the airport.

Peggy sat in the back seat of her car with her legs crossed as she read a document in her black leather
padfolio. Floyd looked into the rearview mirror and spoke up to his boss, "Almost there, Director.
Traffic is killer around this time since everyone tends to go out to lunch around now, but we should
be there fifteen minutes prior to your meeting."

Peggy smiled at him, "Thank you, Floyd." Floyd nodded with a humble smile and returned to
focusing on the traffic jam.

The light at the intersection turned green, and the traffic started to flow through the cross street
slowly. As Peggy's motorcade slowly made its way across the intersection, a small black cargo truck
suddenly rammed Peggy's car at the side, throwing her car from the middle of the SHIELD column
and causing it to roll over twice, coming to a stop on its mangled roof. The truck quickly backed up
to the middle of the street and dropped its left side panel, revealing over a dozen gunmen with ski
masks and automatic weapons. Before the agents in the lead car got to react, the gunmen opened fire
and killed them in a matter of seconds.

The two agents in the trailing car drew their sidearms and got out of the car just as the truck's right
side panel dropped revealing the shooters. The SHIELD agent on the driver side instantly dove to
cover, but his partner was too exposed and was immediately gunned down by the gunmen. The
SHIELD agent peeked over the car and saw the shooters hop out of the truck and began to walk
over to the Director's upturned vehicle. The agent reached into the car and grabbed the shortwave
radio, "Headquarters, Agents down, Director in contact, cross street of 7th and West 23rd!" He put
the receiver down and quickly stood up and fired two rounds, killing one of the gunmen. Half of the
gunmen turned around and started shooting in his direction prompting him to take cover. The agent
was outgunned and outnumbered leaving not much he can to get to the Director to see if she's alive.
In Peggy's upside down car, Peggy was kinked in an uncomfortable position laying on the ground which is now the dented and mangled roof of her vehicle. Glass shards and debris scattered the area immediately around her. Her business suit was torn and aside from minor cuts, abrasions, and minor bleeding, she was alright. As far as Peggy could tell, she didn't have any broken bones or any critical injuries to worry about, likely still in one piece as a result from receiving the serum while carrying Steve's children. But, Peggy didn't have time to think about it since there were more pressing issues right now with the hostile gunmen.

Peggy groaned uncomfortably and wiggled and shifted her body, so she's lying flat on her stomach. She quickly found her purse lying nearby and speedily grabbed her Walther PPK pistol and an extra magazine of ammunition from her bag. Peggy looked to the front of her car and saw Agent Floyd still relatively in his seat, but his shoulders and head rolled forward against the roof of the vehicle. "Floyd!" Peggy called out to him. "Floyd! Are you okay?"

Floyd groaned in agony, "My legs are broken and my back feels kind of weird."

"Hang on, let me get you out of there," Peggy said as she began to crawl out of the left passenger window, away from the gunmen. As she got out of the car, the masked assailants started to open fire in her direction. Peggy ducked lower and remained behind her overturned car and used it as cover. She put her pistol and the extra magazine in the belt of her skirt and hastily removed her black blazer to have more maneuverability in her arms. Peggy then bent down, reached into the driver side window, and grabbed her driver by the collar of his suit, "Here we go. This might hurt."

"Let's do it!" Floyd said gritting his teeth. While bullets snapped past her head and with one strong tug, Peggy effortlessly pulled Floyd out of his seat, dragging him across the ground and broken glass. Once he was out of the vehicle, Peggy sat him up against the side of the engine compartment. "Are you okay?" she asked quickly while bullets snapped past her and pinged against the car.

Floyd nodded, "Yeah."

Peggy gripped his shoulder, "Watch my back." Floyd nodded in response and slowly took out his Colt .45 pistol. Peggy, in turn, took out her pistol from her skirt and moved to the other side of the car, keeping low to avoid getting shot by the approaching gunmen, and got ready to hold her ground.

At a slight pause between bursts of gunfire from the gunmen, Peggy seized the opportunity and stood up from her cover and shot four rapid shots at one of the men, killing him with a shot in the head and multiple rounds to the chest. She quickly ducked behind cover as the assailants focused on her position and opened fire with a spray of bullets from automatic weapons. Peggy bowed her head lower as bullets pinged off and against the car. The sound of gunfire and the snap of bullets whizzing past her head was deafening. Though the gunmen were heavily suppressing her, she was able to briefly lean out of cover and fire back causing a break from the gunfire from the assailants as they spread out along the width of the street.

In the reprieve of gunfire, Peggy quickly reloaded with the extra magazine tucked in her skirt then stood up and shot at the gunmen, killing two more of them. The thugs promptly returned fire causing Peggy to duck behind cover. The leader of the kill squad looked to his right, "You two go and flank her; we'll suppress them here!" The two gunmen on the right gave a thumbs up and quickly bolted off the street while the rest of the thugs continued to pepper the overturned car with bullets.

Peggy and the gunmen continued to exchange fire for what seemed like an eternity. Peggy rapidly peeked out of cover again and fired another volley of pistol rounds at the gunmen, unaware of the two masked men trying to flank her left. As she ducked behind the car again, Floyd rose his voice, "Director, watch out."
Peggy looked up and saw the two gunmen trying to sneak up to her from the side just in time. She quickly aimed and shot a single round, hitting the man in the shoulder and sending him down to his knees. Peggy tried to fire again, but her pistol clicked. Empty. Without a second thought, she threw her gun at the wounded man at lighting speed and hit him in the face, knocking him over, unconscious. The second thug trained his weapon at her head and just as he was about to fire, he was shot in the forehead with a single bullet. The man fell over, dead. Peggy turned around and saw Floyd sitting forward aiming his pistol with one hand.

Floyd flipped the pistol around in his hand and held it out to Peggy, "You'll have better use with this than me. I'll tell you if they'll flank us again." Peggy nodded and took the .45cal pistol from her driver.

Knowing their flanking attack failed, the remaining thugs continued to push forward, suppressing Peggy with their consistent gunfire. This time, Peggy didn't get much of an opportunity to shoot back since she was under a constant barrage of .45cal bullets as the thugs got closer and closer. Peggy ducked her head and bided her time for a chance to return fire. But as the gunmen approached dangerously close to Peggy's flipped car, a spray of gunfire ripped through the men in the back causing them to all fall face first, dead. The street suddenly fell silent of shooting, the only sounds coming from police sirens and screams of people fleeing the firefight.

Peggy cautiously looked over the car and saw a small line of four SHIELD agents walking toward them. She looked over at Floyd, "Calvary is here." Floyd let out a sigh of relief as he leaned his head back against the car. He groaned in pain as he tried to shift his body on the ground.

The pair heard Thompson's voice call out to them, "Director! Are you okay?"

Peggy smiled, "We're alright! Need a medical team over here, Agent Floyd is wounded!"

Thompson turned to Li, "Mike, get the paramedics over to Peggy."

Li nodded, "On it," he said as he turned around and ran back toward their car to call for an ambulance if one wasn't on its way already.

Peggy looked down at Floyd, "Need me to carry you?"

Floyd shook his head and groaned in pain again, "No. I'm good here. I'll wait for the medics."

Peggy nodded and handed him his pistol back, "Thanks."

Floyd nodded and holstered his pistol, "You kept us alive. I should be thanking you." He paused for a moment as he leaned his head back. He shook his head in disbelief, "I don't know how you walked out of that collision without anything other than a few scrapes. Beats having broken legs." He groaned in discomfort as the adrenaline from the fight started to wear off and all the pain from his injuries started to rush into him. "And maybe some back problems too," he said while gritting his teeth.

Peggy shrugged and patted his shoulder, "Lucky I suppose," she said withholding the truth.

It wasn't common knowledge that she received the serum from carrying Steve's children. But truth be told, Peggy would probably be in a worse condition if it wasn't for the serum. Though the super soldier serum is popularly known to effect molecular density of cellular fibers such as skin and muscle, the serum also caused her tissues and bones to be denser. Which is why Steve's body could take numerous beatings from someone on near equal playing field like Bucky and his bones won't break.
Soon Thompson, Ramirez, and Kathryn joined Peggy by her overturned SHIELD car. Thompson greeted her first, "Sorry we weren't here sooner. We just dropped off the Soviet spy at SHIELD when we got the call. Got here as fast as we could."

Peggy gave a small smile, "You're here and that's all that matters. Thanks."

Kathryn saw the handful cuts and abrasions on Peggy's body through the tears in her white blouse. "You sure you're okay, Director?" she asked.

Peggy nodded, "Some scrapes and bruises, but I'll survive." She looked at Floyd, "Floyd's legs are broken and has at least a spinal injury of some sort."

Thompson nodded, "Li is getting the paramedics. Shouldn't take long." He looked over and saw that the NYPD and additional SPU teams arrived in force and formed a perimeter around them and the intersection, "the police and SHIELD strike teams are here."

"Good," Peggy replied calmly. "Rick, can you look after Floyd for me? I need to check something."

Ramirez nodded, "No problem," he said as he bent down and attended to his fellow agent.

"Jack, Kate, follow me," Peggy said as she walked over to the two bodies of the gunmen who tried flanking her during the fight.

Floyd followed the trio with his gaze then looked up at Ramirez, "Rick, you worked with the Director before right? Before she became Director?"

"Yeah, why?" Ramirez replied calmly.

"We got hit by the truck which caused our car to roll over. I got my legs broken and from what it feels like, a spinal injury too," Floyd began.

"What are you getting at?"

"The Director walked away from it with barely any cuts and bruises. She doesn't seem like she's affected by it at all." Floyd chuckled with disbelief, "She got me out of the car instantly and held off these shooters by herself until you guys got here."

Ramirez shrugged, "Ah. Well, she's always been a strong woman. The depths of her strength never cease to surprise." He chuckled, "Also doesn't hurt that she's just lucky. There have been numerous times where she should've been killed or wounded, but nothing happened. Director Rogers is a force to be reckoned with, and no one should ever dare get in her way."

Floyd leaned his head back against the car, "What I saw earlier, what she did, I just can't fathom... She seemed so calm and walked out of that crash not like nothing happened…"

"Hey. That's why she's the Director," Ramirez coolly said, interrupting him.

"Yeah," Floyd grunted uncomfortably as his legs throbbed with pain.

"Not many people outside of SHIELD respect her position because she's a woman, but she's sure as hell earned mine and a lot of other men a long time ago."

Floyd smirked, "She'll never lose mine…" Ramirez patted him on the shoulder.

Peggy bent down and picked up her pistol she threw at one of the two gunmen who tried flanking her earlier. The two motionless bodies of the thugs lay next to each other on top of a pool of blood.
One gunman had the back of his head missing from a gunshot to the forehead, and the other man oozed blood out his shoulder wound and had a badly broken nose with blood all over his face and discoloration on his cheekbones and forehead. Peggy tucked her pistol in the back of her skirt again and bent down and checked the pulse of the thug with the broken nose, feeling for any sign of a heartbeat.

Thompson cocked his head to the side, "What up, Peggy?"

"Seeing if he's alive." Peggy felt a pulse in her fingers, "Good. I got a pulse. He's alive."

Katheryn nodded, "He's going to wake up with one hell of a headache." She smirked, "Did you throw your pistol at him?" she asked in surprise.

Peggy looked up at Kathryn, "I was out of ammo."

Thompson turned around briefly to look at the overturned. From the car to the two bodies on the ground the distance was a little over ten yards, which means Peggy threw her pistol so incredibly hard that it didn't lose its velocity over the length and hit the man with such force it knocked him out. Not to mention her throw was also amazingly accurate. Thompson couldn't help but be genuinely surprised and impressed by her quick thinking and strength at the moment. Though Peggy has been out of the field for many years, Thompson is still amazed at her physical strength. Sometimes it seems like she's superhuman like Steve, but that's impossible.

Thompson chuckled, "That's one strong arm you got. Knocked him out cold," he said impressed.

Peggy smirked up at Thompson, "Wouldn't recommend throwing your gun at your enemy. Lucky shot."

Kathryn shook her head and whispered to herself, "Got to be more than just luck."

Peggy then leaned forward and again focused on the unconscious man in front of her. She opened his jaw and started to feel his teeth. Kathryn looked at her confused, "Um. Boss…Can I ask what are you doing?"

Peggy didn't look up as she felt each individual tooth, "Checking for a cyanide capsule hidden in a false tooth. If these men work directly with Hydra or the Soviets, they'll have a cyanide pill to kill themselves with if they're captured." She felt a loose tooth in the back of the man's jaw and quickly removed it and found a small cyanide pill. "Found it."

"At least we know these aren't some well-armed street thugs hired to kill you."

Peggy then started to search the man's body for any documents or personal effects but found none. These men were a true kill squad, they hid their identity and carried a suicide pill to avoid capture. She stood up and turned to her lead agent, Jack Thompson, "Jack, patch him up and get him back to HQ. We got a few things to discuss with him."

"With pleasure," Thompson replied. With that, Peggy walked away.

Katheryn smiled, "He's going to be so confused when he wakes up."

"He's going to be in a whole new world tomorrow," Thompson said with a smirk.

Stark Industries: New York City Facility, Manhattan
Steve sat in a fancy conference room near the head of the table next to Howard, going through yet another meeting with the board of Directors. The meeting, like the ones from earlier in the morning, was dry and slow and seemed to drag on forever. Steve did his best to stay engaged as the directors of the company talked about finances, current market, stocks, and production. It's a long day full of meetings and the day is barely halfway through. A day full of rich and arrogant older men in fancy suits.

One of the Directors at the long conference table leaned forward, "Truth be told gentlemen, we're competing with more companies that produce the same things we do. We need to be more innovative and focus on..."

Stark spoke up, "I agree. That's why I'm funneling research and development into the Arc Reactor project."

Another gentleman chimed into the conversation, "Mr. Stark, we have nuclear reactors already and they continue to get better and better with each new development. They're still new and there isn't a need to find a suitable replacement for them yet. The industry nor the country has experienced any nuclear issues, so the Arc Reactor is moot. Secondly, the Arc Reactor project is expensive and time consuming. There isn't a market for it yet nor do we need it at the present time."

Stark sighed, "It's not about what we need, it's about what's possible. I started this company to be innovative and to push progress to form a future that'll be outside our wildest imagination. The Arc Reactor project will be the cornerstone for a technological future. We're pioneering different types of technology. We're at the edge of greatness with the development of the reactor, gentlemen."

"Mr. Stark, we profited from the two wars our country fought, and we still make weapons for the U.S. government. Weaponry has become our forte," said another Director.

Stark sighed in response. He truly hated these meeting, almost as much as Steve. One of the directors leaned forward on the table, "All we're saying, Mr. Stark is that since the wars, we've been producing weapons for the government and making large sums of profit. Whether your ideas of innovation and progress involved weaponry or not doesn't matter when we're turning out large profits from it. Our job as the members of the board is to assure that our shareholders are taken care of, therefore, the board all agrees that we should focus more on weapons and push more funding to that sector."

Steve looked at Howard, and Howard responded by shaking his head slightly. Another Director spoke up, "We know that you want to split production with more peacetime sectors, but we're one of the top weapons companies contracted by the military and one of the only companies supplying SHIELD. Competing with numerous companies in the civilian sector would be expensive."

Howard nodded and spoke confidently, "For the record, I'm not opposed to developing new innovative weapons for the government, in fact, I support it. However, I believe, no, I know we have the capacity to split between weapons development and very least the Arc Reactor Project with our Civil Technologies Division." He leaned back in his chair, "I enjoy designing weapons, but I also very much enjoy making new technology to improve everyday life. That is the purpose of this company, to improve everyday life with technology."

An older gentlemen at the opposite end of the table from Howard, an older and paler man with no hair, one of the more experienced corporate Directors in Stark Industries finally spoke up, "Mr. Stark, we appreciate your enthusiasm, but for now we believe weaponry should be our primary focus, especially with the new fiscal year coming up. We can address the Arc Reactor project at a later time. Our Civil Technologies Division will remain but receive less funding while we divert most of our resources to the Weapons Division." Howard didn't respond and stared back at the older man.
"This is the unanimous decision of the members of the board, Mr. Stark."

Howard is both the CEO and chairman of Stark Industries, but he knew the Board of Directors still had power over him. For the past several weeks, he's been disagreeing with many board decisions, and if he continues to oppose the board, especially on a crucial corporate matter such as this, they can vote him off. Not wanting to be kicked off the board and lose his position, Howard conceded. He nodded, "Very well." Without a doubt, Howard was going to make his Arc Reactor one way or the other, with or without corporate approval from the board. Eventually.

"Good. It's the decision of the board, Mr. Stark," replied the older gentlemen. The man leaned forward, remaining stoic at the table, "Now Mr. Stark, for the next order of business. We've been hearing unsettling rumors of one of our best department heads threatening to resign or worse move to our competitors."

Howard cocked his head to the side, "Who?"

"Old time friend of yours. Obadiah Stane. We've been hearing unsettling things from his department," replied another man.

Howard shook his head, "Hm. He's been upset that he was passed over for the President position in favor of Steve Rogers."

The older gentlemen finally broke a smile as he looked at Steve, "A decision we don't regret, Mr. Rogers. You've done excellent work."

Steve leaned forward and nodded at the board, "Thank you, gentlemen."

"But what shall we do with these rumors?"

Howard sat forward, "It's only been a month since Steve was promoted, Obadiah will get over it."

"In the situation he does leave, what then?" Asked another Director.

Steve finally spoke up, "If he leaves, he leaves. It won't be the end of the company. It's simple math. The fate of Stark Industries does not rest on one man, especially not on Obadiah Stane." He looked to Howard, "IF the company does then it's on Mr. Stark's shoulders. Losing Stane might be a setback, but we have teams of engineers and leaders in his department to step up as department head." He leaned back, "If there's a legitimate issue, other than wanting more corporate power in the company, then we could work with him to make life better for him. But his only issue seems to be stemming from being passed over for President of Stark Industries. If that's all he wants, then we can't appease him for it." Steve shrugged, "Sometimes we're going to have to cut a man loose."

One of the Directors nodded in approval, "That's a good response."

"I had very limited exposure to Mr. Stane, but from what I can tell, he works hard, a brilliant businessman, and is exceptionally smart. But offline from work, my impressions is that he isn't much of a people person. Take that for what it is," Steve replied.

Howard looked at Steve and nodded, respecting his friend's points. He looked at the board and leaned back in his seat, "I've known Obadiah for a long time. He'll get over it. I don't think we need to worry." He smirked, "Work performance may suffer for a little while longer and the rumors might persist, but I doubt he'll quit. If he doesn't do anything horrible, then I won't fire him." He nodded, "As Steve said, Obadiah is brilliant and a great businessman, as far as I can tell, he's still an asset to the company."
The older gentleman at the end of the table nodded in agreement, "Alright. That takes care of that then."

Suddenly there was a knock at the conference room door, interrupting the meeting. Before anyone could respond, the door opened, and Steve's secretary, a young blonde woman stepped in briefly, "Mr. Rogers."

Steve looked over at his secretary, "Yes?"

"SHIELD headquarters just called. It's your wife. There's been an incident. They want you over there as soon as possible," she said quickly.

Steve shot out of his seat, "I'm on my way." He looked at all the men at the table, "Excuse me, gentlemen." He hastily gathered his things and put them in his briefcase then rapidly made his exit, leaving the board members and Howard with confused and concerned looks.

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**Time Square, New York City, SHIELD: AEGIS HEADQUARTERS**

A motorcade of three SHIELD cars screech down the subterranean levels of the SHIELD parking garage and finally, come to a sudden stop at the curb by the elevators. Peggy stepped out of the middle car followed by Kathryn and Li and then stopped to watch Thompson and Ramirez get out from the lead car and pull out the unconscious gunman they grabbed from the ambush. Peggy gripped her leather padfolio and dirty suit jacket in her hands as she watched her two agents carry the unconscious thug in their arms.

Li spoke up, "He might need medical attention. Don't know the extent of his concussion."

Peggy nodded and called out to Thompson, "Doesn't matter. Jack, take him to an interrogation room. Keep him on constant guard."

Thompson nodded, "You got it, Director," he said as he started walking with Ramirez while carrying the unconscious man to the cargo elevator.

Peggy turned to Kathryn, "As soon as the gunman wakes up, let me know."

Kathryn nodded, "Yes, Director."

Peggy then looked through the clean glass doors to the room with the elevators and saw Rose waiting for her. Peggy looked to Li, "A high valued target from Sokovia is coming in from the airport under guard by the SPU. While I handle his questioning, tell Jack he can handle the gunman. If he wakes up in time."

Li smiled, "He's going to love that. But, are you sure you don't want to question the thug? He did try killing you."

Peggy spoke confidently, "I'm not a big fan of the use of torture or force in questioning someone, and lord knows I've made a few exceptions over the years. This is one of those times, but I won't handle the interrogation. I trust my agents to gain some much needed information from him by any means necessary."

Li responded, "Understood."

With that, Peggy nodded and excused herself, "Thank you for the back up," she said as she walked toward the elevator room to talk with her secretary.
Li watched Peggy step through the doors and spoke up to Kathryn, "Hm. Guess she's afraid she'll kill the guy before she gains any information from him."

Kathryn shook her head, "No, you know she has more control than that. She pretty much said that the thug isn't worth her time."

"What? The guy was literally part of a group of men tasked with killing her. How is he not worth her time?" Li asked confused.

Kathryn chuckled, "She isn't going to grant him an audience which signals that she doesn't care enough about him. The Director only cares about his answers to the interrogation which she can get from us when Jack makes him sing. If she doesn't show face, it shows that she only treated the ambush as an inconvenience and the thug can't get the satisfaction of seeing her and getting an emotional response from her."

Li sighed, "Women and their signals." He shrugged and started to walk to the cargo elevator, "It's very possible that he might be the strong and silent type."

"Maybe. But the principle still stands," Kathryn replied.

Peggy walked through the clean glass doors to the room with the elevators and was immediately greeted by Rose. Rose spoke up with concern when she got a better look at Peggy's bloodied and torn shirt, "Director, are you okay?"

"I'm fine," Peggy replied calmly as she stopped by Rose.

Rose turned and signaled the elevator then looked back at Peggy, "The SPU team is arriving with Novak. They should be here in 10-15 minutes from their last call-in."

"Good. Notify me when they arrive."

The elevator dinged and the doors opened in front of the two women, prompting them to step into the lift. Rose then pressed the button to the top floor which soon closed the elevator doors shut. As they ascended, Rose looked over at Peggy, "Also your husband is here, waiting for you in your office. Called him when I heard what happened."

Peggy produced a sudden relaxed smile, "Oh. You didn't need to call him, but thank you, Rose." She relaxed slightly. The thought of Steve nearby put her at ease.

Peggy has been in a high-stress situation for the past hour, and the fact Steve is present in the SHIELD Headquarters building is a relieving feeling. Though she doesn't want him to miss work, she's happy to have him here. Steve's mere presence is a welcoming reprieve from the high-stress situation she was in, no matter how short a time her husband is here in the office. Truthfully, this very moment is the first time she let her mind wander to her husband and kids. During and immediately after the ambush, Peggy couldn't afford to think about anything other than her present situation. But now, with her husband nearby and in the middle of SHIELD, she could finally let her guard down.

Once the elevator reached the top floor, the two women stepped out and stopped by Rose's half-circle desk. "Anything you need right now from me, Director?" Rose asked as she walked around her desk to her chair.

Peggy shook her head, "Not right now." As she turned and was about to leave for her office, she suddenly stopped and looked over at Rose, "Oh, yes. One thing."
"Anything, Peggy," Rose quickly replied as she sat down in her seat.

"Agent Floyd was wounded in the ambush, I believe the paramedics took him to the hospital in Midtown. Can you check up on him and let me know how he's doing?"

Rose nodded, "Of course."

"Thank you," Peggy said with a kind smile. Peggy then walked off, down the hallway to her office.

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Peggy entered her office and immediately saw Steve staring out the window, lost in thought. She could tell by how he was standing with his shoulders hunched forward and his hands in his pockets that he was tense. Peggy closed the door behind her, and the sound of the door shutting drew his attention, bringing him back to reality. Steve visibly relaxed upon seeing his wife in the office with him. Without hesitation, he rushed over to her and captured her in a strong embrace.

"Peggy," he managed to gasp as he hugged her tightly.

"Steve," Peggy whispered back, cherishing the physical contact with her husband. She closed her eyes and rested her cheek against his chest as she returned the hug, enjoying the sense of security in his arms. Peggy is a strong woman who could handle herself in any fight, but that didn't mean she didn't long for the comfort and sense of security in her husband's arms.

After a while, Steve leaned back and scanned her up and down, "You look okay, seem okay, aside from some bleeding and some scrapes." He noticed her white blouse was ripped in different places and dried blood stained the soft white fabric with a dark red color all over the shirt.

Peggy smiled and spoke softly, "You're the first person not to ask me if 'I'm okay.' I appreciate that." She nodded, "But I promise I'm alright, its but a few scrapes. It was nothing I couldn't handle."

Steve nodded, "I know. But I couldn't help but to be worried when I heard you were caught in an ambush."

Peggy smiled, "Thanks for coming. It means the world." She then brought him close and kissed him deeply on the lips. After a moment she broke the kiss and smiled up at Steve, "I have to change out of these tattered clothes. Can you grab by spare, it's hanging on the door."

Steve nodded, "Yup, I see it." He kissed her on the forehead then extracted himself from her grip and walked over to her spare Navy blue business suit hanging on her office door. He removed the coat, and the violet blouse from the hanger then turned back to his wife who was walking back to her desk, "Want the coat too?"

"Please. Oh, and can you hang the shirt and coat over my chair for me, please," Peggy replied as she leaned up against her desk and started to unbutton her torn dress shirt.

"No problem," Steve replied as he walked back over to her desk and neatly draped the coat and shirt over the back of Peggy's chair. Steve walked back around the desk and stopped in front of Peggy as she finished unbuttoning her shirt. Once done, Steve stepped forward and helped Peggy remove the bloodied and torn shirt, "here, let me help you," he said as peeled the shirt off her shoulders.

Peggy leaned forward and kissed him briefly, "Thank you, darling," she replied softly as she let her husband take her shirt off.

Steve took the shirt and folded it the best he could and placed it down by her hip, Peggy now leaning
on her desk in only her white bra and ripped black business skirt. Steve took a step back and scanned her body for injuries and got a better look at the handful of small shallow cuts that appeared scabbed over along her body, and one big bloody gash on her side that still looked fresh. Steve nodded to the big cut under her ribs, "Normally, I'd say 'I like the view,' but you got a lot of small cuts and a pretty deep gash that is bleeding on your side." He shrugged, "I'm not really concerned about the smaller wounds, but I am with that big one." He looked up at his wife, "Didn't see the medics or anything?"

Peggy moved her arm and finally saw the wound under her ribs then looked back at her husband, "Didn't feel the need too. Just thought I had minor scrapes and bruises that I can deal with later." She shrugged, "Didn't know the one on my side was that bad though." She looked to the right to a row of filing cabinets under one of the windows, "I have a first aid kit in the far right cabinet on the bottom drawer."

Steve nodded and walked over to the far right filing cabinet. "So, do you know who ambushed you?" he asked as he bent down to the last drawer and grabbed the first aid kit. Steve stood up and walked back over to his wife, "Was it Hydra? The Soviets?"

Peggy shrugged, "One of the two, but they're all in the same," she replied as she watched Steve put the aid kit down on her desk. "They had all the marks of a kill squad from one of them, organized, well-armed, and masked. However, we were able to capture one gunman alive and found a cyanide capsule in his mouth. That's an instant clue and that narrows it down, so I have without a doubt that it's one of them," she replied calmly.

Steve opened up the aid kit and grabbed an alcohol wipe and a sterile cotton elastic bandage roll. "Alright, let's patch you up," he said as he walked over to his wife and dropped the first aid supplies on her desk next to her hip. He took the alcohol wipe and sterile bandage roll and went down on his knees to patch Peggy's side wound. "Even with the serum, can't risk an infection," he said with a smirk as he tore open an alcohol wipe.

Peggy smiled as she lifted her arm to let Steve gain access to the deep gash on her side, "It's a safe practice, darling. We may have enhancements in natural resistances, immunities, and human abilities, but it's always best to avoid any complications in our speedy recovery from injuries. We can still get infected given a chance, but our bodies will likely overcome it naturally and recover faster than the average person."

Steve nodded, "True enough. Good thing your smaller cuts already scabbed over already and look like they're healing pretty quick." He put the wipe on the palm of his hand, "Okay, this is going to be a little cold." Peggy nodded silently in response. Steve applied the wipe to her side and felt her flinch slightly from the cold sensation from the alcohol wipe. As he started to disinfect the wound gently, he felt Peggy wince in pain from the alcohol on her open wound.

Peggy continued to wince in pain as she felt her husband rub her open cut with an alcohol wipe, "Almost done down there?"

Steve chuckled, "Just about," he said as he finished cleaning and disinfecting her deep cut. "It's a good thing we don't have to go all over and disinfect all the smaller cuts you got," he said looking up at Peggy and crumpling up the alcohol wipe in his hand.

Peggy smirked, "We're married, Steve. I don't mind you touching me, so you don't need to think up an excuse."

Steve shook his head as he unraveled the sterile bandage, "You're taking this pretty well," he said with a light chuckle. He stood up and began to wrap the bandage around her belly to patch the wound, Peggy lifting both of her arms in the air to allow her husband space to patch her wounds.
Peggy shrugged, "I'm feeling more relaxed with you around. But believe me, I'm thinking about what occurred."

Steve finished wrapping Peggy's wound then stood up and faced her, "Anything you want to talk about?"

Peggy dropped her arms to her side, "The ambush was likely a reprisal for our capture of Adrian Novak, Sokovian Ministry of State Security. You know about Sokovia's relationship with the Soviet Union since I talk about it with you after work a lot, right?"

"Yeah."

"Well, it's been getting harder to get reliable Intel from the heart of the Soviet Union even with our current assets over there. They've been cracking down on surveillance and secret police raids recently. Novak has information on the Soviet foreign intelligence apparatus and other valuable internal information from the Eastern Bloc. He knows a lot and is valuable to the Communists and Hydra as well."

Steve nodded, "And killing you is their response…"

Peggy nodded, "That's the problem though. Killing me doesn't change the fact that we captured Novak. We'll still get information from him regardless if I'm alive or dead." Steve tensed for a moment at the thought of her dying in the ambush.

Steve leaned back and crossed his arms, "Unless they kill him too."

"Yeah. But if Novak poses such a security breach why wouldn't they just kill him? Why target me?" Peggy asked as she thought to herself.

"Killing you means they get rid of the thorn in their side. They would eliminate the single most important person in SHIELD. You've caused many problems for both the Soviets and Hydra over the years, killing you would guarantee someone who isn't as hard as you to be appointed as Director," Steve said calmly.

"But the immediate problem is Novak, why would they target me over him?" Peggy asked as she continued to think.

Steve thought for a second, "Did you send Dugan and Bucky pick him up?"

"From the airport? Yes. Sent a team of SPU with armored vehicles," Peggy replied.

"Exactly, the armored column would be a harder target to attack. Which means when you travelled they knew you wouldn't be as protected as Novak's convoy hence why they targeted you first." Steve rubbed his chin, "Did anyone know where you were going today? Where were you going anyway?"

"I was going to meet the CEO of Titan International to discuss possible supply contract. But for those who knew when and where I was going that's only a handful of people. Rose, my security team, members of the Ops Center, and the CEO of Titan International," Peggy replied calmly.

Steve hummed, "Hm. Could be a rat in the nest or they were waiting for you to leave during some part of the day."

"If they were waiting outside of SHIELD, they would hit me on my home or on the way to work. No, this ambush was deliberate, and they knew where I was and where I was going. It was close to
noon and the traffic was pretty bad when they hit me. No doubt, they were waiting for me." Peggy sighed, "But no one I just listed would be a mole though, so there's got to be someone else who knew."

"That's got to be the only reasonable explanation why those gunmen hit you when they did. Has to be someone in the inside feeding them information. It seems too convenient to be opportunistic," Steve replied calmly.

"You're right," Peggy nodded as she made sense of everything that was being said. Though Steve isn't in SHIELD anymore, she did miss working with him and solving problems like these at work. Not that she's complaining about having him at home, but Peggy did prefer him to be away from SHIELD and out of action.

Steve stepped forward and put his hands on Peggy's hips, "Maybe you should travel in a motorcade for the next few days," he said turning with concern. "If we're right about the mole, they might make another pass at you."

Peggy leaned back and sighed, "As much as I don't want to, I will. At least till the end of the week," she said referring to the motorcade.

Steve looked at her with a worried look and cupped her cheek with his hand, "I can't lose you and neither can our kids, Peg. If you need me to kick a door in or two, I will."

Peggy cupped his cheek in return and smiled, "I know you would. But you won't ever have to worry about losing me, darling. I will never let anything stop me from coming home to you or our kids."

"I know," Steve quietly responded with a small smile.

Peggy gave a loving smile, "Don't worry about me. I'll be okay. I promise." She brought him close and kissed him on the lips. After a while she broke the kiss and caressed his cheek, "We'll find the mole, darling. Don't you worry about that."

To be honest, Peggy was actively trying to make sure Steve didn't pick up the shield again, even though if it meant protecting her. It was selfish, but Peggy didn't want him to return as Captain America in any capacity. Though Steve has been working more extended hours recently, she enjoyed having him around and not worrying about him in a foreign country. Importantly, The kids needed their father in their life. Even with the long work hours at Stark Industries, Steve made considerable effort to be with the kids. Something that would be extremely hard to do if he was back in SHIELD running missions since the operational tempo for the SPU is high. Peggy knew how hard Steve strove to get out and experience a healthy and peaceful life, so she did her best to keep him away from returning to SHIELD.

Steve nodded, "I know you will," he said quietly. He brushed her hair, "Show whoever did this what it means to mess with you."

Peggy leaned into her husband for a kiss, "I will."

Just as they were about to kiss again, a knock on the door interrupted them. Peggy still clad in her bra and ripped skirt gasped and hid behind Steve, turning him to face the door and using his broad shoulders to cover her nearly exposed chest. Peggy crossed her arms over her chest and peeked around Steve's shoulders, "Come in!" she called out to the whoever was at the door.

The door slowly opened and in came Billy Meyers, Operation Manager, "Director…" He quickly paused when he saw Peggy's bloody discarded shirt folded on her desk next to an open aid kit. His
eyes trailed over to Peggy standing behind Steve and realized his boss was probably topless. Meyers quickly looked down and stepped back and slightly closed the door, "Sorry, Director."

Peggy nodded, "What is it, Meyers?"

"Director, Captain Dugan just delivered Novak along with the SHIELD field team," Meyers called from behind the door.

"Good. Put him in interrogation room 502 and I want you to post guards with him. He needs to have a guard at all times. Do you understand?" Peggy said in a commanding voice.

"It will be done, Director," he replied.

"Good." With that, the door closed leaving Steve and Peggy in privacy again.

Steve turned around and faced his wife again, "Well that could've gone way worse."

Peggy shrugged, "At least he didn't see me without my shirt on." She sighed, "Well, I got to get dressed and get to work. If anyone knows there's a mole, it would Novak or that gunman we captured. Whatever the case, I'm going to find out." Peggy looked up at her husband, "Do you need to go back to work?"

"Yeah, I should," Steve replied calmly.

Peggy smiled, "Okay. Thanks for coming by and checking on me, darling."

"Of course."

Peggy stood on her tippy toes and kissed his lips, "I love you, Steve. I'll see you back home."

Steve smiled, "I love you too, and I'll hold you to that."

"Don't worry, darling. I'll be okay," Peggy reassured with a smile. With that, Steve nodded and turned around and made his way to Peggy's door.

Steve opened the door and turned back, "I'll pick the kids up from school today, so all you got to do is go straight home."

Peggy smiled, "Thank you, Steve." She blew her husband a kiss as he left the office to go back to work at Stark Industries. Peggy couldn't blame Steve for being worried, she felt the same when he was in those situations all those years ago.

Peggy composed herself and walked over to her chair where Steve draped her shirt and suit jacket and started to get dressed.

Interrogation

The captured gunman slowly woke up to a bright beam of light shining down on him. He squinted from the bright light as he gradually regained consciousness, trying to get the bearings of his surroundings. Whatever was shining on him was so bright that it practically blinded him and made it that much harder to see where he was located. As his eyes struggled to focus, the gunman realized he was in a dark black room with a single bright lamp shining down on him. At that revelation, the man flinched and tried to move but was immediately greeted by the restrictions of handcuffs and shackles. His wrists were handcuffed to the chair armrests and his ankles shackled to the legs. The man was
completely immobile.

As the man struggled to breathe slowly, trying to make sense of where he was, he saw someone light a cigarette in the shadows in front of him, the iconic sound of a lighter clicking and sparking filled his ears. Thompson stepped out from the shadows, closing his lighter with a click as he came into view.

The man shook his head, focusing on Thompson with a dazed expression. Thompson clamped his cigarette down with his lips and forcefully kicked the chair, "Wake up!" he yelled coldly, the man jumping in surprise. "I need you to be focused."

The man quickly tried finding the cyanide pill he had tucked away in his mouth but found his false tooth missing. Kathryn stepped out from behind him and clamped down on his shoulders with her hands, startling him. "You don't have your suicide pill anymore, sport," she said whispering by his ear.

Thompson took a seat across the table from the gunman, "We don't have time for games so we can do this the easy way or the hard way. But, whatever, the case, you'll play ball one way or the other."

He took a puff from his cigarette and leaned back in his chair, "First off, you and your little band ambushed our Director which we don't take kindly too. So the consequences of failing to answer our questions or resisting in anyway will be quite severe."

On cue, Kathryn moved a cart that carried a strange device that was plugged into the wall over to the confused gunman. She then calmly started to attach a pair of external cables with clamps on one end to his metal chair. The gunmen looked at her confused and with fear in his eyes as she finished attaching the last clamp to his chair. Kathryn turned around and flipped on the machine which lit up and made a hushed buzzing sound, the sound of an electric current running through the cables. The gunman's heart started to race, his body becoming hot, and sweat began to pour from every pore.

Kathryn checked the gauges on the device, satisfied that everything checked out, she turned to Thompson and nodded. "Everything is ready."

Thompson took a puff from his cigarette again. He leaned forward, resting his elbows on the table, "Now, let's begin. Who are you and who are you with? The Soviets? Hydra? Both?" The man, though clearly nervous, didn't respond and stared down at the table. Thompson sighed, "Do you understand the rules?" The gunman continued not to make eye contact. In response, Thompson nodded at Kathryn.

Kathryn grabbed a wooden stick off the cart and stepped over to the man and forced him to bite down on it. She then walked over to the machine and turned a dial and flipped a switch, sending a current through the cables into the metal chair. The man screamed as he bit down on the wooden stick. He surged with intense pain from the electric current running through him, his body seizing as his muscles forcefully contracted. Seconds felt like minutes and minutes felt like hours as he shook from intense electric shock. After a while, Kathryn turned off the machine and removed the stick from the man's jaw.

The man panted as he shook with pain. Thompson leaned back and took a puff from his cigarette once again. "Hydra? Soviets?" He pushed again. The man continued to remain silent. Thompson sighed in frustration, "I don't have time for this."

Kathryn stepped forward again and forced the man to bite down on the stick then flipped on the machine, electrocuting the gunman in his chair. The man screamed again as he bit down on the stick, his body shaking violently as the pain erupted through him. Again, after a while, Kathryn turned off the device and removed the stick from the man's mouth.
The man let out a gasp of air as his body relaxed and throbbed with pain. Thompson spoke up calmly, "Who are you? And who are you affiliated with?" he asked again in a stern tone. The gunman continued to resist with silence, the only sound coming from him is his heavy breath. Thompson sighed and looked up at Kathryn and nodded.

Like the last two times, Kathryn stuck the stick in the man's mouth and flipped on the machine, electrocuting him, but this time for longer until the point that blood started to ooze out of the man's nose. The man continued to scream in agony while biting down on the wooden stick. After minutes have passed, Kathryn finally turned off the power and took the stick back again.

The gunman panted heavily as his body pulsated with pain. Every little part of him hurt and ached from the electricity. Thompson leaned back, "I don't have time for this. You either give me what I need, or we leave this switch on until SHIELDs electric bill is delivered." Thompson took a puff from his cigarette, "Trust me, at this voltage, you will be here for a while until you die. Now, tell me who are you with?" The man frowned and shook his head. "Fine," Thompson said standing up. "Have a good ride," he said in a harsh tone.

Just as Kathryn was about to flip the power on, the gunman begged. "Hydra!" the man pleaded, speaking in a European accent. "Please…I'm just a hired gun paid by Hydra, but I'm not one of them…My name is Dalek… Dalek Petrik."

Thompson sat back down, "Soviets pay you too?"

Petrik frowned and shook his head, "No…The Hydra cell who has someone important within the Sokovian independent government hires mercenaries like me to kill targets in foreign countries. We're not with the Soviets. The team I was with were all hired by Hydra and told we're a type of Sokovian Death Squad," he said as he panted.

Thompson nodded, "It's clear that someone knew where Director Rogers was going. The ambush your 'squad' initiated was no doubt planned. Who ordered the hit on the Director's life?" Petrik frowned and shook his head, doing his best to resist. Thompson sighed, "You may be a hired gun for Hydra, but I know you have more information than you're letting on." Petrik shook his head and sealed his lips shut. Thompson looked up at Kathryn, "Hit him again."

"Ronald Burke!" Petrik yelled in plea.

Kathryn and Thompson looked at each other with a shocked looks across their faces. Thompson carefully eyed the gunman, "Ronald Burke, the CEO of Titan International?"

"Yes…" Petrik replied while panting heavily.

"That's impossible," Kathryn finally spoke up.

Thompson took a puff of his cigarette and leaned on the table, "The Ronald Burke, the owner of a multimillion dollar corporation is a Hydra/Sokovian agent?" He chuckled, "I find that very hard to believe."

Petrik shook his head, "Not an agent, but a contact. I don't know much, because this was my first job, and he's the only name we got for contacts…"

"What does he get out of helping Hydra?"

"I don't know, money?" Petrik responded.

Thompson nodded, "Okay, say I believe you, and I assume your team knew about our capture of
Adrian Novak.

Petrik nodded weakly "I don't know who he is, but I do know that's the reason why we were contacted to attack the Director of SHIELD. I only recognize him by name and that he's important. It explains why we were going to get paid double than what we're normally paid."

"Then why would Burke order a hit on Director Rogers rather than Novak, an information leak?"

Petrik gritted his teeth in pain as he tried adjusting himself in his seat. "Because, killing the Director would distract SHIELD, give someone else an opportunity to infiltrate SHIELD and kill Novak. That was the original plan."

"Wait, infiltrate?" Thompson responded.

Kathryn looked Petrik, "You have someone who can gain access into SHIELD? Wait... unless you already have a Hydra agent here who already has access..."

"I know for sure Burke doesn't have direct access to SHIELD, so someone had to know the Director's schedule and the exact route she was going to take to her meeting with him, and then notify him so he could order a hit on her," Thompson quickly said, piecing everything together.

Kathryn looked at Petrik, "Who's the agent here? Who's the contact?"

Petrik shook his head, "I don't know." Kathryn frowned and gripped the switch of the machine. Petrik looked at her and pleaded, "I-I don't know! Please! I don't know! Please," he started to cry in distress. Thompson shook his head to Kathryn, signaling her not to electrocute him. Petrik panted and sputtered, "I promise, I don't know! I'm only a mercenary hired by Hydra and someone in the Sokovian government. I don't know any names and don't even know who pays us. Ronald Burke is the only contact's name I know. I don't even know what goes on outside of our individual team. We only got our strike order from Burke, and that's all I know. I don't know who feeds him information from SHIELD! I'm just a hired gun for Hydra!" he pleaded.

Kathryn looked at him sternly, "There are more mercenary teams out there like you?" Petrik nodded.

"Yes... We get paid a lot of money for this job and send it to our families back home. Hydra hires us through a broker in the poor villages of Sokovia, specifically people who speak good English, then they gives us quick military training. After that they give us fake American Passports so we can enter the country without raising suspicion. We make contact with another nameless Hydra agent who gives us a safe house to stay, weapons, and suicide pills. Then we just wait for the call," Petrik babbled out. "And if I ever get captured, I was instructed to kill myself, and a large sum of money will go to my family upon my death."

"Too bad you blew it," Kathryn said coldly.

Thompson eyed him carefully, "But you're aware that someone's in SHIELD is Hydra."

"It makes sense. I don't know for sure." Petrik frowned, "Until a few months ago, I didn't even know what SHIELD was... and then suddenly I'm told to kill the Director of it..."

Thompson looked at Kathryn, ignoring Petrik, "You know better than anyone that the consequences of a possible double agent is too dire to ignore."

"Novak is still in danger," Kathryn said in a serious tone.

"My thoughts exactly," Thompson replied as he stood up from his seat. He turned to the observation
room and knocked on the two-way mirror, "Call Agents Li and Ramirez down here. Need them to escort this merc. to a holding cell," he said to the analysts observing in the observation room.

Thompson faced Kathryn and put out his cigarette in an ash tray at the edge of the table, "We need to warn the Director ASAP." With that, the two agents left the interrogation room.

In the hallway, Kathryn pulled Thompson to the side and whispered, "Shouldn't we get an additional security detail to Novak's interrogation room?"

"No. I don't trust anyone right now outside of our immediate team and Peggy. We don't know who to trust right now, and calling for additional security might give the double agent or any Hydra infiltrators the opportunity," Thompson replied.

Kathryn nodded and started down the hallway, Thompson following close to her side. "We don't even know the current status of Novak right now. He might be safe and sound in an interrogation room or dead for all we know."

"The Director should be interrogating Novak right now. We'll head over to his interrogation room and check up on him, and notify the Director," he replied calmly.

"Right." She sighed, "IF there really is a double agent, we might really be fucked."

Thompson nodded, "Couldn't agree more."

Peggy, now dressed in a clean suit with a skirt, stepped out of her office and walked down the hallway toward the elevators and Rose's desk. As she rounded the corner Peggy saw Rose working diligently and the lead agent who captured Adrian Novak sitting at one of the couches, a young woman with long straight brown hair tied in a ponytail by the name of Agent Sarah Shaw.

Rose looked up at Peggy, "Director, Agent Sarah Shaw is here to see you."

"Director," the agent greeted calmly as she stood up, straightening her neatly pressed black suit and slacks.

Peggy paused in front of the young woman, "Agent Shaw. Good work on capturing Adrian Novak."

"Thank you, Director," Shaw responded respectfully. "I'll have the report filed first thing in the morning. We also obtained a few Top Secret documents from him when we captured him. I delivered it to lockup personally."

"Good," Peggy said as she called for the elevator to head down to the interrogation floor. "Did you have a smooth extraction?" she said looking back over at Shaw.

Shaw nodded, "No resistance. Surprisingly."

Peggy hummed in response, "Hm."

"What is it, Director?" Shaw looked at her with a neutral expression.

One of the elevators suddenly dinged, and the doors slid open, interrupting their conversation. "Come with me," Peggy said stepping into the open elevator. Peggy pressed the desired floor number and looked at the young agent by her side. "There's an enemy agent here. A double agent. Someone told Hydra or the Soviets of my route to my meeting and ambushed me on the way. No doubt a response to our capture of Novak."
"We heard," Shaw responded calmly as the elevator doors closed and started to descend.

"Whoever did this tried killing me to create chaos so they can get to Novak. He was the main target, if anything, the main objective. I was only a valuable side objective," Peggy responded calmly.

Shaw nodded, "I see where this is going. So while SHIELD would've been recovering from your loss and conducting an agency-wide manhunt to find your killers that would allow whoever tried killing you to seize the opportunity of the distraction to kill Novak."

"Precisely," Peggy said in a hushed tone. "He's still in danger even though he's supposedly secured here in SHIELD. Who's guarding him by the way?"

"My team," Shaw replied.

"Good." Before they knew it, the elevator dinged on the interrogation room floor and the doors opened. The two women stepped out of the lift and walked down the hallway toward Novak's interrogation room.

Peggy glanced over at Shaw as they walked, "If everything is in order in the interrogation room, I'll be handling the interrogation personally, but I need you in there with me. Keep two agents outside the room as the guard. No one in or out."

Shaw nodded, "Got it, Director."

As the two women rounded the corner of the hallway, nearing Novak's interrogation room, they spotted Agents Jack Thompson and Kathryn Ottis walking towards them from the opposite end of the hall.

"Jack, what did the gunman say when he woke up?" Peggy asked as they approached each other.

"Director, we were on our way to call you, but we got a problem," Thompson replied urgently.

Peggy nodded, "Is this problem related to a double agent or a mole?" she asked stopping in front of Novak's interrogation room door labeled "502."

Thompson and Kathryn stopped in front of her. "Yeah, double agent, but how did you know? We literally just found out ourselves from the gunman you captured," he said surprised.

"Call it a hunch. But Steve and I figured that might be the case," Peggy replied calmly. "But now that our suspicions are confirmed, we have to move decisively." She crossed her arms, "Hydra or the Soviets…"

"It's just Hydra, Director," Kathryn interrupted. "The team of gunmen that attacked you were mercenaries contracted to kill you from someone within a Hydra cell and the Sokovian government. According to the Dalek Petrik, the gunman you captured, someone who's in Hydra and in the Sokovian government hires mercenaries like him to execute targets in foreign countries. Apparently, they don't know who gives them orders or pays them, but they have a local contact here in the city who give them information."

"Who?"

"CEO of Titan International. Ronald Burke."

Peggy looked at Thompson and Kathryn with surprise, "Are you sure?"
Thompson nodded, "We're sure."

Shaw spoke up, "Is it possible the merc is lying to you?"

"No, he was telling the truth. I could read his body language and his eyes," Kathryn quickly said. "He's not a professional spook or a member of a special forces unit for a foreign country. He's a gun for hire who's expected to kill himself if captured." She sighed, "These guys are hired off the street with the incentive of money and financial support to their families, quickly trained and equipped, and paid to kill in any country. From what we gather, they know very little information on the interworking's of the whole operation, so if they do get captured, they can't give away anything dangerous." She shook her head, "Even with everything the gunman just said earlier, Hydra and the Sokovians don't consider it damaging. What are we going to do about them hiring mercenaries? Probably not a whole lot. If we do, they lose nothing but time and money which isn't a concern when the Sokovians get financial support from the Soviets. But right now, they will lose Ronald Burke, and I think that's a sacrifice they're willing to make. He's probably easily replaceable."

Thompson nodded, "Yeah, Ronald Burke was the only specific name the gunman knew." He sighed, "Too bad we can't invade Sokovia." He rolled his eyes, "besides, it probably spark World War III since it's so close to the Soviet Union."

Peggy sighed and crossed her arms, "Jack, get your team over to Titan International and arrest Ronald Burke, and do it quickly. If you need support, contact the SPU team."

Thompson nodded, "Got it."

Peggy then turned and opened the interrogation room door and immediately stopped in her tracks. "Shit..." Peggy whispered.

"What?" Thompson asked. Peggy stepped aside to let Shaw, Kathryn, and Thompson look into the room and saw that the three SHIELD agents supposed to keep were lying on the floor in a pool of blood, and Adrian Novak was face down on the table with a gunshot to the back of the head.

Shaw pushed into the room and bent down to her fellow agents and team members and checked for any signs of life, but found none. Peggy frowned, "Shaw... I'm sorry, but they're dead." She looked at Kathryn, "Kathryn, check the observation room."

"On it," Kathryn said as she bolted out of the room to check the observation room.

Shaw shook her head, "God damn it." She frowned as she took it upon herself to examine her dead fellow agents, team members, and friends potential cause of death.

Thompson walked into the room and over to Novak's lifeless body to investigate his corpse. Upon immediate observation, he knew exactly what happened. Thompson sighed and put his hands on his hips and looked at Peggy, "He was executed, no doubt about that." He then looked down at the blood spray pattern on the table, "Shot him point blank."

Peggy crossed her arms and leaned against the door frame, clearly deep in thought. Shaw shook her head and stood up. "Agents Morrison and Lenard were stabbed in the chest and neck, looks like they drowned in their blood," she said with a scowl. "Agent Jackson was shot in the head. They were surprised. Neither of the three drew their weapons."

Kathryn briefly peeked into the room, "Director, you should come take a look at this," she said then turning back into the hallway.

Peggy nodded and silently followed Kathryn into the hallway and into the adjoining observation
room. She entered the small, dimly lit room, and unsurprised, saw the two analysts slumped on the tables with blood splatters on the wall and table, indicating they were executed by a gunshot in the back of the head. Peggy sighed, "Damn it," she whispered in frustration.

Kathryn sighed, "A double agent… Here. In SHIELD," she said with cold surprise.

"Yeah."

Kathryn looked through the two-way mirror at Agent Shaw, "Is it possible that Shaw is a double agent? She was with Novak the longest."

Peggy shook her head, "Not possible. She had every opportunity to kill Novak and her team. She also didn't know my schedule and the route I was taking to meet Burke. It can't be her."

"That's right," Kathryn replied in realization. "I'm just trying to consider all our options," she said evenly.

"I know. I understand what you're getting at," Peggy sighed as she looked at Shaw through the two-way mirror. She crossed her arms and started to think.

"What is it, Director?" Kathryn asked curiously.

Peggy shook her head and turned around to face Kathryn, "How is it that the gunman you talked to only knew one name? Something doesn't feel right."

Kathryn shrugged, "I don't know, but we'll find out when we pick him up."

Shaw suddenly ran out of the interrogation room with Thompson close behind her, and quickly reappeared in the observation room. "I think I know who the double agent is!"

"Who?" Kathryn replied.

"Billy Meyers, the Operations Manager. That's his name right? He was the one who greeted us in the garage and was one who posted my team as guard." Shaw shook her head, "He stayed in interrogation when I left to go talk to you."

Kathryn gritted her teeth, "That son of a bitch… We've been working with him for a while. We trusted him."

Thompson looked at Peggy, "Are we sure it's him though?"

Peggy nodded, "It makes sense. He works in the Ops Center, and the head of my security team discussed the route with him to my meeting before we left." She shook her head, "He knew where I was going and how I was getting there. Didn't think of him as the double agent…"

"That traitor. I'm going to beat him until he can only eat through a straw," Thompson replied angrily.

Peggy shook her head and remained calm, "Not right now Jack, I'll take care of it personally. What I need from you right now is for you to get your team to pick up Burke ASAP, but I need Kathryn here. Once you get your team together, call a judge and tell him to get us a warrant, and tell him we need it quick."

Thompson nodded, "We'll take care of it." With a sense of urgency, Thompson bolted out of the interrogation room to gather up his team.

Peggy turned to the wall phone next to the door and picked up the handset and called the Ops
Center, "This is the Director. Lock down the building, code in Tango-Whiskey-421395. All agents be on the lookout for former Ops Manager Billy Meyers, he's wanted for treason and espionage for an enemy state. I want him alive. Agents Thompson, Ramirez, and Li are the only ones who are cleared to enter and leave the building."

Once she heard confirmation of her order from the Ops Center, Peggy hung up the phone and turned back around to face Shaw and Kathryn. "Follow me. We're going to the Ops Center," she quickly said.

Shaw nodded, "Right behind you, Director." With that Peggy flanked by two of her agents left the observation room and headed back to the elevators to get to the Ops Center.

There was a definite feeling of betrayal within the group as the three women walked silently down the hallway. Though Sarah Shaw has been overseas for over a year and never been to SHIELD Headquarters, the fact that someone in SHIELD, specifically a person in a prominent position such as an Operations Manager, was a double agent still immensely bothered her. Shaw, like many other agents, are committed to the agency and have a deep sense of patriotism to the United States, so a traitor in SHIELD filled her with rage. A few moments ago, she was able to see a glimpse of Thompson's and Kathryn's anger, but yet to see the Director's. Shaw got a good first impression of the Director as someone who is good at hiding her real emotions and thinks clearly under pressure.

**Operations Center**

Peggy, Shaw, and Kathryn entered the Ops Center and saw that the staff were extremely busy at their desks and workstations. The Ops Center was in an atmosphere of organized chaos as agents, analysts, and techs devised plans and contingency plans on capturing Billy Meyers and anticipating his possible movements. Everyone was working with urgency. Why shouldn't they? One of their own just betrayed them.

As Shaw and Kathryn followed Peggy toward the front of the room, an analyst ran up to Peggy and quickly spoke to her. "Director, we don't have records of Meyers ever leaving the building, so we got teams of agents and security personnel searching every corner of the building, but so far we haven't found him. We also sent agents already in the field to airports, bus stations, and train stations."

Peggy nodded, "Good."

"But we got one other problem."

Peggy got to the front of the room and turned to the analyst, "What is it?"

The analyst frowned, "Delta Team found the gunman you captured dead in his cell. Shot in the head. They think the weapon was suppressed which was why no one heard it."

"Holy shit..." Kathryn grumbled in surprise.

Peggy gritted her teeth for a split second before nodding at the analyst. "Is that all?" she said hiding her true emotion.

Analyst nodded, "A lot of the agents believe that Meyers escaped the lockdown and is attempting to flee the country."

Peggy nodded, "I'm starting to agree. Thank you," said responded calmly. The Analyst nodded then turned and walked off, heading back to work.
Just as the analyst walked off, Shaw spotted a pair of agents quickly walk into the Ops Center and head straight to the Director. "Director!" the lead agent called out to the trio.

"Yes?" Peggy responded coolly.

The pair of agents stopped in front of her and the lead agent held out something wrapped in a rag. "While we were searching the building, we found this in a trashcan in the lobby," the agent said unwrapping the rag and revealing a long Welrod Mk1 suppressed pistol.

The Welrod Mk1 pistol is a British bolt action, magazine fed, and suppressed weapon made during World War II and is the quietest pistol in the world. Firing a single .32ACP made a sound no louder than 34 decibels or equivalent to a whisper. The design of the gun was smart where the top half of the weapon was a cylinder which functioned as the bolt, vented barrel, and the suppressor. The bottom half was the pistol grip which operated as both the magazine and grip. Separating the two parts of the pistol made it easier to conceal rather than carrying them together in one piece, ideal for espionage and assassinations.

"A Welrod," Peggy said in astonishment. "Quietest pistol ever made."

The agent nodded, "Not SHIELD standard issue. It's not even in the black market. Had to come from our traitor. But we got no idea where he got it from."

Kathryn nodded, "Makes sense. No one heard gunshots in the hallways when he executed Novak, the gunman, and Shaw's team."

To avoid her fingerprints on the gun, Peggy took the rag and pistol from the agent and utilized the whole cloth to separate the pistol grip from the barrel to check if it was recently fired. She looked into the magazine and saw that it carried one round which means Meyers shot five times which adds up to the number of bodies killed by gunshot. She handed the rag and pieces back to the agent, "Not a doubt that this is Meyers. Clever man. He knew we had eyes and ears everywhere here." She sighed and crossed her arms.

"Director, I think he's long gone from the building," the agent replied.

Kathryn nodded in agreement, "Makes sense. Come to think of it, Meyers would've executed his targets quickly and leave as soon as possible. He also would've anticipated that you'd lock down the building and waste time searching for him once you discovered the bodies, so it would be beneficial for him to get out quickly."

"Damn it, you're right," Peggy responded, finally betraying her frustration.

"He made a fool of us both, Director," she responded empathetically.

Peggy nodded to the pair of agents in front of her, "Thank you. Drop off the pistol in lock up, please."

The agent nodded, "You got it." He then turned and walked away with his partner close in tow.

Shaw spoke up, "Director, I think we can call off the search in here. He's in the streets. If he's good enough to infiltrate us for months and murder a handful of our agents and assets without getting caught, he's good enough to get out without being detected."

Peggy nodded, "true."

Peggy faced everyone in the Ops Center and put her hands on her hips and yelled to get everyone's
attention, "Listen up!" Everyone automatically stopped what they were doing and focused on the Director. "As you know, we have a traitor, and he's on the run. What I want from every one of you, is a hard target search of every gas station, car dealership, airport, bus station, taxi, train station, and residential areas within the initial area of 15-miles. Lift the lockdown on the building and get local law enforcement involved. Our target is former Operations Manager: Billy Meyers, this is Priority One, we want him alive." She paused and nodded, "Go get him." Without hesitation or a second thought, everyone quickly went back to work at her command.

Shaw never met the Director until today and looked at her with admiration and regard. Peggy spoke and walked with such confidence that she no doubt earned and commanded great respect. A tremendous accomplishment for a woman in a male-dominated job in today's society. How Peggy walked, talked, and commanded her subordinates gave Shaw a glimpse of who the woman in charge really was or very least the professional side of the woman at the head of SHIELD. Shaw became interested to see if the stories about the Director were true as the long day continued to drag on.

Interrogation Floor

Late in the afternoon, Peggy walked down one of the hallways on the interrogation floor with Agents Sarah Shaw and Kathryn Ottis trailing behind her. A few moments ago, Peggy got the word in the Ops Center that Thompson's team arrived after picking up Ronald Burke. She was quick to leave for interrogation to question him personally. For the past several hours, SHIELD and the police have failed to find any trail of Billy Meyers in the city, so Peggy was looking for some good news and useful information about Hydra in Eastern Europe, specifically in Sokovia. Not to mention to learn more about Burke's hand in her attempted assassination.

As the trio walked down the hallway, they spotted Thompson round the corner at the end of the hall and quickly walk toward them. "Director," he greeted courteously.

"Jack. Hope Mr. Burke didn't give you too much trouble," Peggy responded.

Thompson joined the trio and turned to follow them toward Burke's interrogation room. "Not really. We caught him in his office. He didn't think we were going to track him down and catch him. We guess he didn't think the gunman we captured was alive… However, there is a little issue you might have to deal with," he quickly said.

"What is it?" Peggy asked as she rounded the corner and spotted a man in a fancy suit standing outside Burke's interrogation room with a briefcase in hand. Peggy stopped in her tracks and sighed. Thompson shrugged, "His lawyer." He frowned, "As we were apprehending Burke, he called his lawyer, and that Jackleg over there insisted he come along. For legal reasons."

Kathryn shrugged, "Unfortunately, Burke has the right."

Peggy sighed again, "I'll handle him." With that, she stepped forward and walked toward the lawyer.

The lawyer, a man of tall stature with neatly combed brown hair and a fancy suit, turned to Peggy as she walked toward him, "Mrs. Rogers. I'm…"

"It's Director," Peggy said stopping in front of him and quickly correcting him.

The man in the fancy suit nodded, "Director Rogers then. I'm Charles Woods, I'm the lawyer for my client, Ronald Burke, CEO of Titan International: Weapons and Technologies," he said in a very formal tone.
Peggy shook her head, "Enough with the pleasantries. I know who he is."

Woods nodded, "Okay, that's good. I'm trying to defend my client to the full measure of the law. My client has a right to an attorney and trial by jury. You can't charge him or toss him in jail or execute him without a fair trial..."

Peggy frowned, "Do you think I don't know the law? You think I got to the head of an intelligence agency because I'm stupid?"

"Director, please," Woods said raising his hand and brushing off her comments. He continued to push his statements at her, "Your agency is continuing to charge him for treason, right?"

"That's correct," Peggy responded while crossing her arms over her chest, clearly impatient.

Woods nodded, "Okay. For my client's sake, he has all these rights, but it would be catastrophic for him to go to jail for life let alone get executed. Is there a way we can make a bargain or some plea deal that doesn't involve him getting life in prison or executed? I'm sure he has something he can offer to help your agency."

Peggy shook her head, "No bargain." She nodded, "But he will help our agency and our country whether he likes it or not."

Woods shook his head, "Be careful with what you say, Director. He has the right to remain silent and doesn't have to answer your questions." He sighed, "Director, do you know what you're charging with this man with? This can ruin a man's career let alone life."

"What? Because he's rich and owns a technology company, his life is supposed to be more important? What about my life, huh? His life isn't any more important than mine, and definitely not worth more than those agents who were murdered earlier today," Peggy responded harshly.

Woods shook his head, "That's not..."

Peggy shook her head, "I'm sure the families will take great solace in the fact that the man linked to their murder is rich." She frowned, "My agents showed you the warrants right?" The lawyer nodded sheepishly. "Then you understand that your client is charged with treason and conspiracy to commit murder, and we have the legal authority to seize any and all documents related to our case." She nodded, "Since you so clearly know the punishment for treason, do you know what SHIELD does?"

Woods nodded, "I do."

"Then you must understand what your client is tangled in," Peggy responded calmly.

"I'm just trying to protect my client. He can..."

Peggy signaled him to stop talking by slightly raising her hand. She sighed, "I'm sure if I was a man you wouldn't be begging me to change my mind and offering to make deals on his behalf. You would most likely be working harder in court." She made a sarcastic smile, "Because for whatever reason, you lawyers assume that women are not assertive, not intelligent, and don't know the law. But understand this, if your feeble mind can, Mr. Woods, that women are more capable than what you give us credit for. If you're married, Mr. Woods, then I'm sorry that your wife has to deal with such idiocy."

Peggy nodded to the door, "Now, you're obviously welcome to sit in the interrogation, but if you're going to continue to waste my time, I'll have Agent Thompson move you." Thompson nodded and
smirked with eagerness. The lawyer nodded and stepped aside. Peggy looked at Thompson, "I'll handle the interrogation, but I want you and Kathryn with me."

"Got it," Kathryn replied.

Peggy then glanced at Shaw, "Shaw, if you don't mind sitting back in the observation."

Shaw nodded, "Not a problem, Director." With that, Thompson, Peggy, Kathryn, and the lawyer walked into the interrogation room while Shaw split off to the adjoining observation room.

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Ronald Burke, a slightly overweight middle-aged man with dark brown hair and pronounced wrinkles on his face, dressed in a fancy black suit, sat quietly at the table as Peggy took her seat in front of him and his lawyer sat down by his side. Kathryn and Thompson stood behind Peggy, flanking her on either side.

Peggy leaned back in her seat and nodded at him, "Surprised to see me?" Burke didn't answer and remained begrudgingly silent. "I see. You rather be silent and rather have everything unfold in the trial." Peggy chuckled, "So, I'm just going to talk. You're defense better be rock solid because we know about your affiliation with Hydra and the Sokovian government. My agents are also tearing apart your office and residence and once we find any sort of paper trail linking you to Hydra and the Sokovian government, you'll be charged for treason and likely executed. Oh, and conspiracy to attempt murder. It's only a matter of time."

Woods looked at his client then back at Peggy, "Director, it's clear that he doesn't want to speak. So I think we'll take this battle to court."

Peggy smiled, "I see. Well, wouldn't hurt to as a few questions." Burke looked at her in the eyes. "We know you're a contact for Hydra and Sokovian agents, and maybe for the Soviets as well. We also managed to capture one of the Hydra mercenaries alive, and he told us a lot of things, but he only seemed to know one name. Yours. Why associate yourself with our enemies? What are you providing them?"

Burke didn't respond and simply remained silent in his chair.

"Silence is still an answer, Mr. Burke. The gunman we captured didn't just mention your name because you're rich, he specifically mentioned that you're the Hydra contact that gave his team the mission to ambush me on my way to meet you." Peggy sighed, "As I said, we know you're associated with Hydra, but we don't why or what you provide them or the communists."

Burke looked down, breaking eye contact with Peggy. Woods looked at Burke, "You don't have to answer, Mr. Burke."

Peggy let out a sigh, "I don't need to know why you, or Hydra wanted me dead. That doesn't concern me. But you are directly responsible for the deaths of many of my agents and a valuable asset. It'll be easier on you if you tell me willingly."

Woods looked at Burke again, "You don't have to answer any of her questions."

Peggy slammed her fist on the table, creating a shallow hole with ease, and causing everyone to jump. She slowly stood up, "When, not if you get convicted, we're throwing you in the Delta Maximum Security Prison. A place where we house traitors, terrorists, spies, and individuals too dangerous to be housed in other federal prisons. For the sake of my dead agents, I'll make sure you get sent there." Burke remained silent.
Woods shook his head, "Are you threatening my client, Director?"

Peggy waved her hand and stood straight, "Fine." She nodded, "S.H.I.E.L.D will see you at court then."

As Peggy turned to leave, Kathryn and Thompson moved to follow her. But just as she opened the door, Burke called out to her, "Wait," he said in a quiet plea.

Peggy paused and turned around, "You got something for me?" Burke sighed and nodded. Peggy closed the door and sat back down quietly.

Burke sighed and spoke softly, "For the past few years, I've been selling technology, high-tech and experimental surveillance equipment, and economic information to the Sokovians and Hydra…"

Woods looked at Burke, "Mr. Burke, you don't have too…"

"It's okay, Charles," Burke replied, silencing the lawyer.

"Go on," Peggy responded, now in an easier tone.

"In exchange, they pay me and my company millions of dollars. But recently, Hydra asked more from me and asked me to be a contact for their agents. The only thing I was required to do is pass on the packages and information I received from one agent and hand it to another, and I'll never see them ever again." He shook his head, "If I refused they would expose me to the federal government."

Peggy crossed her arms and leaned back, "Why did you associate yourself with Hydra?"

Burke gritted his teeth, "My company was running out of money and we didn't have any contracts. We were losing to the competition with Stark Industries. My company was going bankrupt. We came up with multiple million dollar ideas, but didn't have the money to make them happen." He sighed, "A Hydra representative found out and set up a meeting with me. He didn't introduce himself and only let the money talk. They liked our ideas and promised to fund our projects in exchange for products." He frowned, "It was only for money. My family was going to lose everything if it wasn't for them."

"What exactly did you give them?"

"Experimental weaponry like assault weapons, body armor, sidearms, and a type of plastic explosive." Burke sighed, "When we started producing quality weapons and equipment, we began to gain favorable contracts from the military. So we ended up providing both the US military and Hydra the same things…"

Peggy nodded, "That meeting you called for to discuss contracts was a set up to ambush me."

"Yes," he responded quietly. "I was told by my Hydra contact to call for a meeting to get you out of the office and pass along information to the mercenaries, and they'll take care of the rest."

"Okay," she responded quietly. "It seems strange that the mercenaries only knew your name but no one else. Why is that?"

Burke shrugged, "Probably because they think I'm expendable…"

"Are you?"
"Must be, if I'm the only name that came up. I guess they got what they needed from me and burned me," Burke said in a hushed tone. "I was never loyal to Hydra. I just dealt weapons and technology for money…"

Peggy shook her head, "No, you did more than that. You provided for our enemies and got rich from it and passed along information that could've ended the lives of many people." Burke looked down ashamed. She sighed, "Is there anything in detail that you can tell me about Hydra's current status and anything concerning the Sokovians?"

He looked at Peggy in the eyes and shook his head, "Probably what you already know. Hydra has people embedded in Sokovia, not to mention the Soviet Union. Sokovia in particular, they have control over everything. Government, money, everything. Can't say Sokovia without Hydra."

Peggy nodded, "Well, we didn't know how much influence they had in Sokovia, but now we do. But one last thing. What did you know about Adrian Novak?"

Burke shook his head, "Nothing. Just a name that went with yours."

Peggy stood up, "Thank you, Mr. Burke." She put her hands on her hips, "I can't drop the charges, and I don't cut deals, but I can assure that you won't get sent to the Delta Prison."

Burke nodded. He was guilty, no doubt about that, but he knew that nothing he said will make everything better for his circumstances and the lives that were ruined because of his decision to associate with Hydra. "I'll plead guilty. I confess, I associated with Hydra and sold weapons and technology to our enemies."

Woods looked at his client, "Mr. Burke, what you're doing is…"

"It's done…" he replied calmly. He looked up at Peggy, "Don't punish my family because of me, please."

Peggy nodded, "This crime is on you and you alone will take the blame." She nodded at Thompson, "Agents Thompson and Ottis will take care of you from here."

As Peggy was about to leave the room, Burke called out to her. "Director," he said calmly. Peggy stopped and turned around for a moment. "You're the most important person in SHIELD, you're the king on the chest board. You command, move, and lose pieces. But after the game, the king and pawn go into the same box."

Peggy didn't respond and just left the room. Ronald Burke wasn't who Peggy was expecting as a person. She thought he would be a lot like his lawyer, overconfident, resistant, and pushy, but instead, Burke turned out to be a soft-spoken man who looked rather tired. After his initial reluctance, he was very forthcoming with what he knew.

Though there isn't much SHIELD can do with the information provided by Burke other than seize his assets and arrest him, SHIELD has a better understanding of how Hydra functions nowadays. Hydra still poses a considerable threat and has a long reach in the shadows, as opposed to what the rest of the government believes they're capable of doing. With the limited information gathered today, SHIELD can formulate a strategy and be better prepared to counter Hydra's ever-evolving methods of espionage and conflict, particularly within Sokovia. Though it won't be easy and there are many unknowns, SHIELD is capable of meeting the challenge in that country. At least SHIELD is aware of Hydra's influence in Sokovia and perhaps the rest of Eastern Europe.

In the observation room, Shaw stood impressed with the Director. The stories about her tenacity,
confidence, and assertiveness are all true. How she handled the lawyer and the interrogation of Ronald Burke clearly impressed her. It also seems like the rumors about the Director making a hole in an interrogation room table during her SSR field agent days is also true too. The Director looked like she punched the hole in the table with ease. It's not easy punching a hole in a hard table like that, and Shaw figured the Director had more strength in her than what she shows. The rumors of the Director's physical strength could possibly be laughably underestimated.

A lot of things happened today. Shaw lost her team and friends, and she returned back to the states after over a year of being overseas. There's a lot to do and another mission she needs to look forward to, but for right now she'll mourn the loss of her friends. She'll take some time to grieve then write her report for the Director, and return the next day ready for her next assignment because Shaw knows you can't wear the black armband forever.

Though secretly, Shaw hopes she can be the one to find Billy Meyers so she can make him pay for what he's done not only to her team but to SHIELD…

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**Steve & Margaret Rogers Residence, Scarsdale, NY**

Peggy walked through the front door of the house, finally home but later than usual at around seven in the evening, and was welcomed by the pleasant smell of dinner and laughter of her kids. It's been a long day, and Peggy wanted nothing more but to relax with her family and rest. She put her briefcase down next to the console table and called out to her family, "Darlings, I'm home!"

Peggy heard a slight commotion over by the family room before she spotted Angela and Michael race into foyer, charging toward her at full speed with arms wide open. Peggy bent down to her knees and quickly spread her arms open, putting on a smile for her kids. "Oof!" she gasped as she took the full impact of her two excited children. Peggy tightly hugged her kids and kissed them both on the cheek, "Hey there, children," she said, hiding the stress of the day from her voice.

Angela spoke first and smile, "Welcome home, Mama!"

Michael nodded, "You're home later than normal."

Peggy chuckled, "I know. Been a long day at work." She poked Michael on the nose, "How was school?"

Michael shrugged, "Good. Same as yesterday." He chuckled, "Walked Irena home again today."

"That's always something, darling," Peggy said to her son. She looked at her daughter, "And Angela, what about you?"

Angela smiled, "Good. I got a new book from the library."

Peggy chuckled, "Did you finish your other ones?"

"Almost, but I could read two," Angela said with a grin.

Peggy laughed, "That's something I can't do." She looked at the foyer, "Where's your sister, brother, and daddy?"

"Over here, Mama!" Sarah said entering the foyer, while chasing after John as he ran toward Peggy. Athena, the young German Shepard puppy, chased after the two kids.

"Mama!" the toddler called as he ran to his mother.
Peggy stayed on her knees and smiled as she waited for her youngest son to run over to her before embracing him in a big hug. She lifted him off his feet and kissed him on the cheek and belly multiple times, earning a playful giggle from the little boy. Peggy grinned, "Hi there, sweetie," she said putting him down.

John smiled, "Hi, Mama."

Sarah walked over to her mother and gave her a hug. "Long day at work, Mom. Back later than normal," she stated evenly.

Peggy shrugged, "Mhmm. Pretty stressful today. But, I'm glad I'm home with my kids." She brushed a stray lock of hair away from Sarah's face, "How was school?"

"It was uneventful, but good," Sarah responded evenly.

Peggy laughed, "Just like your siblings." Athena trotted over to her and sat down by her lap and looked up at her, the small puppy cocking her head to the side in a goofy look. Peggy turned and patted Athena on the head and scratched the back of the puppy's ears, "Where's your father?" she asked without looking away from the cute German Shepard puppy in front of her.

"Cleaning up the counter," Sarah responded with a sly smile.

Peggy looked at her with a confused look, "Why, what happened?"

"He broke a glass and spilled juice everywhere."

Peggy stop scratching Athena's ears and laughed, "Goodness. At least he's cleaning up. Did you eat dinner yet?"

Angela shook her head, "Nope. We were waiting for you."

"Aw, you didn't have too, darlings." Peggy scooped up John in her arms and stood up, "I don't want you to be hungry waiting for me."

Michael spoke up, "But we wanted to. It's like how we wait for Daddy sometimes."

Peggy smiled lovingly at her kids, "Okay, Darling." She nodded toward the kitchen, "Shall we?" she asked as she adjusted John in her arms.

Angela nodded, "Yeah!"

As Peggy, her kids, and the puppy headed to the kitchen, Peggy looked down at Sarah, "Did you feed Athena?"

Sarah nodded, "Mhmm! She's all fed."

As they entered the kitchen, Peggy saw the dinner table already set with plates, utensils, and food just waiting to be eaten. "Mmm, smells delicious," Peggy replied.

Suddenly, she saw Steve appear from behind the counter with a white rag stained purple. "Oh, hey, honey!" Steve said with a smile. "Welcome home!"

"Thanks, Darling," Peggy said giving her husband a warm smile.

Steve nodded to the table, "Dinner is ready. Kids insisted they wait for you."
Peggy chuckled, "I heard." She started to walk over to the table, "Let's eat. I'm starving."

"I'll be right there," Steve said as he walked over to the sink to drop off the stained rag.

After a long and stressful day, Peggy didn't want anything more than a quiet family dinner, and not talk or think about work. Though she didn't want her family to wait on her for supper, she's glad they did because it's the small things like spending time together to eat that really boost her mood. Peggy couldn't help but feel lucky to have such a loving family.

Later in the evening, after a wonderful dinner and some much-needed relaxation time with family, it was time for the kids to go to bed. Peggy, now dressed in a light blue short-sleeve spring dress, briefly knocked and opened Sarah's bedroom door, peeking her head into the dimly lit room. "Darling, did you finish all your homework and got everything ready for school tomorrow?"

Sarah, dressed in her blue pajamas lay in her bed with a book in hand and illuminated only by the lone lamp next to her nightstand, smiled at her mother. "Yes, Mama," she responded politely.

"Good," Peggy responded quietly as she walked into the room. She sat down at the edge of her daughter's bed and leaned down and kissed her on the forehead, "Go to bed now, darling. I love you."

"I love you too, Mom," Sarah said as she closed her book. Her mother gently took the book from her and quietly placed it down on the nightstand. But as her mother reached to turn off the lamp, Sarah quietly called to her, "Mama?"

Peggy looked at her daughter and leaned back, "Yes, my darling?"

Sarah adjusted her head on her pillow, "I was wondering… How come Daddy never talks about his time as Captain America?" She shrugged, "We always hear small stories from you and our Uncles. Well, except Uncle Bucky, he also never talks about Dad as Captain America. We hear stories all the time from other grownups, but Daddy never talks about it from his view."

Peggy smirked. She shrugged, "Well, I never used to tell you big stories of your Daddy because they used to be enough to appease your curiosity." She chuckled, "He-"

"Can you tell a big one now?"

Peggy shook her head, "I'm sorry, darling. I don't think I should. Your father is very private about it and I have to respect that. The small stories your Uncles and I tell you are true, but are on the lighter side of things. There's a lot of things your father doesn't want to talk about right now. He's been through a lot, and been in many fights, and it's not my place to tell the story for him."

"Oh. Okay," Sarah said, sounding dejected.

Peggy leaned toward her daughter and gently ran a hand across her cheek, "It's good you're proud of your father, and curious about what he's done. But you have to respect his privacy, Okay?" She smiled, "He'll talk about it when he's ready. It might not be for a long while though."

Sarah frowned, "Okay, Mama."

Peggy nodded in understanding, "He's not hiding his stories from you to hurt you or your brothers and sister. He's trying to protect you from the bad and scary things." She brushed Sarah's hair gently, "But if you want to know, then he'll tell you when he's ready. Okay?"
Sarah nodded, "Okay." She smiled, "Can you tell me a story when you were an Agent? Please?"

Peggy thought about turning her daughter down because she had an extremely stressful day, for lack of a better word. But Peggy already turned down telling her daughter a big story about her father, and although she’s tired, she couldn't bring herself to deny her daughter a bedtime story. Her daughter is more important than her need for rest and relaxation.

Peggy smiled, "Okay. Well, let's see…” She thought for a moment and decided on a particular memory she can turn into a story for her daughter while omitting or altering many of the details to make it more fun and pleasant. Peggy leaned back, propping her arms behind her, and smiled, "During World War II. When I was in France while your father was attached to another Army unit," she began while Sarah smiled and listened with great interest.

An hour later, Peggy finally entered the master bedroom and closed the door behind her. She spotted Steve already in his usual sleepwear, lying in bed with his back against the headboard with a book in hand. Peggy made a warm smile and walked over to her husband's side of the bed, "Michael and Angela in bed and everything?"

Steve put his book down and nodded, "Mhmm." Peggy sat down at the edge of the bed next to him, prompting him to sit up. "That took some time to get Sarah and John to bed," he said as he started to rub her back affectionately.

Peggy chuckled, "I had to tell Sarah a bedtime story about my field agent days." Steve raised an eyebrow in question. "Don't worry. It wasn't too detailed or graphic. One of the boring ones I had in France during the war, but I made it exciting for our little girl. She seemed to be satisfied."

Steve laughed, "She's turning into a big girl."

"Don't remind me. Is it sad that I want Sarah and Michael to remain ten?" Peggy asked looking at her husband.

Steve chuckled, "No. I wish that too." The couple shared a light laugh for a moment before a silence fell between them.

After a moment, Peggy looked at her husband, "Do the kids know what happened today?"

Steve shook his head, "No. But they'll probably know tomorrow. It's all over the news today and likely tomorrow as well."

Peggy nodded, "Well, I'm glad they didn't have to worry about their mother today."

Steve sighed, "Peggy, after today, if you need me to come back to SHIELD. I've been thinking…"

"Darling, not this again." Peggy sighed, "You keep bringing this up."

"I'm sorry. I'm just concerned for is all," he replied while he continued to rub her back in gentle circles. "I know you can handle yourself, but what if there are things you can't see. Who's watching your back when I'm working a 9-5 job."

Peggy chuckled lightly, "You know our oldest daughter asked if you wanted to go back as Captain America?"

"Really?"
Peggy smiled, "Yeah. She thinks so much like you that it's kind of scary. Sarah also thinks about other people all the time and always thinks about you. She's definitely you." Steve chuckled in response but said nothing. "Steve?" Peggy asked quietly.

"Hm?"

"Are you happy?"

Steve nodded, "Of course. Why wouldn't I be?" he asked confused.

"With what you do?" Peggy asked again while staring into her husband's eyes.

Steve paused and shrugged, "Yeah. It'll take some getting used to the new job and it's responsibilities. Are you happy?"

Peggy smiled, "OF course I am." She sighed, "Selfishly, darling, as I said, I don't want you to pick up the shield again. You said it yourself that you've been striving for peace and to live a simpler life. A normal life." Steve nodded in understanding. "And you've been so good with the kids, and you're an excellent husband and father. I also love having you home instead off on dangerous missions." She shrugged, "I just… love having you home. And the kids do too."

Peggy rested a hand on Steve's lap, "When I go to DC for meetings, it gets hard being away from the family even if it's only for a few days. But it's a welcoming feeling know that you're home caring for our family." She stared at her husband lovingly, "And vice-versa when you go on business trips, I know there isn't much to worry about because you'll be home soon." Peggy looked away and sighed, "I guess…I just don't want to worry about you risking your life again. And I know you always do the right thing."

"Peggy…" Steve whispered.

Peggy shook her head, "I shouldn't be making the choice for you. I'm sorry…"

Steve smiled and wrapped his arm around his wife, "Peggy, I'm happy where I am. Believe me. I may not know a whole lot on corporate level stuff as President of Stark Industries, but it's nothing I can't learn." He put a hand to her cheek and gently turned her head so she'll be looking at him, "I'm at peace here. With you and our kids. I love the life we made together and never want to change it for anything. Our family is the adventure."

Peggy smiled widely, "Okay."

Steve shrugged, "But, I will say this. If there's an emergency and you need me for anything. Don't second guess and tell me."

Peggy nodded, "Deal." She leaned forward and kissed her husband on the lips for a long moment before breaking the kiss and hugging him tightly.

Steve wrapped his arms around Peggy and kissed her on the base of her neck and whispered, "Everything go okay at work?"

"Let's not talk about that now. Just hold me," Peggy whispered back as she closed her eyes, enjoying the feeling of being in her husband's arms. Being in her husband's embrace was like no other, she felt safe and content like nothing could harm her. No doubt Peggy will tell Steve about what occurred after he left SHIELD, but later, for now, she just wants to enjoy the rest of the evening with her husband. The evening with family was exactly the medicine Peggy needed after an intense and stressful day. She won't soon forget what happened today.
Sometime Later…

Ronald Burke, now dressed in faded grey overalls, sat down at one of the phones in the prison visitation area and waited for his family to arrive on the other side of the thick bullet resistant window. He noticed that he was surprisingly alone in the room aside from the handful of police guards keeping watch of the area. Strange, since prisoners loved visitation hour so they can talk to friends and family, but Burke didn't think much of it and was just happy to see his family again. But after a moment, and to his surprise, a middle-aged man in his early 40s with thick brown hair and a fancy black suit sat down opposite from him across the glass. The stranger picked up the phone, prompting Burke to do the same.

"Who are you? Where's my family?" Burke asked concerned.

The man chuckled, "Your family will be here in a few moments, Ronald." He smiled, "You don't know me, but my name is Obadiah Stane."

Burke tilted his head, recognizing the name, "Wait, I know your name. You work for Stark."

Stane smiled, "Maybe not for long." Burke looked at him confused. "I came to tell you that you made a lot of wise investments, and your partner appreciates your business. Though SHIELD is seizing your company, it will continue to exist, but under new management."

"Why are you telling me this?"

"Because your partner no longer requires your services and finds you a risk, and a loose end," Stane replied calmly.

Burke looked at him confused, "What? I don't know much of anything to risk them!"

"Doesn't matter to them," Stane replied evenly.

Suddenly, Burke felt a sharp pain in his shoulder causing him to turn around and see a police officer just standing guard by the door, looking in another direction with an absent looking expression. Confused, Burke looked back at Stane and shook his head, "Please. Just let me see my family."

Stane glanced at his watch then back at Burke, "You're family will see you. But…I'm afraid you won't…"

"Wh-Wh…" Burke stuttered in confusion as he felt a burning sensation tear through his body. He then abruptly started to shake and foam at the mouth, causing him to drop the phone. Burke leaned back in pain and confusion, slouching in his chair, continuing to shake gently and foaming. Within seconds, he was dead.

With a cold expression, Stane hung up the phone and stood up from his seat and walked away. The police officers didn't bat an eye or raise any questions until Stane left the room. Once he left, the police officers on the other side of the glass prepared to stage the body as a suicide in his cell.

Long and dramatic chapter! Hope you enjoyed.

Sarah Shaw: Based off Sameen Shaw in the hit show Person of Interest
Quote from Golden Girls

Long chapter filled with Drama and twists and turns. It will all continue to build.

A chapter with focus on Angela Elizabeth Rogers will be coming soon.

To be continued with more Hydra, Soviets, and double agents.

Setting up stuff with Obadiah Stane for the future.

Russian: лапа (lá-pá): Sweetie

Russian: родная (rad-ná-ya): Darling, a close one (part of family)

Probably a lot of spelling/grammar errors. I'll go back over it again, but I wanted to push this chapter out to you guys after my first few run throughs for errors lol.

Hope you enjoyed! Reviews are always welcome!
July 1957

For the past month, SHIELD has been on an extensive manhunt for former Operations Manager Billy Meyers, a double agent for Hydra. Due to the security breach, SHIELD had to change many of their signal codes and relocate many of their agents, strike teams, and assets, particularly in Eastern Europe. At the very least, SHIELD doubled security at facilities and assets that couldn't be relocated. Also, after the situation with Meyers, SHIELD conducted extensive background checks of all agents and personnel. On top of other new security procedures, Peggy also instituted monthly polygraph tests for all agents and staff rather than holding one every three months as established previously. She also initiated regular and random background checks to assure internal security. All the new security measures were reactive rather than proactive because of what happened in May, and since then security in SHIELD intensified. Though the new security measures were labor and time intensive, Peggy didn't want another enemy agent to slip through the cracks into SHIELD. She wanted to assure that the situation that occurred in May didn't ever happen again. By any means necessary. Without a doubt, Billy Meyers found himself at the "Top 10" of SHIELD's target list, and SHIELD and the U.S. set its sights on the Communist Regime in Sokovia. This marks the beginning of the Western intervention in the small Eastern European country.

Other than instituting new policies for SHIELD and being a little busier, Peggy's life majorly stayed the same since the incident. Though the loss of her agents affected her, she took the pain and responsibility well. Peggy did an excellent job at hiding her guilt of what happened from everyone and only allowed Steve to see it since he understood the feeling better than anyone. It wasn't Peggy's first time losing people and surely won't be her last, but it was just another thing she had to live with as Director of SHIELD. That responsibility of command and the weight of the lives of her agents on her decisions is a burden she must bear as a leader. But even after everything, Peggy remained strong-willed and continued to be the leader SHIELD needed and a loving mother for her four children. Although not always perfect at it, Peggy tried not to let what happened in work affect her relationship with her family. Plus, with summer present and school out, she looked forward to playing every day with her kids and doing summer activities with the family, and wouldn't dare let the stress of work affect the joy with her family.

For Steve, he learned his new job and responsibilities as President of Stark Industries reasonably quickly but remained busy. Though work is time-consuming, he got better at balancing work life and home life and vowed to come home on time and not get bogged down with work at home.
Essentially, Steve managed his time better so he could be with family, a hard task to achieve for many corporate employees. But even with excellent time management, work-life balance wasn't always easy for the past few months, but he made it work the best he could. Truth be told, Steve didn't imagine holding such a high-level corporate job in the city, let alone being President of Stark Industries. His new business position wasn't what he had in mind for living a regular life, and never once thought his attempt to live that life would lead him to be a corporate officer position in such a small amount of time. Honestly, he didn't want the job, but out of respect for Howard's decision and faith, he took it. Sure the pay was excellent, but Steve didn't enjoy it as much as his last position as Senior Manager of Stark's Civil Technologies Division. More politics, more meetings, more responsibility, and more stress was what it meant to be the second highest position to Stark's company. But Steve soldiered on, and with the push and support from his wife, he adapted, worked hard, and thrived in his job. Was he happy in his career? Steve didn't know himself, but one thing is for sure, he would prefer family over work any day of the week, and his family knew it, and everyone at Stark Industries knew it.

With school out, the Rogers kids had more time in the day to help around the house as well as play outside with friends, play games, and watch favorite TV programs. The summer months brought more than enough time for the kids to enjoy the break from school and help with more household chores. Though chores are not the most exciting thing for a kid to do while not in school, Steve and Peggy enjoyed the extra hand since running a household with four kids is no easy task. The two parents made sure to teach the kids a thing or two as well as pay them allowances for their hard work. But when the kids weren't doing their chores, they ran around outside, played with friends, and rode their bicycles into town to spend their hard-earned allowances at the ice cream shop enjoyed life as a kid on summer break. The kids also enjoyed family time, generally eating all breakfast and dinner together as a family, and often played board games when their father came home in the evenings after dinner, with Clue, Candy Land, and Scrabble being the favored games. Angela was exceptionally better at Scrabble than her siblings and often gave her mother a run for her money in the game. Her constant reading definitely showed during Scrabble nights, and Peggy was continually impressed. Summertime for the four Rogers kids was always fun and filled with daily adventures. Life was never dull for the kids.

Downtown Scarsdale, NY

Angela Elizabeth Rogers, the young blonde seven-year-old, accompanied by her best friends Lizzie and Jessica rode their bikes into the busy downtown, passing the old town center as they rode to the local bookstore. The town was bustling on this Saturday afternoon with the streets crowded with cars and the sidewalks cluttered with adults doing some weekend errands and teenagers enjoying their summer. The town teenagers were out doing various things but mainly hanging out by the local "Five and Dime" shop, different diners, or driving in their new convertible cars in the summer sun. The three little girls on the bikes, however, didn't quite care what the teenagers and other adults did during the weekends, and it really didn't concern them since they were more focused on getting something with their allowances from the store.

Angela rounded the corner on her bike, careful to be aware of cars on the road and coasted the final short stretch to the bookstore. Once in front the shop, the two girls hopped off their bikes and leaned them up against the wall. Lizzie was the first to bolt toward the door. "Come on, you guys!" the girl called to her two slower friends.

Jessica smiled, "We're coming!" She turned to Angela who was busy fixing her white and yellow dress after riding a bike for the past half hour, "Angela, are you ready?"

Angela stopped with what she was doing and nodded, "Yup, I'm ready!" She quickly finished fixing
her dress from creases before trotting and joining her to friends to finally enter the store. All three girls were planning to spend their hard-earned allowances on a new book at their favorite local shop after working their own chores all week to earn enough money from their parents. For Angela, like her two older siblings, she was paid for her hard work at the end of the week which allowed her to go into town on the weekends to pay for ice cream, candy, toys, or more often than not, books.

Just as Lizzie was about to grab the door, the door swung open and out stepped the Mayor of the town dressed in a white collared shirt and a pair of grey slacks, carrying a small paper bag in one hand, he held the door open with the other. The older gentleman didn't notice the little girls for he was still saying goodbye to the owners of the shop. "Thanks for the books!" the Mayor called to the owners. "I'll see you both tomorrow at church!" As he finally turned around, he accidentally bumped into the three girls standing just outside the store entrance. "Oh!" he gasped in surprise. "Hey there, young ladies," he greeted in a gentle tone as a warm smile crept on his face. The Mayor is an older gentleman who was short in stature with thinning grey hair but always had a gentle way about him.

Lizzie spoke up first since she stood closest to the Mayor, "Good afternoon, Mr. Harris."

"Good afternoon, Mr. Harris," echoed Angela and Jessica. All three kids knew the Mayor since his name was mentioned a lot during school.

The Mayor smiled at the girls, "Isn't it?" he replied cheerfully. "What are you three up to on this wonderful Saturday?"

"Spending our allowance on a new book or two," replied an excited Lizzie.

"Ah, good on you. Working hard on your chores for your parents, a noble task at home. I'm sure your parents are very proud of your hard work and grateful for an extra hand. Being a parent is a hard job, it's good that you help your parents around the house," The Mayor replied cheerfully. He nodded at the three girls, "Also, good on you for wanting to spend your allowances on books. Reading is never wrong." He chuckled, "You three read a lot?"

Jessica nodded, "Yes, sir. But Angela reads the most out of the three of us, and she reads the fastest.” Angela didn't say anything and just nodded in agreement.

The Mayor smiled and looked at Angela, "Oh, I remember. Your father told me about your love for reading the last time I saw him.” He leaned forward, resting his hands on his knees, "And who's your favorite author, Ms. Rogers?"

Angela shrugged, "Um. John Steinbeck," she said quietly.

"John Steinbeck, really? His books are pretty advanced for your age," The Mayor replied in surprise. Lizzie smiled, "That's what our teacher said too."

"And what's your favorite book of his?"

"Cannery Row," Angela softly replied again.

"That's a fine choice. Excellent book," The Mayor said with a grin. He chuckled, "Also a nice place to visit. Takes place in beautiful Monterey, California. Beautiful sun, water, city, and people. If you haven't been there, I suggest you try to convince your parents to take a vacation out there someday."

Angela nodded, "My parents are taking us to Disneyland in a few weeks. That's in California too."

The Mayor chuckled and he stood up, "That should be fun. That place is quite magical. Though
Monterey is quite a ways away from Disneyland. Might need to take another trip back to California just to visit."

"Oh," Angela replied quietly again.

The Mayor nodded with a warm smile, "Well, kids, don't let me keep you from buying your books." He glanced over at Angela, "Angela, can you tell your father to give me a call when he has a chance? Going to need his help with something."

Angela nodded, "Yes, sir."

"Great, thank you very much." Before the Mayor excused himself, he grinned widely, "Kids, before I go, if you have any money left after you buy your books, I suggest you head down to the ice cream parlor. It's been terribly hot lately, and nothing beats a cold ice cream cone on a hot summer day."

Jessica agreed, "That's an excellent idea!"

The Mayor bowed, "Have a fun day today, kids." With that, the older man excused himself and walked down the sidewalk to his car parked at the curb.

"Bye, Mr. Harris!" Lizzie and Jessica called out to him and waved.

After waving and saying goodbye to the Mayor, the three girls finally entered the bookstore. The bell that hung at the top of the door jingled as they walked in which signaled to the store owners of the new guests. Behind the cash register stood a mid-aged lady with light brown hair and glasses and dressed in a lovely violet day dress, greeted the girls first, "Ah, it's our favorite customers! Good afternoon, you three."

"Hi, Mrs. Foster," the three girls greeted in unison.

"Is that Angela, Lisbeth, and Jessica, I hear?" said a male voice from the back room behind the counter.

Mrs. Foster glanced to the back room and smiled, "Sure is."

After a moment, an older man in a dark blue sweater over a collared shirt stepped out from the back room and greeted the three girls joyfully, "Young ladies, welcome back to our store!" The man is Mrs. Foster's husband and looked a little older than her with defined bags under his eyes and greying short brown hair. He was always a cheerful person and particularly to the town's youth since many of the kids reminded him of his children when they were younger.

"Hi, Mr. Foster," The three girls immediately greeted the older gentleman in the same respectful tone as his wife.

Mr. Foster grinned, "And how are we this lovely Saturday afternoon?"

Lizzie shrugged and spoke first, "It's hot, but it's a good day. We want to buy a book with our allowance money."

Jessica nodded in agreement, "Yeah! We've been waiting to come down here all week."

Mr. Foster chuckled, "I love your passion for reading. It's so contagious."

Mrs. Foster smirked, "Isn't it?"

"Are you girls drinking enough water? I don't want to hear that you passed out on the road while you
ride around on your bikes in the heat. It's a hot day," he said in a fatherly tone.

Jessica and Lizzie nodded, "Yes, sir," they both said in unison. Angela simply nodded in response, remaining silent.

"Good," Mr. Foster said approvingly. He then clapped his hands, "Now, let's go pick out a book for you girls." He walked around the counter and nodded down one of the aisles of bookshelves, "We got a load of new books on Wednesday that you might like. Follow me and I'll show you which adventures you might like."

With that, Mr. Foster turned and walked down one of the aisles, Jessica and Lizzie were quick to follow him while Angela remained behind. Before disappearing within the bookstore with Jessica, Lizzie stopped and turned around to speak with Angela, "Angela, aren't you coming?"

Angela shook her head, "No, I'm going to look around over here. I like the fiction books at this section."

"Okay. We'll be over here when you're done," Lizzie called as she turned and excitedly ran off to rejoin Jessica and Mr. Foster. Unlike the two friends, Angela was uninterested in the books of her age and grade that she knew Mr. Foster will likely introduce to them. She enjoyed much more advanced books than what most kids of her age enjoy.

As Angela was about to look around for a book to buy, Mrs. Foster called out to her, "Angela."

Angela looked over at the woman, "Yes, Mrs. Foster?"

"Come here," the adult lady said with a smile. "I got a book you might like that just came in the other day. I knew you'd come into the store at some point, so I didn't put it out on the shelf and saved it just for you to look at."

Angela smiled and walked over to the woman behind the register, "What is it?" she asked curiously with a hint of excitement in her voice.

Mrs. Foster reached under the counter and pulled out a thick book titled *Of Mice and Men* written by John Steinbeck. She smiled as she put the book down on the countertop, "I know you love Steinbeck's books and this one was a best seller a few years ago. Arguably one of his best works. I think you might like it."

Angela grinned happily, "Wow!" she said excitedly. "May I?" she asked politely as she reached for the book on the counter.

"Of course, sweetheart," the woman said kindly.

Angela gently picked up the book like she was about to break it and examined it for a moment. She grinned happily as she opened up the book and took in the new book smell. The gentle and pleasant warm smell of soft paper and the slight hint of ink, not yet worn by the reader's hands filled her nose. The potential story and adventure in the palm of her hand dazzled her curiosity as she held the new novel in her grip. Angela then flipped to the prologue and briefly skimmed it as Mrs. Foster watched over her from the counter with a pleasant smile on her face. Then after a moment of skimming the prologue, she flipped through the book and stopped at a page when particular sentence got her attention.

"I got you to look after me, and you got me to look after you, and that's why," Angela quoted.

Mrs. Foster smiled, "It's a good book, Angela. That's one of my favorite quotes from that book." She
chuckled, "I'm sure your mother is familiar with that quote too. But do you know what my favorite quote is from John Steinbeck?"

"Hm?" Angela hummed curiously.

"I believe a strong woman may be stronger than a man, particularly if she happens to have love in her heart. I guess a loving woman is indestructible," Mrs. Foster quoted by memory. She smirked, "From one of my favorite books, East of Eden. A very profound quote from him. Hopefully, one day you'll get the chance to read that book."

"Wow," Angela replied with great amazement. "I'll add it to my list."

Mrs. Foster smiled, "You know? Rumor has it that your mother is just as indestructible as your father."

Angela grinned and nodded, "She is, and all my siblings know it."

"Your mother is quite the woman," Mrs. Foster said in praise.

Angela smiled and closed Of Mice and Men. "May I buy this?" she asked politely. "Please?"

Mrs. Foster put her hands on her hip, "Of course. But on one condition." Angela nodded signaling that she was listening. "You tell your mother that you bought this book. The novel is meant to be read by someone two times your age and up. It's descriptive and often has some harsh language, but I know you're a very advanced reader, so I know you'll understand what you're reading. I personally don't see a problem with you reading it, but it's up to your mother whether she will allow you to read it or not, okay?"

Angela nodded, "Yes, ma'am."

"Promise me, please. I don't want to be enemies of your mother. I love her to death," Mrs. Foster said with a grin.

"I promise."

"Good. If you have questions about the story or anything going on in the book, I'm sure your parents will answer them." Mrs. Foster nodded and pressed a few buttons on the cash register, "That'll be $1.50, sweetheart," she said as the register dinged loudly and the cash tray slid out.

Angela put the book back on the counter then reached into one of her pockets on the top half of her dress and removed a handful of coins. She placed the money on the countertop by the book where Mrs. Foster automatically sifted through the coins and grabbed the required amount.

"And that takes care of that," Mrs. Foster said as she closed the register after depositing the money into the cash tray. "You're now the proud owner of Of Mice and Men. Enjoy," she said pleasantly. "And someday you'll be able to read East of Eden. I highly recommend it, I'm sure you'll love it."

Angela smiled grabbed the rest of her money and stuffed it back in her pocket, "Thank you, Mrs. Foster."

"You're very welcome. Do you want a bag?" Angela nodded in response. Mrs. Foster bent down under the counter again and grabbed a small paper bag then noticed a book with the name "Margaret C. Rogers," taped to it. Mrs. Foster stood back up with the paper bag in one hand and a book in the other, "Angela, can you do me a favor?" Angela again nodded in reply. "I forgot your mother ordered a book a while ago and I have it here. Can you deliver it? She already paid, so all you have
to do is bring it home."

Angela nodded, "Yes, Ma'am."

"Great, thank you so much, Angela," Mrs. Foster said as she slid the books into the paper bag. "Tell your mother I said hi," she said as she handed the paper bag to the little girl.

"I will, thank you, Mrs. Foster," Angela said as she took the bag.

Mrs. Foster smiled at the girl, "Say, I forgot to mention, you're dress looks very pretty today, Angela."

Angela looked down at her dress for a moment then looked back up at the adult, "Thank you. My mother and father say I should always dress my best." Her mother always made sure that Angela and her siblings dressed nicely and was very stern when it came to not ruining their nicer clothes. Keeping the good clothes looking nice was a particular problem her mother had with Sarah and Michael since they liked playing outside and horse playing the most out of the four of them.

"Your parents are very wise," the lady said with a smile. "So, what's next for your day?"

Angela shrugged, "Probably the ice cream shop then go home. I got enough money for a double dipped ice cream cone," she said betraying a hint of excitement.

"Sounds delicious," Mrs. Foster said warmly. She looked over and smiled at her husband and the two little girls talking happily while searching for books in the kid section of the store. She chuckled, "Well, got to wait for your friends before you get ice cream."

Angela shrugged and smiled, "That's okay. I like the bookstore. I can find something to do." Mrs. Foster smiled proudly at the young blonde girl.

Angela looked around for a moment, and her eyes settled on the history section of the store. Curiosity suddenly got the better of her as she started to think about her father's time during the war and wondered if any of the history books had something new to add about him. Angela, like her siblings, read plenty of history books, but many of them said much of the same things about her father and cited many of the same events and heroic actions. She wanted to know more and not just the big things he accomplished. Angela wanted to specifically hear about his experience. Naturally, hearing her father tell his story as Captain America would be better than any book, but her father is very tight-lipped about his service, and her mother only told short stories and didn't offer much information. Since Angela and her siblings talked to their mother last month about their father as Captain America, she became increasingly curious about her father's duty. No doubt her older sister's curiosity in recent weeks have rubbed off on her. She wanted to know more about her father as Captain America but knew books wouldn't be as good as hearing it from her father himself, but nevertheless, Angela elected right then and there to see what other history books offered on him.

Angela slowly turned back to Mrs. Foster, "Mrs. Foster, may I look around?"

Mrs. Foster nodded, "Of course, sweetheart. You don't need to ask that." Angela nodded and hurried off down to the history section of the bookstore, earning a quizzical look from the older lady.

Angela rushed into the history section and quickly searched for a book on World War II. She didn't know how long Lizzie and Jessica would take looking for their books to buy so she quickly scanned the shelves for a good history book that could possibly hold some new information on her dad's service as Captain America. As the young seven-year-old scanned the shelves, a thick dark blue book tucked in the back between two others caught her attention. The book didn't have a title on its
spine and looked strangely out of place compared to the other history books in the aisle. Angela put her paper bag down then slowly removed the book from the shelf, and noticed it was titled, *Building the Divide: The Wars That Split The World*. She furrowed her brow in curiosity and slowly opened the book to the table of contents and saw that the book was split into two sections, World War II and the Korean War. Though from the table of contents, the part on World War II was much larger than the Korean War.

Angela started to skim through the book, figuring that any book discussing the two recent wars would have something on her father. Of the two past wars, she knew the least about Korean War other than basic knowledge and that the country didn't want to talk about it. Angela, however, knew her father fought in it, but that's as far as her knowledge goes. Her mother also mentioned that Angela was born just before the Korean War started and probably didn't remember what it's like to have her father go overseas. In fact, both of her older siblings also didn't have any memory of their father being deployed. Angela also recalled that her mother was worried about their father during his time in the Korean War, and for a good reason.

Angela continued to flip through the book until she landed on a black and white photo that occupied much of the page, a photo she clearly recognized as one of the most produced pictures of her father. The image is her dad, clad in a leather jacket and standard issue helmet, a sharp contrast of his later uniform, leading the rescued soldiers of the US Army 107th Infantry Regiment back to base during World War II. In the photo, Angela could also see all of her Uncles walking behind her dad, all of them looking younger than they are now, except for her Uncle Bucky and her dad who still look surprisingly youthful as this picture. She didn't understand how but figured there was a logical explanation for it.

Angela briefly skimmed the paragraph accompanying the photo and noticed it was things she already knew about her father. Turning the page, she spotted a new black and white picture of her dad she hasn't seen in any other history book. The image is the back of her dad, standing firmly in his iconic stars and stripes uniform, shield in hand and his pistol in the other, in a desolate mountainous landscape blanketed by snow. The background of the photo was obscured by a thick white mist, but Angela could make out the rocky peaks peering over the fog. Her dad was the lone object and center of attention in the whole picture.

She read the caption below the picture that said, "Captain Steven G. Rogers [Captain America] stands in defiance against Chinese attack. Chosin Reservoir, North Korea. Photo Credit: Donald Helms, UPI."

Angela was fascinated by the photo and wanted to know more. She read the accompanying paragraph which gave a brief detail of her father's heroics during the Chosin Reservoir. "Captain Rogers is credited for killing over 100-Communist troops and for saving over 150-American soldiers. With great personal sacrifice and risk to his own life, Captain Rogers was pivotal in the breakout of Task Force Faith from their battered position North East of the Reservoir."

She then skimmed to the next page and saw a list of listed her father's awards over his military career until the end of the Korean War. Angela was fascinated by the number of awards and accolades he earned over his time in the service. She knew her father was decorated but didn't realize that he had that many awards. Her mother mentioned his accomplishments but never knew the extent.

Angela was brought back to reality by her friend Jessica tapping her on the shoulder. "Hey, Angela, are you ready?"

Angela quickly closed the book. "Yup," she said as she put it back on the shelf.

"What were you reading in the history section?"
Angela shrugged as she picked up her paper bag of books, "Something about my dad." She quickly changed the subject, "Are we getting ice cream?"

"Yup," Jessica said with a smile. "Lizzie is about done paying for her book, so we should be going soon."

"Yay," Angela said with a smile as she started to walk out of the history section, Jessica close in tow.

Though Angela got to learn something new from that history book, she was now faced with more questions than answers about her father's time as Captain America. At least she got to learn a few new things about her dad during the Korean War and his accomplishments while in service. That last photo she saw burned into her memory, and couldn't wait to tell her older sister about everything she recently learned. Angela's curiosity about her father was reaching the same level as Sarah's to the point where she felt desperate to know more about her dad's experiences as Captain America.

Steve & Margaret Rogers Residence, Scarsdale, NY

After the bookstore, like the Mayor suggested, the three girls went to the ice cream parlor and enjoyed two scoops of ice cream on a cone. It was late in the afternoon by the time Angela got home riding on her bike, her friends no longer with her as they went their separate ways not too long ago. As Angela pedaled toward her home, she saw her older brother playing a game of street baseball in the middle of the road with the neighborhood boys. Ignoring the baseball game taking place in the street, Angela just rode onto the driveway and parked her bike at the side of the garage, only interested in going into the house and cooling off and hanging out with her sister and mother.

Michael who about threw the pitch, suddenly stopped when he noticed his sister getting off of her bike by the garage. He paused the game for a moment, much to the other boys' dismay, "Angela!" he called out to her. Angela stopped in her tracks and faced her brother at the sound of her name.

"Michael, come on, she doesn't want to play. Just throw the pitch," said another boy, playing as first base.

"Yeah, plus, she's a girl," said another boy who was up to bat.

Michael rolled his eyes and ignored the other kids, "Want to play?" he called out to his little sister.

"I'm okay. I just want to relax inside," Angela replied. She briskly turned around and grabbed the paper bag of books out of the front basket of her bike.

"Okay," Michael said with a wave. "Welcome home!" He then focused on the batter and frowned, "Be careful with what you say about my baby sister, kid. She's more than just a 'girl,'" he said with venom in his voice.

The batter frowned, "My name isn't 'kid' it's Chris."

The boy playing catcher by the name of Jason Parker, a good friend of Michael's, shook his head and whispered, "Chris, I know you're new here, but making Michael angry isn't going to be the best choice, especially when it comes to his sisters. Plus, the Rogers' sisters are stronger than you. I guarantee it."

Chris shook his head, "Yeah right," he said in a smug tone.

"Then you'll learn about the hard way and it's probably Sarah who's going to teach you," Jason replied cautiously.
"Sure."

Michael smiled confidently, "Jason… I think you might want to move for this one."

Jason shook his head, "Come on, I can take the heat. Just don't hit me in the face."

Michael chuckled, "Deal," he said as he prepared to pitch. Michael was naturally the best pitcher and batter in the neighborhood, except when his twin sister is playing. Sarah was the better hitter and was responsible for breaking many windows. Though the twins were holding back much of their strength, they still were far better athletes than any other kid on the block. All the kids knew it except the new one.

Angela walked up the few steps of the front porch and instantly saw her mother in a bright yellow dress relaxing on one of the patio chairs with a book in hand and iced tea on the small patio table next to her. Her mother was the picture of calm as she read with a small smile on her face, no doubt enjoying the July Saturday. Before Angela could take another step further onto the porch, her mother looked up and gave her a warm smile.

"Hi there, dear," Peggy said with a smile as she lowered her book to her lap.

Angela smiled back, "Hi, Mama," she said closing the distance between them. As she approached her mother, Angela noticed her baby brother playing on a picnic blanket with his toys by their mother's feet.

John put his toys down when he saw his sister and waved energetically at her. Angela returned the gesture with a warm smile.

"Welcome home. Did you have fun in town?" her mother asked.

"I did very much. Jessica and Lizzie say hello," Angela replied.

Peggy grinned, "Aw. They're sweet girls. I'm so glad you're friends with them, darling." Angela nodded in agreement. Peggy eyed Angela's paper bag, "Did you buy your book?"

"Mhmm," she hummed as she reached into the paper bag and removed the book she was supposed to deliver for her mother. Angela handed over the book, "Mrs. Foster said this book is for you."

Peggy graciously took the book and smiled at her youngest daughter, "Perfect! I was going to swing by the bookstore later in the week and pick it up. Thank you for bringing it to me, sweetie."

"You're welcome, Mama," Angela replied kindly.

Peggy briefly put the book down on the table next to her iced tea, then turned back to her daughter, "And what book did you buy with your hard earned allowance?"

Angela removed her John Steinbeck book and handed it to her mother, "Of Mice and Men. Mrs. Foster says to ask you permission to read this book since it's for kids two times my age and up." She shrugged, "She says, it's descriptive and has bad words."

Peggy smiled and took the book from her youngest daughter and examined it for a moment. She has read the book once and has thoroughly enjoyed, and knew her youngest daughter would too. Though the book is for kids and teens older than her, Peggy knew without a doubt that Angela can understand and grasp the story. Angela is a very bright girl for her age and has an incredible knack for reading, often reading books way above her age level. Though Peggy knew her youngest daughter won't understand all the references, she would be happy to answer any curious questions
for her.

Peggy flipped through the book and smiled, "This is a good book, darling, of course, you can read it." She closed the book and handed it back to her daughter, "You'll love it. But if you have any questions about the themes or certain aspects of the book you aren't sure about, don't be afraid to ask, okay?"

Angela took her book from her mother and smiled, "Thanks, Mama. I'm super excited to read it."

"As you should be. You are a big fan of John Steinbeck," she replied with a smirk.

Angela nodded and fell silent, awkwardly looking down as she remembered the history book she glanced over at the bookstore. She didn't move and remained passive, looking away from her mother as she contemplated whether or not to ask her about what she read at the bookstore about her father's service in the wars. Being inquisitive as ever, Peggy noticed her daughter's sudden silence and questioning look on her face. Angela was always a quiet girl, but her current silence was a different type, the type of about asking a question.

Peggy nodded, "Darling?"

Angela shook her head, "Yes, Mama?" she responded, breaking her silence.

"You look like you want to ask me something."

A distraught Chris, the new kid in the neighborhood, yelled in frustration after being struck out by Michael's fast pitches caught both mother and daughter's attention. The two briefly glanced at the boys playing street baseball and saw all the boys on Michael's team start to cheer while Chris pouted. As Michael's team continued to roar cheers for Michael, the new kid walked off homeplate with his head hung low and with a disappointed look on his face. The kid apparently didn't take getting struck out very well.

Peggy focused back on her youngest daughter and nodded toward her, "So, do you want to ask me something, sweetie?"

Angela thought for a split second, but opted to shake her head. "No. May I go inside, Mama? Say hi to Daddy and Sarah?"

Peggy chuckled and nodded, "Of course. You don't need to ask to come home, sweetheart." She knew her daughter had a lingering question since Angela wore it on her face, but Peggy decided not to press it. She was sure it would eventually come up if Angela thought it was important.

Angela smiled, "Okay." She then turned and walked over to the front door.

"Oh," Peggy said glancing over at Angela causing the young girl to stop and look back at her mom. "Sarah's friend from school, David, is here. Don't forget to say hi to him too."

Angela nodded, "Okay, Mama." She then opened the front door and walked into the house.

As Angela stepped into the foyer, she instantly heard the sounds of laughter from her older sister and David in the family room. Without a seconds pause, the young girl quietly made her way across the hall and walked into the kitchen, quickly spotting her father by the sink preparing to make dinner. Angela then glanced over to the family room and saw her older sister and David entertaining themselves with a board game on the coffee table, both older kids playing happily and unaware of her presence. Angela opted to greet her dad first since he looked less busy and was alone. She didn't dislike David, she was just shy trying to get to know her older sister's friend.
Angela strolled over to her dad and greeted him sweetly, "Hi, Daddy, I'm back from the bookstore and ice cream shop."

Steve turned off the sink after washing his hands then turned to his youngest daughter, "Hey, Kiddo, welcome home." He chuckled, "Have fun?"

Angela smiled widely and nodded in response. "Is dinner soon?"

"No, it'll be done in a few hours. I'm just preparing stuff." He chuckled, "Don't worry, you have plenty of time to digest all that ice cream before eating dinner." Steve noticed her paper bag in her hands, "What do you got there? A new book?"

"Yup!" Angela said as she opened up the bag. She removed her book and showed her father, "It's called, *Of Mice and Men*."

Steve chuckled, "Good book. You'll love it, I'm sure."

"You and Mama like the same books, huh, daddy?" Angela replied. She crumpled the bag up and carried the book in her hand since she's home, and tossed the discarded bag into the trash bin by the counter.

Steve chuckled, "We like some of the same books, but her tastes are much more broader than mine. Your mother always enjoyed fantasy stories and most fiction, but I'm a little more picky in general."

"Oh, Mama told me," Angela replied.

Steve raised a brow in question, "Told you that I'm picky in my choice of reading or in everything?"

Angela looked up and thought about her answer for a moment then smiled mischievously. "Everything," she said with a giggle.

Steve laughed and waved his hand dismissively, "Go on and say hi to your sister. I'll call you when dinner is ready," he said humorously.

Angela smiled and twirled in her skirt from side-to-side, "I love you, Dad," she said in an uncharacteristically adorable tone.

Steve chuckled, "Yeah, I love you too, sweetheart. Now, go greet your sister."

"Okay, Dad, talk to you later." With that, Angela trotted away toward the family room, leaving her dad with an amused expression across his face. It's a great and wonderful thing to have such a tight-knit family where everyone has natural banter with one another regardless of age.

As Angela entered the family room she saw Athena, the all black six month old German Shepard puppy, laying down between her older sister and David. She greeted her older sister, "Hi, Sarah."

Athena immediately sat up at the sound of Angela's voice and excitedly trotted over to greet her. The puppy quickly sat down at her feet and wagged her tail energetically until Angela squatted down to pet her. As the young girl happily pet Athena, the young German Shepard rolled to her side so Angela can rub her belly. The young puppy, no doubt, enjoyed the attention from the seven-year-old girl.

Athena grew considerably since the family adopted her in early April and is now tall enough on all fours to reach Peggy's upper knees. Her ears have gotten perkier, her fur coat has seemingly gotten blacker, and she has a more massive appetite now. At least six months old, the young German
Shepard is still a puppy and is a ball of energy, especially in the mornings. Athena, undoubtedly, requires a lot of attention and has to be walked regularly which is just another chore the family has to deal with throughout the day. The kids are more than happy to walk Athena in the evening, but Sarah tends to take most of the responsibility since she was the one who wanted to adopt her in the first place. Athena is just another member of the family with the only responsibility of not peeing or pooping in the house and listening.

Sarah looked up from her game and smiled, "Hey there, Angela. Welcome home."

David also greeted the young blonde girl, "Good to see you again, Angela."

"Yeah. You too…David," Angela responded shyly.

Sarah chuckled and patted the spot on the floor next to her, "Want to play with us, Angela? We're almost done with this game."

Angela shook her head, "No, I'm okay. I want to go read and draw upstairs."

"Okay, suit yourself, lil-sis," Sarah replied with a warm smile. "If you change your mind, we'll be here."

"Okie doke," Angela said as she turned and left the family room.

As Angela left, Steve strolled into the family room and spoke to Sarah's friend, "David, are you staying for dinner today? We would love to have you." Sarah looked at David and gave an excited grin.

David looked up at Steve and shook his head, "No, sir. I have to go home and eat." He smiled, "But thank you for asking." Sarah's grin faded, but she understood.

Steve nodded, "No worries. Do you need a ride home?"

"No, I'm okay to walk, thank you, sir," David responded in a respectful tone.

"Just thought I'd offer. You two can go back to your games," Steve replied with a smile as he walked back into the kitchen.

Sarah looked at David, "Thanks for coming by and hanging out today, by the way."

David smiled, "Of course! You're like my closest friend, Sarah. I always enjoy hanging out with you."

Sarah blushed for a moment but quickly composed herself, comfortable that David didn't see her turn red. "I think it's your turn," she said nodding to the game board. David nodded and picked up the pair of dice on the table and prepared to conduct his turn.

Sarah and David have been spending a lot of time together as friends since school ended. Since protecting him from bullies in March, Sarah and David became close friends, and along with Hannah and Amy, the four friends spent a lot of time together during school and during the summer thus far. However, David gravitated more to Sarah than the other two girls, and spent more time with her since the summer began. From the start of their friendship in March, the two friends had a very distinctive relationship of opposites that covers both of their personalities and natural aptitudes. Sarah is a Type A personality child: confident, outgoing, ambitious, organized, and proactive while David is a Type B child, emotional and expressive, generally a laid-back attitude, patient, and relaxed. The two have formed a tight bond over the recent months and they complement each other.
A little later after Angela got home, she snuck into her father's office in the basement, curiosity getting the better of her about her father's time as Captain America. She wanted to see all the pictures of her father and all the memorabilia that he hid away in his green chest that he called a "footlocker." After seeing that new picture in the book she found at the bookstore, Angela wanted to know more about her dad but knew he doesn't answer questions in great detail about his time in service or about the wars. So, Angela took matters in her own hands by trying to learn something new about him through his things he had hidden away from his family. Angela figured it was wrong to snoop through her dad's stuff, but temptation and the idea of learning more about her dad overcame her.

Angela closed the door behind her and headed straight to the closet, figuring it was the most logical spot for her dad to put his green footlocker. She reached the closet and discovered it was locked much to her frustration. Angela sighed in disappointment and concluded that it was probably not the best idea to sneak behind her dad's back to go through the things that he considered private. As she turned to leave the office, a glint of something shiny on her dad's desk caught the corner of her eye. The young girl immediately stopped and walked over to the table to investigate, and to her amazement saw a set of keys lying wholly exposed.

Angela quickly grabbed the keys and unlocked the closet, opening the double doors with excitement but immediately froze at what she saw. Her dad's dress and service uniforms and his "Stars and Stripes" combat uniform hung in the closet, seemingly untouched, pristine, and neat. Below the suits is a faded green, wood US Army footlocker with "U.S." printed on the top. Angela stepped forward and ran her hand up and down her dad's Captain America uniform in amazement. The suit was heavier than she imagined and unknown to her, the weight was because of all the leather and relatively lightweight, flexible armored padding lining the uniform. Angela was amazed and wanted to get her sister, but decided to only tell her about it later.

She then turned her attention to the footlocker and noticed that it didn't have a lock. Opening the locker, the young girl saw two trays lying side by side occupying the open top, both full of random trinkets and various things including small books, uniform items, and photos. But of all the stuff on the trays, the first thing that caught her attention was a stack of photographs of different sizes resting on top of a wood jewelry box.

Angela carefully picked up the small pile of black and white pictures and observed the top photo which is a headshot of her mother smiling widely with her hair down. Angela didn't know when the photo was taken, but she noticed that her mother didn't look like she aged a day since that photo. The seven-year-old girl figured that this photo was taken a while ago if it ended up within her father's Army footlocker, so comes to the conclusion that her mother was a lot like her father in the fact that she still looks as young as this picture. Angela began to wonder if she'll look as youthful as her mother when she gets to be as old as her.

As Angela flipped through the rest of the photos, she noticed that they all consisted of her family but didn't include her baby brother, John, who Angela figured wasn't born yet when her dad had these photographs. She recognized some of the pictures of her as a baby being held by her mother, and others with just Sarah, Michael, and her mother. These photos looked like ordinary pictures of the family, but Angela knew that these held significances to her father.

Angela placed the photos to the side and turned her attention to the lone jewelry box in the footlocker that was underneath the stack of photographs. She carefully picked up the box, felt the weight, and studied it for a minute. After a few moments, Angela slowly opened the lid of the box and saw all of her father's medals, ribbons, uniform devices, and Captain bars piled into the box. But the decorations that caught her attention the most was his Medal of Honor on a light blue neck ribbon with 13-white stars, and two distinguished crosses on small ribbons that she recognized from books.
Angela put the box down on the floor and carefully picked up her dad's Medal of Honor, handling it with great care and respect. She knew her dad was awarded these decorations, but never once saw any of them in person. Holding her father's Medal of Honor somehow made it feel more real, that it wasn't just something heard merely from her parents, uncles, and read from books. The only thing she didn't know was her dad's perspective on how he earned these medals.

As Angela was about to put the medal away, she heard her dad behind her. "Angela…" She jumped in surprise, almost dropping the medal.

Angela turned around slowly and frowned, "Hi, Dad…" she replied in an ashamed tone.

Steve frowned and sighed, resting his hands on his hips. "What are you doing in there?" he asked calmly, staring at his youngest daughter.

Before Angela could respond, Peggy called from upstairs, "Darling, David is leaving, do you want to say goodbye?"

Steve didn't break eye contact from his daughter, "I'll be up in a moment," he called back to his wife. He then nodded to Angela, prompting her to respond.

Angela frowned, "I…I was curious. I just wanted to know more about you as Captain America."

Steve sighed and walked over to his daughter, "Please put everything away." Angela nodded and did exactly as she was told. She carefully packed up the medals in the jewelry box and placed it where she found it in the footlocker then gently placed the stack of old photos on top of it. Angela then closed the footlocker and stepped back so her father could close the closet as tears began to well-up in her eyes.

As Steve closed the closet, he heard a series of light whimpers from behind him. He frowned, knowing that Angela wasn't much for crying which means she's really upset. Steve left the closet unlocked with the keys still in the keyhole, and turned around to face his daughter and saw her crying. Angela stood whimpering before her father while using the back of her hands to wipe away the rushing tears rolling down her cheek.

Steve frowned and kneeled down in front of his youngest daughter, "Sweetheart," he said calmly. "Y-yeah?" Angela replied weakly between gasps of crying, upset because she's in trouble and made her dad mad.

"It's okay, sweetie," he replied smoothly as he patted her on the shoulder. "Don't cry."

"Are you mad at me?"

Steve chuckled, "No." He nodded to the closet, "I don't blame you actually. Going through my things without asking permission is rude and it's bad, but I'm not mad or upset at you."

"R-Really?" Angela said wiping away tears as she cried.

"Really." Steve brought her close and embraced his daughter, "Don't cry, it's okay." Angela leaned her cheek against her dad's shoulder, but continued to let her tears out. He patted her back, "Angela, I understand why you wanted to go behind my back to learn more about my time as Captain America and I don't blame you." He made a small smile, "I know I haven't really been forthcoming with it to your siblings, but that's for a good reason."

Angela buried her face into the crook of her dad's neck, "Ever since Mama told us that you wanted
to keep it private, my sister and brother wanted to know more about what you did during as Captain America." She sobbed, "We only hear the big stories, but we feel like we still don't know what you did. We just wanted to know more."

He leaned back so he can look at Angela, wiping tears from her cheeks with a gentle touch. "I know you and your brother and sister want to know all the details, sweetheart, but I can't tell you. Not now at least. Those stories you hear are more or less true, and you'll have to settle with those for now, okay?" Angela nodded. "You know enough to realize I have done and experienced many things, so take pride in that I have done those things."

"I do, Dad." Angela frowned, "But why don't you ever talk about it with us? You said there was a reason, but what is it? You never answer our questions and only say that you'll tell us when we're older."

Steve smiled, "I guess I never did offer a good reason to not answer your questions." He shrugged and spoke in a serious tone, "I have done a lot of bad things in the name of 'freedom' and 'country,' both things that I'm ashamed and proud of, but they're violent and hard to swallow."

"Like the Battle of Chosin Reservoir?" Angela replied.

Steve was surprised that she knew about that battle since the country more or less forgot about the police action in Korea. He nodded, "Yeah, like the things I did there." He brushed her hair gently, "The hard truth of my experiences I can't tell you or your siblings right now because you won't fully understand them. And the last thing I want is for my children to come out of my stories feeling even more fearful of war and of me." He sighed, "War is bad, and it should be feared, but I don't want you and your siblings to be paranoid about it."

Suddenly, Peggy appeared at the door of the office, "Darling, David just—" She stopped when she realized Steve was having a serious conversation with their daughter.

"But I won't ever be fearful of you, Daddy," Angela replied, no longer crying.

Steve didn't break eye contact with his daughter as he continued to speak, "Maybe, maybe not, but I don't want these stories to affect your perception of me. Understand that there's a lot of pain with these stories and it's not something I'm willing to share with you at this point. When you're older and when I'm ready, I'll tell you. I promise," Steve said softly. He made a small smile, "But for now, the stories you hear from your mother and your uncles are all you need for now, okay?" Angela nodded.

"We want to know… would you ever go back to being Captain America again?" Angela asked innocently.

Steve finally broke eye contact with his daughter and looked up at Peggy leaning on the doorframe with her arms crossed, wearing a look of concern on her face. Steve looked back at his daughter and nodded, "Only if I have too, sweetheart. Being your Dad is the better job."

Angela leaned forward and hugged her father tightly. Steve chuckled as he reciprocated the hug, "I tell you what, during dinner, you guys can tell me the stories you heard and I'll tell you if they're true or not. I'll even tell you some of the good details of my journeys."

Angela leaned back and smiled excited, "Okay." Peggy smiled lovingly at her husband and daughter as she continued to lean against the doorframe.

Steve patted her on the back, "But right now I have to cook dinner, I just came down here to grab something." He nodded toward the door, "Go ahead and tell your brother and sister."
"Okay!" With that, Angela turned around and was about to bolt out of her dad's office when she bumped into her mother. "Oh, hi, Mama," she gasped in surprise.

"Hi there," Peggy responded with a smile. She stepped aside to let her daughter pass, "go ahead, sweetie." Angela smiled and ran out of the office and toward the stairs.

Peggy's smile turned into a look of concern as she looked at her husband still kneeling on the floor. She pushed herself off the wall and walked over to him, "What happened?" she asked in a soft tone.

Steve bowed his head for a moment, "Angela came down here and I caught her looking through my old war stuff. She was trying to find out more about my time as Captain America."

"Really?" Peggy said in an upset tone, resting her hand on her hips. She looked toward the open door where Angela ran off, "Goodness, I told the kids explicitly to respect your privacy about the matter." Peggy frowned and looked at her husband, "I'm sorry, darling. I can talk to them about it."

Steve stood up and shook his head, "No, it's okay. I don't blame the kids for being curious. I personally didn't do a very good job of telling them the reason why not to ask me." He shrugged, "To them, they just hear 'respect my privacy,' but don't know why."

"I didn't do a good job of telling them the 'why' either."

He chuckled, "Well, it's not your responsibility. I should've told them, but I appreciate you watching out for me."

"Always, darling," Peggy said with a smile.

"Honestly can't blame the kids for wanting to know more. It's only natural for them to be curious about what their parents do, and in this case, did."

Peggy nodded, "Yeah, Sarah especially has been obsessed with stories about you being Captain America." She shrugged, "That's because she wants to be like you."

"Yeah," he said evenly.

"It's actually pretty cute," Peggy said lightheartedly. She then nodded to the closet, "This was bound to happen eventually. Looking through your stuff."

Steve shrugged, "Yeah, oh well. I can let it slide for now."

Peggy shook her head with a smile and crossed her arms, "You're always so easy on them."

Steve laughed, "What can I say? I have a soft spot for our kids." He frowned, "I do feel kind of bad though."

"For what?" Peggy asked confused.

"The kids seem to only want to focus on my past as Captain America and never about what you did as a field agent."

Peggy laughed, "That's because no one tells stories about me. The kids always hear stories about you from teachers, their uncles, and TV and radio programs." She shrugged, "Unlike you, I don't have an 'Agent Carter: Adventure Program.'"

Steve rolled his eyes, "Oh good lord."
"Exactly. Their Uncles tell stories about me, but they aren't as exciting as yours and usually have you in them." She chuckled, "A lot of my 'stories' I can tell are really dull compared to yours."

Steve raised a brow, "I don't know… Dugan tells some pretty good stories about you."

Peggy rolled her eyes, "That's because he tells our kids of how strict and stern I am." Steve chuckled and shrugged in response. She smiled, "I'm not jealous, darling. I'm proud that they take such great interest in you."

"Hey, they take interest in you too," Steve replied.

"I know that, Darling," Peggy said as she took Steve's hand and gripped it lovingly. She leaned forward and kissed his cheek, "You're an excellent father even though you're really easy on the kids," she said humorously.

"Ha," Steve replied with a grin. "Oh! You said something about David?"

Peggy nodded, "Right. I was wondering if you wanted to say goodbye since he was about to leave. But I think he might've left already."

"Ah, right." Steve shrugged, "Well, dinner should be done in an hour or -"

Sarah's voice calling from the stairs interrupted him, "Mom, Dad, David is leaving now!"

Peggy smirked, "Never mind." She turned to the door, "Hold on for a minute, darling! We're coming up to say 'goodbye.'"

"Okay!" Sarah called back.

Peggy smiled at Steve, "Shall we?" She asked gripping his hand. "Oh, didn't you say you needed something down here?"

Steve smiled, "I forgot. I'm sure it could wait." He started walking to the door, "Let's go."

As the couple left the basement office, Steve turned off the lights and closed the door behind them. Peggy smirked, "So…Sarah and David," she said implying a subject Steve intentionally avoid.

"No…Not talking about this now," Steve said shaking his head as he let go of Peggy's hand. He raised his hands defensively and walked off ahead of Peggy to the stairs, "I'm not ready for that either."

Peggy laughed and chased after her husband, "I think they look cute together. They might make a beautiful couple in high school."

"She isn't dating yet so therefore I don't have to think about it!" Steve replied as he disappeared up the stairs.

"Not yet," Peggy called back as she chased after him up the stairs with laughter.

"Exactly, not yet!" Steve shot back, Peggy laughing happily in response.

His daughters dating. Another subject Steve wasn't ready for, nor was he prepared to talk about. To him, it's still too early to even think about the issue. But Peggy, however, was just using the subject to poke fun at him.
Apparently I posted the same chapter twice. My apologies took me too long to figure it out

A little family chapter with Angela as the focus.

Will Steve return as Captain America? Find out.

Hope you enjoyed.

Thanks for all the follows and reviews! Always up for more feedback!

I'm still planning on writing, but updates will be slower due to work picking up.
Chapter 42: John's Trouble

I don't own Captain America

On October 1957, the Soviet Union successfully launched a rocket into space, sending the first man-made satellite, Sputnik 1, into orbit. Though Sputnik was a tremendous feat for humanity, it came as an overwhelming wave of shock and fear to the American public. The success of Sputnik catapulted both the United States and the Soviet Union into the Space Race, the race for dominance of spaceflight capabilities, and as a side effect, further escalated the nuclear arms race between the two superpowers. In 1958 with the United States initially lagging behind in the Space Race, President Eisenhower signed the National Aeronautics and Space Act with approval from Congress, establishing the creation of NASA. From henceforth, NASA would be the agency funded by the government to compete against the Soviets and surpass them in the endeavor to reach space.

But as the Space Race emerged, the United States and the Soviet Union continued to build their respective nuclear arsenals at a rapid rate with both sides creating bigger and better nuclear weapons to outmatch the other. Different methods of delivery of nuclear weapons were also designed such as ICBMs or Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles capable of hitting targets thousands of miles away, and ballistic missile submarines capable of bringing deterrents within miles of enemy coastlines without being detected. It almost seemed like the two countries could destroy the world between the two of them with both countries at each other's throats with humanities deadliest weapon ever created. Tensions only continued to rise between the two superpowers with the beginning of the 1960s and the start of the Space Race.

Then in 1961, the youthful John F. Kennedy was elected President and came into his term with the ever-increasing tensions posed by the Soviet Union and the continued threat of the spread of communism in South East Asia and Latin America. Like his predecessor, President Eisenhower, Kennedy was confident in himself and his country and approached the Cold War in an aggressive stance. Much of his foreign policy in the opening years of the 1960s was dominated by U.S. confrontations with the Soviet Union through proxy contests and shows of force. One of the most critical proxy conflicts was the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba in April 1961.

In the early months of Kennedy's first term as President of the United States, he authorized the CIA lead invasion plan of Cuba that called for the use of anti-Castro counter-revolutionary exiles in the hopes of removing the Communist dictator, Fidel Castro. Unfortunately, the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba ended in a disaster which embarrassed the Kennedy Administration and the CIA. But during the planning stages of the operation, it seemed seamless and was backed by all of the department heads, military, and agencies of the Kennedy Administration. Everyone but Peggy, the director of SHIELD approved of the plan. Though Peggy did agree in removing Castro, she believed there was a better way, but was overruled by the majority and mainly the CIA. The CIA assured Kennedy that Castro would be removed from power within days, but that wasn't the case. The operation inevitably ended in catastrophic failure.

Facing harsh political blowback from the very public failure of the Bay of Pigs invasion, Kennedy was at ends with the CIA as well as having an increasingly tense relationship with the military Joint Chiefs of Staff. Though he always had a tenuous relationship with the military from the start after succeeding President Eisenhower, the Bay of Pigs did nothing to help the relationship between him and the military. But, in the aftermath of the Cuba situation, Kennedy began to develop ways to improve the actions of the CIA as well as starting to lean on SHIELD more heavily. He quickly, like
Eisenhower, expanded SHIELD's power and funding. SHIELD began to further grow in the space it split with the CIA to be the prime intelligence arm of the executive branch.

Peggy demonstrated her good judgment to the President when she was the only one to oppose the Bay of Pigs invasion and offered him political repercussions and strategic alternatives. Unfortunately, Kennedy didn't listen to her at the time, believing the assurance he got from the Joint Chiefs and the CIA Director, Allen Dulles, of the success of the Bay of Pigs operation. But inevitably after the failure in Cuba, Peggy proved herself as very competent and solidified her character to the President as someone who has insight in areas that her CIA counterpart and the military lacked. Due to Peggy's reputation, integrity, and calm demeanor, President Kennedy began to count on her skills, leadership, guidance, and her agency more and more for espionage and foreign affairs in conjunction with the CIA.

Though Peggy's reputation and vast experience preceded her, she sadly still had to prove herself daily in front of the majority of the men in the upper levels of the government. Peggy is still the only woman director and official in the highest level of the federal government and continues to face challenges based on her gender, but true to her character, she never let it get to her or stop her from doing her job. Thankfully, President Kennedy was one of the few who didn't mistrust her or look down at her from the onset because she was a woman. He was a pioneer in gender equality after all. However, it was unfortunate that the President didn't listen to her before the Cuba incident. It would've saved a lot of lives and pain. But for Peggy, that situation merely improved her position with the President.

1961

Since the Cuba fiasco in April, Peggy has been increasingly busy with work and has been called in for more frequent meetings in DC with the President and the Special Group, the group responsible for monitoring covert actions of the CIA and SHIELD. The Special Group consisted of Peggy, Allen Dulles, Nation Security Advisor, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Under Secretaries of the State and Defense Departments. Peggy was required to attend these frequent meetings because the committee reviewed and endorsed covert projects undertaken by both the CIA and SHIELD. These meetings generally only lasted a few hours, and Peggy would leave and come back the same day, or on the rare occasion, the meetings would call for her to be in DC for days at a time, depending on the circumstances. The rapidly growing tensions with the Soviet Union and mainly the Bay of Pigs incident made these Special Group meetings more regular which called for more business travel to DC for Peggy lately.

Though Peggy's workload increased as did her travel, she made it her personal mission to make it up to her family by maximizing her time with them on her days off and evenings. No matter what, no matter how tired or frustrated she was, Peggy always aimed to be a loving mother to her four kids and a loving wife to her husband. She didn't dare let her work dictate her life to the extent that it would force her to alienate her family. But it was an increasing challenge without a doubt, and recently, it's been harder than ever to balance work and to be a mother. No matter the hardship, Peggy made it work the best way possible.

Steve has been supportive as ever with Peggy's busier work schedule even though he has been busy with his own job at Stark Industries. For instance, if Peggy worked later, he would leave his job earlier, make dinner, help with the kids' homework, and help around the house until Peggy got home. But when she needed to travel to DC, Steve would often go to work later to drive the kids to their schools and leave his job earlier if possible, and pick them up. If he couldn't get them, then the kids would generally walk home. Then when Peggy returned home things would go back to the way things were usually. Though the two of them found themselves busier than average, they did their
best to find time for each other after work and the kids. Life is all about balance, and it takes constant effort to maintain a happy medium.

Even though Steve has been out of service for over ten years since the Korean War, he kept himself in shape by going to the gym or for a run in the early mornings or during his lunch break at work. He wasn't the type to go lethargic and become stagnant from ordinary life. His job as the President of Stark Industries has been busy as ever, but he's gotten much better at balancing his work and family compared to his first time at the new position in 1957. It also helped that no one would argue with him if he decided to choose family needs ahead of the company.

Howard was generally supportive of Steve's family decisions as long as it didn't interfere with certain business trips, deadlines, or important dates. Being close friends with the owner of the Company and an essential asset to the board also didn't hurt. This is not to say that Steve wasn't working hard or wasn't busy, he definitely had his hands full most days of the week with handling both business and family matters.

In terms of Steve's corporate career since his promotion, he developed a business model to beat the competition in the market and guided Stark Industries to create a profit each fiscal year and produce enough revenue to cover operating expenses. With Howard at the head of the company, creating new technologies, making all the major corporate decisions, and managing the overall operations and resources of the company, the two men together shaped Stark Industries into one of the most extensive technologies and weapons companies in the world as of the start of 1960.

The ever-growing Stark Industries empire was also named one of the top grossing companies in the world. Though the company's expansive success was contributed largely to Howard's creative and inventive mind, Steve's management and leadership skills played a significant role in the company's recent successes. Steve largely enjoyed working behind the scenes and left Howard in the spotlight and the most of the credit. He never enjoyed the limelight, and Howard was always better with the masses. But in all with the success rate the company is going, Stark Industries looked like they will have nothing but success for years to come.

For the Rogers kids, Sarah and Michael are a shocking fourteen years old and finishing their last year in junior high school. The twins have been doing great in school and have been getting excellent grades in their classes. Sarah Amanda took up the piano at the end of elementary school, and now plays in the Jazz and Concert Bands and is very good for her age. When Sarah started learning the instrument, her father bought an upright piano for the house and for her to practice on as well as paid for private lessons for her. To keep her motivated, Steve also learned the instrument in his free time so he could play with her, but Sarah was always better than he was. She also used her musical talents in church and was part of the church band on Sundays. On top of participating in the band, Sarah also excelled in drawing and art and was part of an art club in school.

Throughout all of the fifth grade and junior high school, she remained close to her three best friends Amy, Hannah, and David. She especially has been getting closer to David over the years, but the two only saw each other as best friends. Since the two first met each other in fourth grade, Sarah continued to grow up as a beautiful teenage girl and became increasingly popular in school while David largely remained invisible to most kids other than his three friends. But true to Sarah's humble nature, like her parents, she never let her popularity get to her head and always remained kind to everyone. She still hated bullies like her father and made that clear to anyone who met her.

Michael, however, didn't participate much in extracurricular activities for his school other than participating in his school's leadership program which often had him participate in community events in town. As a young fourteen-year-old boy, Michael was an exceptional leader for his age and carried himself confidently. His style of leadership was much like his mothers, kind but strict when
he needed to be. He was a servant leader where he puts the needs of his peers first and helps the other kids develop and perform as highly as possible, just like his mother. But other than leadership class, Michael didn't have many other extracurricular activities. His mother forbids him and his siblings in partaking in any organized sports out of fear that they would lose control of their enhanced strength and hurt someone or raise questions about their health.

Like his twin sister, Michael James remained tight with his usual band of friends who were with him all through elementary school. He also stayed extremely close to Irena Kawashima and still walks her home every day after school. Though Irena still remained closed off and private to the majority of other kids and people, she opened up considerably to Michael over the years and his group of friends. Unlike Sarah, Michael wasn't as popular in school as her, but he did know everyone in his class in some capacity. He didn't change much since fourth grade and continued to be highly selective of who he hung around with, taking to heart a saying his mother always told him. "You are the sum of the five people you hang around with," she would say to him every so often. Michael also maintained his protective nature over his siblings and is still overprotective of his youngest sister.

Angela Elizabeth now eleven years old is finishing her first year in middle school as a seventh grader. After her stellar performance in fifth grade, Angela was allowed to skip sixth and move directly into seventh grade. Angela's love for reading, learning new subjects, and bright mind earned her recommendation to skip the sixth grade which brought great pride and joy to her parents and siblings. She was always a gifted child, but the first clues of her intellectual gifts were made clear by her extraordinary reading level, her outstanding test scores, and the fact she found many usually challenging problems for kids her age impressively easy. Other than skipping a grade level, the young blonde didn't change much and remained the same shy and quiet little girl who loved to read. Though she was in a higher grade, she maintained her close friendship with her old friends a grade below her and developed a few close friends in her current class.

Over the years, Angela became closer and closer to her Uncle Howard Stark which didn't bother her parents what so ever as long as her Uncle set a good example. But even then, the first few times she and her uncle spent time together, her mother was there supervising, not over her but her Uncle. Eventually, Angela and her Uncle were allowed to spend time together as Uncle and niece without supervision. Though Angela never understood why, she was sure her mother had her reasons to supervise her Uncle. The young girl always knew her Uncle was afraid of her mother more than her father since her father was too close of a friend to him to be intimidating. To the eleven-year-old, it was a funny thing to see her successful uncle so afraid of her mother. But in all, this tight bond between Angela and her Uncle Howard impacted her inspirations. She recently decided she wanted to be an engineer and make things like her Uncle. A goal both of her parents adore in their youngest daughter.

John Steven, the youngest of the Rogers kids, just turned a shocking seven-years-old and is finishing his first year of elementary school. The young boy grew up so fast that his parents had a hard time keeping up with him. Though his personality is still developing, he's still the same energetic and talkative kid he always was since he was a toddler. Much like his mother when she was his age, John yearned for adventure and exploration which in recent years has gotten him into trouble with his parents. But just like his father, he had an unwavering spirit and determination and demonstrated extraordinary charisma even at his young age.

But like the rest of his siblings, John inherited the serum and is generally taller and bigger than most kids his age. Still, even with the serum, he is the youngest of all his siblings which prompts his older sisters and brother to always watch over him. They are generally overprotective of him, particularly his older sister, Sarah. When their mother isn't around, it's Sarah who usually catches him doing something he shouldn't be doing, and is the one who scolds him but won't tell their parents after.
Without a doubt, the kids remained close and always will.

June 1, 1961

John Steven Rogers, the young blonde seven-year-old boy, walked down the sidewalk in the middle of the day with his two best friends Charles and Ben on their way to the woods. The boys are all dressed for a standard school day with collared short-sleeve shirts tucked into a pair of long pants. It's another hot sunny weekday in New York, and the three kids decided to leave their school during lunchtime and go on a little adventure for the remainder of the day, choosing to skip the rest of the school day.

Ben, a short and overly cautious kid with red hair, looked at his John and Charles, "Are you sure this is a good idea?"

John chuckled, "Not sure yet, that's why this is fun." He grinned, "Where's your sense of adventure."

"Scared at what my mom might say if she finds out about this," Ben replied with a frown.

John looked at his shorter friend, "No one said you had to come with us, Ben. We won't make fun of you for it or call you a loser if you want to go back to school." He shrugged, "I honestly thought I'd be going on my little adventure to the woods by myself, really." Ben was the tallest of his friends and one of the tallest kids in his grade, a side effect of inheriting the serum from his parents, no doubt.

Charles, the other friend, a little shorter than John with jet black hair and a skinnier face, laughed, "I'm only here to make sure John doesn't get lost." John rolled his eyes in response. "Someone needs to watch his back too, you know? But you don't have to follow us."

Ben shook his head, "I want to come. It does sound like fun."

John smiled, "Great! The more the merrier."

Ben then looked at John with a confused look, "But what did you do about us skipping the rest of school? Mrs. Brooks will know we left."

"Don't worry, that problem should take care of itself," John said with a confident grin.

Charles grinned, "I wrote all of us a sick note, filled it out completely with our parent's signatures, and turned it into the nurses office. We'll be good, it looks believable."

John smiled, "Great!" He looked back over at Ben, "See? No sweat."

Ben nodded but didn't feel as secure as his two friends.

"What is it, Ben?"

Ben shook his head, "Nothing."

John smirked, "We're doing science after lunch, right?" Ben nodded in response. "Exactly, it's what we're doing too."

Charles chuckled, "This is way more fun than learning in the classroom, Ben. We get to actually see and touch things, not to mention we get to run around."

"Exactly! Mrs. Brooks always says we need to find our own answers to questions about the natural world when she talks about science. What better way to learn about the natural world than to go see
it for ourselves in the woods!" John said enthusiastically. John is a highly energetic kid, always seeking to run around, go on "adventures," and enjoying talking with his friends. Of all his siblings, he was the most social and talkative of the four kids even more than his oldest sister, Sarah who is also a social butterfly.

Charles chuckled, "Exactly! But I'm not into the science stuff, but I do like the outdoors. Won't pass up a good walk through the woods."

John nodded, "Exactly. As long as our permission slips are good, we'll be fine."

"I just don't want to be in trouble for skipping school. My mom would be super mad," Ben replied cautiously.

"Mine would too, but I'm sure we'll be fine."

Once the three boys got to the Saxon Woods in the outskirts of town, the trio was quick to run through the various rivers and streams, climb huge rocks and ledges, and, of course, climb the acres of tall and spiraling trees. John was in his element in the woods, his adventurous character and active demeanor was at its peak in the woods. He loved running around, exploring, and climbing on things, and the forest was just the place for him to do just that. The classroom setting wasn't for him, and John would always prefer physical activities and the outdoors over anything else.

It was late afternoon by the time the trio stopped running through the trails to catch their breath, the three kids dropping their school bags on the rocks to take the load off for a moment. Charles and Ben hunched forward and gasped for air while John stood calm and a look of vigor as he looked up a nearby tall tree. Charles stood back up and grinned, "John!"

"Hm?" John looked back at his gasping friend.

"how are you never tired?" Charles laughed, "I don't know why I keep asking you." He waved his hand, "Never mind." Ben couldn't say anything because he was so tired that all he could do was focus on catching his breath.

John shrugged, "I don't know. I just like running a lot and I do it all the time. Guess I'm just used to it." He knew the truth, but he lied to his friends as instructed by his parents to keep his enhanced strength and endurance a secret.

Charles shook his head and put his hands on his hips, "I got to catch up to you. I'll beat you in a race someday." John chuckled in response. Charles noticed that John was eyeing a tall tree and figuring that he wanted to climb it. He caught his breath and walked over to John and placed a hand on his shoulder, "I tell you what..."

"What?" John replied calmly.

Charles pushed John back and rushed to the tree, "Whoever climbs the highest the fastest is the strongest!" he yelled while laughing.

"Hey! Cheater!" John yelled as he chased after his friend.

Ben shook his head and found a rock by his side and sat down, too tired to keep up and climb up another tree.

John and Charles continued to race up the tree with John easily surpassing his friend in the first few seconds and continued to outpace him. After a moment, John stopped at the highest and thickest
branch he could stand on, nearly engulfed in leaves and twigs at that height. A few seconds later, Charles caught up but stopped just short of John and on an opposite branch. The two boys were nearly thirty feet off the ground, but both of them were unphased at the height.

"Okay you win," Charles gasped as he sat down on the branch and grinned. "I don't know how you do it."

John shrugged, "Practice I suppose." Charles just laughed in response. "WOOHOO!" John hollered at the top of his lungs while standing on his branch.

"Yeah! WOO!" Charles echoed as he swung his legs on his branch.

"WOOHOO" John continued to holler.

"Hey!" called a man's voice causing the two kids to stop their hollering. The two boys looked down and spotted the man and his wife on the trail below staring up at them.

The woman looked at her husband, "For Pete's sake. Look at them up there," she said adjusting the straps to her leather backpack.

"Get off of that tree you damn fool kids! You'll break your necks!" The man called. Ben who sat by a nearby rock just watched innocently at the exchange between his two friends and the adults.

Charles laughed, "I think that might be Mr. Doster."

John giggled and started to jump on his branch, "WOAH! AHH!" He yelled, playfully pretending to be in trouble.

Charles laughed and did the same, "AHHH, WOAH!"

Mr. Doster sighed, "Oh... One of them up there is John Rogers. Steve and Margaret's youngest."

His wife shook her head, "To think with such a good family, John would be a little more proper like his older brother and sisters."

"Yeah. Damn fool kids," Mr. Doster said with a sigh. He looked at Ben sitting on a rock, "You tell your friends to get off that tree, you hear?"

Ben nodded and stood up, "Yes, sir." The couple then began to walk away, now ignoring the hollering kids on the tree.

On the tree, John smirked as he and Charles watched the adults disappear down the trail and into the thick brush of the forest. Once the adults were long gone, the two boys cracked up into fits of laughter at their jokes. They sure enjoyed making the adults worry, and it was all in good fun.

"That was funny," Charles said between fits of laughter.

"Right?" John replied with a wide grin.

They were suddenly interrupted by Ben calling up to them from the base of the tree, "John, Charles! Come down! Mr. Doster said so!"

Charles smiled, "It's okay, Ben! They're gone now!" he called to his friend.

John looked at Charles, "Hey, want to scare Ben too?"
"Yeah!" he agreed over excitedly.

John began to bounce happily on the branch again, and looked down at Ben at the base of the tree. "Hey, Ben, watch this—" Suddenly the branch John was on snapped from underneath him, sending the seven year old kid tumbling thirty vertical feet straight down. "AH!" he screamed as he plummeted to the Earth.

"Woah!" the Charles called out, seeing John's falling in the corner of his eye.

By the time Ben, standing by the tree, realized what had happened, it was already too late. John landed on a thick tree root at the bottom face first with a tremendous thud.

John lay motionless at the base of the tree as Ben froze in place, overcome by shock and fear for his dear friend's life. Charles quickly but carefully made his way down the tree to get to his friend, also fearful for his friend's condition. The two kids feared the worst and instantly thought John was dead after falling from such height and then landing head first onto a tree root.

Charles hopped off the tree and joined Ben staring at their still friend. Both of them wore a look of worry and fear as they stared at John's quiet form sprawled on the ground. Ben especially was feeling overly worried about their friend's condition, still in shock of what just happened. The idea of death was something neither boys could grasp in this current situation, but both of them inherently feared it.

Charles slowly walked over to John and squatted down next to his form and quietly said his name, "John?" When his friend didn't respond, he started to shake his friend gently, "John?" Again, John didn't respond. Fearing the worst, Charles started to shake him more violently, "John!" he called out again, but again there was nothing. "John!" cried the boy as confusion and terror began to sink in. "Wake up! You have to wake up!"

Ben began to cry, "W-What are we going to do?" he asked as tears rolled down his cheeks.

"I-I don't know," Charles replied as he turned pale with guilt and panic.

"S-Should we-we tell someone?" Ben stuttered as he cried.

Charles shrugged, "I don't know. John would probably…he always has an answer," he replied in an indecisive tone.

Suddenly, the kids got a sudden jolt when they saw John move slightly and make a slight grunting noise. In shock, Charles shot to his feet and watched John slowly roll to his side, exposing a dark blue bruise on the left side of his forehead. John let out a painful groan of discomfort as he rotated onto his back, "Ow," he managed to say, wincing in pain.

Charles and Ben looked at him with complete and utter shock, surprised to see him conscious and even alive after landing head first onto a hard tree root from a fall from over thirty feet. Ben wiped his tears away and calmed down, "J-John… Are you okay?" he asked cautiously.

John nodded as he remained lying on the forest floor, "Yeah… that really hurt."

Charles let out a sigh of relief and squatted down by John, "How did you… we thought you were," he said grinning but unable to finish his sentence, happy that his friend is okay, for the most part.

John sat up, "Lucky I guess…"

Charles nodded, "Yeah, no kidding." He chuckled, "We didn't know what to do…"
John grinned, "Luckily, we don't have to do anything…"

"Can we go home?" Ben interrupted with a big frown. John and Charles turning and looking at their shaken friend then back at each other.

"Yeah, let's go home," John replied.

As he was about to get up, Charles offered him a hand which he graciously accepted. After Charles hoisted him back onto his feet, John suddenly felt a throbbing pain in his forehead causing him to wince. He carefully brought his hand to his forehead to touch the source of the pain and felt a rather large bump on his head. John groaned and shook his head.

"Yeah…It looks pretty bad, John. I think it'll be there for a while," Ben said in concern.

"My mother is going to kill me," John said as he started to walk away from the tree while he kept his hand to his forehead to feel the bump, Ben and Charles turning to follow close behind.

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**Steve & Margaret Rogers Residence, Scarsdale, NY**

By the time John got home, it was about five in the evening, the sun was setting, and it was nearing dinner time. Luckily, he wasn't late for supper because if he were, his mother wouldn't let him hear the end of it. She was very strict when it concerned meals with the family since she wants the family always to eat together. Of course, with some exception. But since John isn't late for dinnertime, there was only the need to worry about explaining to his mother why he got hurt again after school. John figured his mother wouldn't be as upset at him over getting himself injured as compared to if he also missed dinner. He just thought being in trouble with one thing was way better than being in trouble with two things.

Though John knew his mother would be upset over his injury, he knew that his mother was only like that because she was concerned for his well-being. It didn't help that he has a history of injuring himself because of his reckless and wild behavior from going on his "adventures." The repeated bruises, cuts, and gashes tended to make his mother upset every time he came home with them and always demanded an explanation. But even though she was agitated, she would always soften and take care of his injuries no matter how many or how frequent he came home with them.

John cautiously walked up the front porch and pushed open the front door, and was immediately greeted by an intimidating sight. Standing before him in the foyer is his mother with her arms crossed over her chest and glaring fiercely at him. It didn't take long for John to realize that he's in big trouble. Even when dressed in a colorful swing dress, his mother still looked fearsome when she made that ice-cold look. Truthfully, his mother could look frightening no matter what she wore. Her eyes always made the kids feel frightened when they got in trouble, never failing to be intimidating.

John gulped and looked up at his mother as he closed the door behind him. "Hi… Mama," he greeted innocently and cautiously.

"John Steven Rogers, why did I get a call from the school that you skipped class? That the note you left said, you went home sick?" His mother said in a cold tone. John gulped nervously, unable to respond. Peggy sighed and spoke sternly, "I don't even want to know how you got that bruise on your forehead right now. All I want to know is why I got a call from the school that you didn't return to class after lunch, and why I had to leave work early to talk to the school."

John gulped again. He was terrified of being in trouble with his mother, and he knew she was very agitated. "Um," was the only thing he managed to squeak out.
"Don't you dare lie to me, John," Peggy said in a severe tone that sent shivers down John's spine. Though she rarely yells, her stern voice was more than enough to elicit fear and convey her message in him and his siblings.

John was so nervous in front of his mother that he couldn't speak.

"What were you doing instead of being in school like you're supposed to. Answer me," Peggy demanded. John didn't reply again as he stood in guilt.

In the kitchen, Michael and Sarah were curiously peeking around the corner, watching the exchange between their mother and their youngest brother. The twins could see John's fearful facial expressions as their mother lectured him. Both siblings didn't like seeing their little brother getting in trouble with their mother and always felt terrible when he did. Sarah, in particular, felt like she needed to protect John, but knew she shouldn't because he rightfully deserved being scolded for skipping school and lying about being sick. Nonetheless, she felt terrible for John; he's been getting in trouble a lot lately in school for being a disruption in class, mainly talking when he wasn't supposed to when the teacher was lecturing, which often lead to the situation John is in right now — being reprimanded by their mother.

Sarah frowned as she watched their mother discipline her little brother. Even though John deserved getting into trouble with their mother, Sarah still felt sorry for him. It was always difficult for her to watch John get into trouble with their parents as opposed to Michael or Angela because of how close she is to John despite their age difference. Sarah only sighed as she and Angela looked at her little brother's look of shame in the foyer.

Michael looked over at his twin sister with a baffled look, "Why on Earth did John skip school?"

Sarah sighed, "I don't know." She frowned, "I bet because he didn't want to go back to class after lunch and wanted to continue to play outside."

"Oh, okay, yeah, that makes sense." Michael frowned, "Man, mom looks really upset."

Sarah nodded, "Yup. Skipping school is super bad. Of all the things John gets in trouble for usually, this is by far the worst thing he did."

"Yeah," Michael replied quietly. "Never thought he would do something so stupid."

"Right? Super surprised by his—"

The twins got a shock when they heard their father from behind them. "Kids, let your mother and brother have some privacy, okay? Go back to your school work."

Sarah nodded, "Right, sorry, Dad"

"Sorry, dad," Michael repeated.

Steve smirked, "It's okay. Just let them be alone for a bit. Now, back to work and I'll call you when dinner is ready."

Sarah nodded, "Okay," she quietly said as she left the entrance way of the foyer and headed back to the family room to finish her homework.

As Sarah left, Michael stayed by his father with an unsure look across his face which his father noticed.
"What's on your mind, buddy?" Steve asked in a friendly tone. "It looks like you want to ask me something."

Michael nodded, "Yeah, can I talk to you about something?"

Steve nodded, "Anything." He turned around and began to walk back to the kitchen, "Come on, let's talk over here, so we don't interrupt your mother in the foyer."

"Okay," Michael said following his father.

John looked down at his feet as his mother stared down at him. Peggy sighed and spoke softly, "You and your siblings can't get sick, John. You realize that I know that too, right?" She frowned, "I had to leave work early to talk to your principal to find out that you and two of your friends left a forged sick note and gave it to the nurse." She shook her head in disappointment, "You lied to skip out of class. So now, please, Darling. Please tell me the truth. What were you doing instead of school?"

John let out a peep, "I—" He suddenly stopped, trying to find the right words to say.

"Well?" his mother replied.

"I—" John peeped again.

"Spit it out, John," Peggy demanded.

"I-I left school so I could play in the woods," John finally said.

Peggy sighed, "John… why couldn't you wait until after school to go in the woods." John frowned and didn't say anything, only shrugging in response. "Don't shrug, you obviously thought this was a good idea. Why did you think you didn't have to go back to school after lunch, huh?"

John looked up at his mother and quickly spoke, his voice shaking with nervousness, "Because Mrs. Brooks keeps saying we need to find our own answers to questions about the world when she talks about science stuff. I thought I could do more outside than in the classroom…"

Peggy sighed again, "You just wanted to continue to play outside didn't you?" she asked in a cold tone. John didn't answer but frowned and looked away from his mother. "Am I close?" she quickly asked. John nodded sheepishly in response.

John looked up at his mother, "I don't like being in a classroom, mama."

Peggy frowned, "That doesn't mean you can skip school, darling." Her voice was cold and cut into John like a knife, "School is critical because it teaches you the basics of problem-solving, communication, learning about your surroundings, and working with others." John frowned and looked down at his feet in shame. She shook her head, "Skipping school is very, very bad, darling. You can get suspended and possibly even held back a grade if you miss too much school. Do you want that to happen, sweetheart?" John shook his head. "You're in big trouble because of this," she said fiercely.

John started to cry and close his eyes, refusing to look at his mother in shame.

"You can't do this, John? Do you understand me?"

John only nodded in response as she cried.

Peggy squatted down to his level and gently tapped his chin with her thumb, "Look at me, John."
John started to pant and cried harder, keeping his eyes closed. "Will you please look at me, sweetheart," his mother said in a softer and gentler voice than before. John wiped his tears and finally opened his eyes to look at his mother's gentle face. "John, I understand you learn differently from the other kids. Everyone learns things differently, which isn't bad. I also know you don't like school, which also isn't bad. But skipping school is unacceptable." Peggy sighed again, "Truthfully, I didn't like going to school either, but I still went because it was the right thing to do and what I was supposed to do as a child."

John wiped more tears off his cheeks.

"When your teacher encourages you to find your own answers, that doesn't mean skip school. She wants you to learn in class and discover new things outside of what you learned in school. That's what she means," she said in a much gentler tone. Peggy frowned, "Again…skipping school is completely unacceptable. You can't do that." She sighed, "Secondly, you forged a sick note which is also very, very bad. Do you know what forgery is?"

John shook his head and cried.

"Forgery is making a letter, signature, or document look like someone else wrote it when they did not. In this case, you made a sick note and signed my name on it when I didn't," she said coldly. "This behavior is absolutely unacceptable, John. You not only intentionally skipped school but you lied. And we don't like liars in this family, do we, John?"

John shook his head as tears streamed down his face. "B-But I didn't lie, I just made the note—"

Peggy frowned and interrupted him, "When you forged that note, you automatically lied because I didn't write that note. You did." She sighed, "I know you understand that lying is bad and that lying breaks down trust." John nodded quietly. "But do you understand now, how forgery and lying are linked?" John nodded again. "Don't ever do this again. Forgery and lying break down trust." She frowned, "Always remember, the truth will set you free."

John looked away from his mother and continued to cry.

"What do we always tell you, John?" John didn't answer as he wept in front of his mother. "John, answer me," his mother softly said.

"Do what's right…" the boy quietly replied.

"And what else?"

"Always tell the truth," John quietly replied.

"And did you do that?"

"No…" John said in shame.

Peggy nodded, "Okay. Which means you've been a bad boy, John." She frowned, "If you ever have any doubt that what you're doing is right or wrong, it's probably wrong. And it's always better to tell the truth than a lie. Punishments are always worse in a lie than the truth, okay?"

John wiped tears off his face, "O-okay."

Peggy nodded, "John, do you want to be a bad boy? Because there's a jail nearby with all sort of boys and men who didn't do what's right and thought being bad was cool, and a good idea. Now, look at them. Spending the rest of their lives in prison."
John shook his head frantically, "No! I want to be good! I want to do the right thing! I wasn't trying to be cool. I just wanted to play in the woods." He cried harder, "I-I'm sorry, Mama!"

His mother sighed, "I forgive you, darling." She touched his cheek gently, "You understand we'll have to punish you for this, right?"

John wiped more tears off his cheeks, "Yes, Mama."

"It's okay, sweetie. You made a mistake. It happens. Learn from this and don't ever do it again, okay?" His mother said in a gentler tone. John nodded in response. She made a small smile and wiped a tear off his cheek, "Don't cry. It's okay. I'm done reprimanding you."

John sniffled and wiped his cheeks. He was always afraid of getting scolded by his mother. She was invariably tough and scary when she was upset, way scarier than his father, and reprimanded in a way that it would make him feel incredibly guilty and sorry for ever getting into trouble. Unlike most kids he knew, in this family, his mother was the disciplinary parent rather than his father.

Peggy cocked her head to the side and eyed John's bruise on his forehead, "Goodness, darling, how did you get this?" She gently brought her hand up to his forehead and carefully ran her thumb over the bump, making John wince in pain.

John stopped crying and wiped his cheeks from any lingering tears, "I fell out of a tree."

Peggy sighed, "You're going to be the death of me John Steven Rogers." She then stood up and smirked, "But I still love you, okay? Mama will always love you, even when you get in trouble and make me upset." John nodded sheepishly. His mother nodded, "Right, go to your room and begin your homework. I'm going to get you an ice pack and discuss your punishment with your father, okay?"

John nodded, "Okay, Mama."

She gently kissed the top of his head before letting her son go upstairs, "You can tell me the story of what happened when I come up."

"Okay," John said as he walked off to the stairs. He hung his head low in shame for getting into trouble, making his mother upset, and making a big mistake. To him, making his mother mad was by far the worst feeling.

Peggy watched her youngest son walked up the stairs with a sad and ashamed look on his face. She hated seeing her kids look like that, but it was necessary for her to scold John for what he did today. No matter the offense, Peggy detested getting mad at any of her children, but sometimes it was required. Disciplining the children was just part of being a parent.

Peggy sighed and walked back to the kitchen to get ice and discuss John's punishment with her husband.

Steve looked at his oldest son, "What's on your mind, bud?"

Michael sighed, "I want to join the football team in high school," he said directly.

Steve raised his brows in surprise, "You know how your mother feels about that, right?"

"I know, but… I want to be part of a team. I want to do sports. Do more than just doing leadership class and helping around in church and stuff." He raised his hands, "Not that doing church stuff is
bad, but…” Michael sighed, "I just want to be part of something more. It's not enough just playing pick up games after school. I actually want the drive to win against another team." He shrugged, "Does that make sense?"

"It does," Steve replied softly. "What suddenly brought this on?"

Michael shrugged, "I always wanted to do sports, but I'd never argue with mom, so I never brought it up." He looked down at his feet, "And the football coach from the high school came by to talk about the program and wanted to know who wanted to play. Try outs are later this month."

Steve nodded, "I see."

"I really want to play football, Dad. Be part of a team," Michael pleaded. "I know I'm ten times stronger and faster than the average person, but I promise I'll keep it in check. I'll only be the best by a tiny bit and not make it look like I'm superhuman or anything."

"Hm. Are you concerned that this might not pose a challenge for you?"

"It'll still pose a challenge because it's not a one man sport. It requires a team, and I can't play the whole game by myself," Michael responded quickly.

Steve chuckled, "Good answer."

Michael spoke up again, "Even basketball would still be a challenge cause it still requires skill to shoot the ball."

Steve smiled, "I got it, buddy." He shrugged, "Honestly, I never had any problem of you trying to do sports. I honestly think it would be a great opportunity for you. I trust you and your sister to keep your abilities in check, so you won't attract too much attention."

"Really?" Michael responded in surprise, thinking he needed to sell his case more to his father.

Steve nodded, "Yeah, of course. As long as you control your strength, I see no problem with you going into sports in school. Besides, I always supported you guys in doing sports. But, it's not me you need to convince."

"It's mom," Michael replied deadpanned.

"Yup." Steve sighed and paused for a moment, crossing his arms over his chest and letting silence come between them. After a brief minute, he spoke up, "I tell you what; I'll talk to your mother about it. I have a higher chance of winning the argument than you."

Michael nodded, "That's true. Thanks, Dad!"

"No problem," Steve replied as his son high fived him. "But no promises on success though."

Michael chuckled, "I know, but I have a higher chance of getting into sports than a few seconds ago." He shrugged, "Good idea for you to talk to her first though."

Steve sighed, "Don't get too excited. I haven't talked to her yet."

"I know—" Michael replied but was cut off when he heard his mother's voice from behind him.

Peggy walked into the kitchen and saw her husband and oldest son talking, "Hey," she calmly greeted them.
Steve smiled at his wife, "Hey, honey. How was the talk between you and John?"

"It was…difficult," Peggy said stopping by her oldest son.

She kissed the top of Michael's head and rested her hands on his shoulders. For now, he's is still shorter than her, but in a few very short years, he'll grow to be bigger and taller than her. Soon she'll be looking up at him, and he'll be resting his hands on her shoulders. It shouldn't be long until he surpasses her since he's already pretty big.

Steve nodded, "Hm."

Peggy looked at her oldest son, "Darling, can you give your dad and I a minute?"

Michael nodded, "Yup," he said as he turned around and left the kitchen and into the foyer.

Peggy smiled, "Thank you, Darling."

Steve leaned to his side and called out to his daughter in the family room, "Hey, Sarah and Michael, can you two actually do your homework upstairs? At least for a little bit. Your mom and I need to talk."

"Okay, no worries!" Sarah called out to her parents as she stood up from the family room floor and grabbed her books and paper by her feet and left the family room.

Satisfied that they were alone, Peggy looked at her husband and frowned, "Goodness, it's been a hard day. The last thing I wanted to hear after traveling to and from DC for another meeting was our son skipping school. All this has me in a really bad mood." She sighed in frustration, "Sorry if I seem more agitated than usual."

Steve nodded, "yeah, I hear you, hon. It's okay."

"Right when I got back to the office, I had to leave again and meet the principal of the school and John's teacher about what happened." Peggy sighed, "Couldn't focus after that meeting with his principal… AND it was too late in the day for me to go back to work…" She rubbed her temple with one hand, "Goodness, it's not like traveling to DC for meetings wasn't stressful enough, I had to do that and deal with John skipping school and forging sick notes. It's giving me a headache, I swear."

"Yeah. I'm sorry that you had to do all that today. I know it's been hectic and difficult recently at work too," Steve said with an understanding smile.

"It's okay, darling," Peggy replied with a wave. "I appreciate you showing up to the meeting with this principal too. It always makes me feel better that I don't have to do all this school stuff for the kids by myself."

Steve chuckled, "Raising a family is a team effort, honey. I'm not going to let my wife do all this stuff by herself. You already got a lot on your plate as it is."

Peggy smiled lovingly, "And that's another reason why I love you." After a slight pause, she waved her hand, "Anyways, back to the pressing issue."

Steve nodded, "Right. What do you think? Obviously, we have to punish John severely for skipping school AND forging a sick note."

"Here I thought you would go easy on him. You're generally easier on the kids than I am," Peggy responded in surprise.
Steve shrugged, "He's been getting in trouble a lot since he started first grade. Mainly for disrupting class with his constant talking which interrupts his teacher. Not to mention the countless amount of times he got in trouble for climbing on things he shouldn't have. He's not a bad kid, he's just—"

"Social and energetic," Peggy said, finishing his thought.

"Yeah, exactly." Steve smiled, "Also adventurous. Just like you."

Peggy sighed, "Yeah…" She chuckled, "John sure reminds me a lot of myself as a child."

"I can see that," Steve responded with a smile. "So? What do you want to do?"

Peggy sighed and ran a hand through her hair, "I suggest we ground him for a week and take away a lot of his privileges. Can't play outside, can't draw, and no games. He will, however, help more around the house, completing a list of chores each day." She shrugged, "We can even make his grounding period negotiable. More chores he completes, the sooner he can stop being grounded."

Steve nodded, "Sounds good."

"Glad we agree," Peggy responded in surprise. "I honestly thought you would want a lighter punishment than this."

Steve chuckled, "Yeah, I'm definitely easier on the kids than you." He waved his hand, "But skipping school is a big deal and is really, really bad. So John has to learn from this mistake and do what's right next time." He smiled, "I remember when Buck and I skipped school once…"

"You?" Peggy shot back in surprise. Steve laughed and nodded in response. "You, Mr. Do-the-right-thing, and Captain America, skipped school?"

Steve laughed, "Yes, we did. We were just kids. Probably in the second grade." He shook his head, "Boy, when my mom found out that we skipped school, she spanked us silly. Bucky wasn't even her kid and she spanked him."

Peggy laughed, "That's hysterical, darling. It truly is." She sighed with a smile, "I wish I got to meet your mother."

"Me too. She would've loved you and our kids," he replied with a warm smile. Steve then furrowed his brows and looked out into space, "Hm… come to think of it, I did a lot of stupid stuff when I was a kid which got me into trouble with my mom. She sure shaped me up though."

Peggy grinned, "who knew my husband had a nefarious streak when he was younger."

"Don't go spreading it around, hon. I'm a perfect gentleman now," Steve responded proudly.

"That you are," Peggy said as she stepped forward and kissed his cheek. She then patted Steve's chest, "Well, I'm going to get some ice to John and talk to him. He should be calmed down now."

"Wait, ice? What happened?" Steve asked in surprise.

"He fell out of a tree and bumped his head. It's a big bruise, but it should heal quickly and disappear in a day or so. It's going to hurt for now though," Peggy said as she walked over to one of the cabinets by the refrigerator to grab an ice bag.

Steve nodded, "Does he need to see a doctor? Since it's a head injury?"

"Right now, I think he's okay. He's very alert and didn't seem dizzy. But if anything changes the next
"few days, we'll take him to a doctor." She sighed, "I don't like using the fact our children inherited
the serum as a crutch or a false sense of security, but our kids' bodies can withstand a lot more
punishment than the average person." Peggy shrugged, "I don't know how high he fell, but I think
he's fine. In any case, I'll keep an eye on him if he shows any symptoms of head trauma."

"Alright, sounds good," Steve replied.

As Peggy grabbed an ice bag from the cabinet and moved over to the fridge, Steve decided now
would be a good time to talk about letting the kids, particularly Michael and Sarah, to try out for
sports. "Hey, Peggy?" he called out to her.

"Hm?" Peggy hummed in response as she opened the freezer to grab ice for the bag.

"We need to talk about letting our kids play sports in school," Steve said plainly.

Peggy stopped what she was doing and closed the freezer. She turned around and looked at her
husband with a troubled look, "Darling, we already talked about this. A few times actually."

Steve nodded, "I know, but I feel like we should talk about it again since Sarah and Michael are
about to start high school."

Peggy sighed and ran a hand through her hair, "Steve, you know why we can't do that."

"Look, it'll be a great opportunity for them to participate in organized team sports. Especially in high
school, the kids will not only have fun but know the value of teamwork for a common goal," Steve
quickly replied.

"Darling, our kids are special. They have enhanced strength, superior healing, and other abilities that
no one else possesses. If they go into sports there won't be a competition; our kids will dominate the
field. It won't be fair." Peggy sighed, "Not only that, but they run the risk of revealing their enhanced
abilities and raising a lot of questions."

Steve sighed, "Still, why not let them use their gifts for something constructive?"

"You already know why, I just said it, Steve," Peggy shot back, their conversation now escalating
into an argument.

"But they'll be great at it!" Steve expressed loudly. He sighed and calmed down, "Peggy, I know
what you're afraid of, but they're about to go into high school. Sarah and Michael have shown great
restraint on their abilities over the years. They even play sports with their friends all the time, and
they've shown control and kept the game fun. I'm sure they can take it easy during organized sports
and still get good experience." He crossed his arms and leaned back, "Besides, it's a team sport that
they'll likely want to join. I guarantee that they can't win the game by themselves no matter how
strong they are."

Peggy sighed in frustration, "Steve…"

"Look, Peggy, I understand you're trying to play it safe for them, I get that. But we can't keep
restricting them from school sports because of their enhanced abilities! It's not enough just playing
games in the street; they need to experience an actual team sport." Steve sighed, "We already taught
them control and how to apply their strengths in varying degrees, but now I think it's time for Sarah
and Michael to actually experience organized sports."

Steve leaned forward and spoke in a calm tone, "Peggy, I know they aren't normal kids. But let them
be extraordinary and trust them to do the right thing. Trust them."
"You think I don't, Steve?" Peggy shot back coldly, now becoming upset at her husband.

"Why else wouldn't you let them do sports?" Steve replied.

"Why would you say that? Of course, I trust my own children!" Peggy said angrily. "I'm trying to look out for their best interest, and protect them from people who might want to exploit their gifts."

Steve frowned, "Look out for their best interest? Then let them go out for sports!" He shook his head, "Your worry is grounded in the past when Sarah got into fights, lost control, and seriously injured other kids back in elementary school. Both Sarah and Michael haven't had any instances since then. They've grown up and are responsible. They have continuously exhibited control of their strength."

Peggy frowned, "It's not that simple, Steve!"

"It is that simple, Peggy," Steve shot back. He paused for a moment and calmed down and spoke in a softened tone. "We'll always have to look out for bad people who want to use our kids. Every parent worries about that. But we just have to be a little more protective because our kids are enhanced. There will always be the danger of someone discovering that they do have extreme strength, but we, as in you and me, will always be there to protect them from the real bad people. Particularly, people who want to use our kids as weapons or lab rats." He frowned, "I say that as the worst case scenario. But that doesn't mean we can't let them play sports."

Peggy frowned and ran a hand through her hair, "I don't want to argue about this anymore, Steve," she said ending the conversation, so it doesn't escalate further into a fight. She shook her head, "Look, let me think about it. Can we talk about this later?"

"Okay—" Steve began but was interrupted when he heard Angela from behind him.

"Dad?" Angela called out to him from the entrance to the kitchen.

Steve turned around and quickly changed his mood to cheerful for his youngest daughter. "Hey there, Angela, what can I do for you?" Peggy stood behind him running a hand through her hair as she composed herself.

"I got a question on my homework; can you help me?" the blonde eleven-year-old asked.

Steve smiled, "Okay, let's take a look," he said as he walked over to his daughter. As he wrapped his arm around Angela, he briefly glanced back at his wife, "Talk later?"

Peggy only nodded in response.

As Angela walked out of the kitchen with her father, she looked up at him and quietly asked, "Are you and Mom fighting?"

Steve smiled, "No, we just had a disagreement. Nothing to worry about I promise."

"Was it about John?"

Steve chuckled, "No, no, it was something else. I'll tell you about it later."

"Oh, I don't like it when you and mom argue," Angela replied as she turned up the stairs.

"Me neither, but it happens sometimes. Your mother just had a stressful day is all. You have nothing to worry about," Steve reassured cheerfully. "Now, let's hurry up and do your homework, so I can
make dinner."

In the kitchen, Peggy sighed and turned to the refrigerator and opened up the freezer, and started to fill ice into the ice bag for John.

A few minutes later, Peggy opened the door to John's room and saw him at his desk quietly scribbling in his notebook. She could hear the quiet sound of him sniffling, still crying from being scolded earlier in the evening. "Darling," she called out to him in a gentle tone.

John shuttered in surprise and wiped his cheeks from tears before he turned around to face his mother. "Yes, Mama?"

Peggy stepped into his room and quietly closed the door behind her, "let's talk for a minute. Take a break from doing your homework." John eyed her as she walked over to his bed and sat down, placing the ice bag by her side. Peggy then patted the spot on the bed next to her, "Come here, sweetheart."

John stood up from his chair and walked over to his bed and sat down next to his mother.

Peggy sighed, "So, your father and I decided to ground you for a week for not only skipping school but for forging a sick note." John frowned. "No playing outside, no games, and no drawing, okay?"

John nodded sadly, "Yes, Mama…"

"We also decided for you to help more around the house while you're grounded, so you'll have a list of chores to do each day." John didn't respond and only sat quietly, looking down at the floor in shame for skipping school. Peggy expected his reaction and knew he would be upset at his punishment. She sighed, "John, darling, I know you don't want to be grounded, but this is to make sure you learn your lesson and to realize what you did was wrong. Your punishment is a good lesson for you to know that every action has a consequence. Do you understand, honey?"

John nodded without making eye contact with his mother, "Yes, Mama."

Peggy gave a small smile, "John," she said his name softly, her son looking up at her with sad eyes. "If you work really hard on your chores this coming week, the more you complete, the sooner you can stop being grounded. Sound fair?"

John's spirit slightly lifted at the prospect of having a shorter grounding period, "Yeah!"

Peggy gave him a stern look, "But you have to do a good job on the tasks we give you, okay? And again no playing outside, no games, and no drawing."

"Yes, Mama," John replied plainly.

"Good," Peggy said with a smile. She reached to her side and grabbed the ice bag and handed it to John, "Here, this is for your bump." John took the ice bag from his mother and put it to his forehead, wincing in discomfort from the sharp cold feeling hitting his skin.

"Thank you, Mama…” John responded quietly as he held the bag to his head.

Peggy made a grin, "So, want to tell me who's bright idea it was to skip school between you and your friends?" John looked down sheepishly. She chuckled, "You're already being punished, John. It's okay to just tell me."
"It was my idea," John quickly and confidently said. "My friends just wanted to tag along."

"Really?" Peggy asked in slight disbelief.

"Yeah…" John replied quietly. "I'm telling the truth, Mama. It was my idea."

Peggy sighed, "Oh, John. You know you got your friends into trouble, right?" John nodded quietly. "Do the right thing next time, okay? Make smarter and better decisions." John again only nodded in response, still ashamed for being in trouble. Peggy wrapped her arm around her son and gave a gentle smile, "Did you learn your lesson?"

John nodded, "Yes, Mama."

"Good. Don't ever do that again. Promise me."

"I promise," John said looking up at his mother.

"Okay. Anyway, sweetie, I have to drive you to school tomorrow a little earlier than normal. We have a meeting with your principal and your teacher."

John frowned and looked down sheepishly at the floor, afraid of meeting the principal and his teacher tomorrow. Meeting the principal in his office was the scariest prospect for a kid his age, and his mother notifying him of the meeting tomorrow sent chills down his spine. The fact that John is afraid of seeing the principal was a major understatement.

Peggy noticed his hesitation and, "Don't worry about it, they just want to talk to you about what you did is all, okay?" Peggy said with a reassuring smile. John again only quietly nodded in response.

John began to lower the ice bag away from his bruise, but stopped when he felt his mother's hand bring the ice bag back to his forehead.

"Got to keep it on your bruise for at least fifteen minutes every hour, darling," she said with a gentle smile.

John nodded, "Okay." His mother was no longer acting as the disciplinarian, but now as the caring and kind mother he is used too.

"So, sweetheart. How exactly did you fall out of the tree to earn that bruise on your head?" Peggy asked with a knowing grin on her lips.

John looked down at the floor and smiled…

Peggy finally stepped out of John's room after a long talk and was instantly welcomed by the smell of home cooking that made its way into the hallway from the kitchen. Steve must've finished helping their daughter with homework not too long ago and started to prepare dinner. She couldn't help but smile at the delicious smell, finding herself hungrier than she thought as her stomach began to gurgle. Though she's hungry, the pleasant aroma quickly lifted her mood after a long rough day.

Peggy turned down the hallway and headed to the stairs to relax in the family room while her husband cooked, hoping that Steve wouldn't bring up their previous argument again. She didn't want to have another unpleasant conversation and much rather enjoy his company instead.

As she strolled down the hallway, she overheard Michael and Sarah in deep conversation as she neared Michael's room. Peggy stopped in her tracks and silently leaned against the wall and
Sarah lay on Michael's bed with a book in hand as her twin brother sat at his desk working on his homework. "So, what did you talk to Dad about?" Sarah asked lowering her book on her chest.

Michael put his pencil down and turned to his twin, "I asked if I could join the football team next year."

"Sports? In school? What did he say?" Sarah responded in surprise. "Because you know Mom doesn't want us playing sports in school because of our superhuman qualities."

Sarah and Michael out grew the term "superpowers" used in many of their favorite comic books, and instead much preferred to use the word "superhuman" in describing their enhanced abilities. Though the twins knew they genetically inherited their abilities from their parents, specifically their dad, they didn't exactly know the full story of where their father got superhuman abilities. All they heard is that their dad became superhuman during his time in the Army, and that's as much as either their mother, father, or extended family would tell.

Michael shrugged, "Well, Dad didn't seem to mind that we play sports as long as we could control our strength and abilities. But, he said he'll talk to her."

Sarah rolled onto her stomach and faced her brother, "I don't know… Mom is pretty stern on the whole sports thing and making sure we keep our abilities a secret."

"But, we played baseball and basketball with our friends all the time, and we've controlled our strength," Michael retorted. "We've managed our strength for years, so we don't hurt anyone or reveal that we inherited our parents' abilities." He sighed in frustration, "I don't see why we can't do sports, but can play pick-up games with our friends anytime."

Sarah shrugged, "I don't know, brother."

Michael frowned, "It's like mom doesn't trust us. I guess she doesn't believe in our ability to control our own strength even though we've been in control of it for years. Heck, when Dad became Captain America he had only a few minutes to get used to his superhuman abilities before he was forced into action," he expressed in frustration. Michael sighed, "We had all our life to get used to it. I mean sure when we were in elementary school we messed up a few times, but we're not kids anymore! I want to try something new." He shook his head, "I want to be a part of something. Why can't Mom just… let us try…"

Peggy frowned and leaned back against the doorframe as she listened to her kids' conversation. She suddenly saw the point her husband was trying to make earlier in the evening, but at the time she didn't want to hear it. Overhearing Michael's conversation suddenly made her realize that she was overprotective of her kids' abilities. Steve was right. Her decisions to keep them from school sports stemmed from past experiences of Sarah and sometimes Michael getting into big fights with other kids and getting carried away when they were still in elementary school. But her oldest kids were teenagers now and heading to high school. They haven't had any instances in years. There's no reason for her not to trust their abilities. All Peggy wanted was to protect her children's abilities from bad people and the public, and at the same time let them live a normal life. What she didn't realize until now, is that her overprotectiveness made her kids feel like she doesn't trust them.

Sarah spoke up, "I hear what you're saying. And I agree. Mom is just be overprotective which, honestly, doesn't help." She chuckled, "I think going to dad first was a good idea. But you're way closer to Mom than me, so I feel like you could make a good argument."
Michael shrugged, "I don't know. Maybe? Mom can be tough you know."

"I know," Sarah replied with a grin.

"I just want to see what it's like to be part of an actual team. I want to be on the football team!" He expressed enthusiastically. "I think it would be fun." He sighed, "But it's up to Mom."

Sarah chuckled, "Trying to impress the ladies, Michael? You're already popular in school you know."

"No. That-that has nothing to do with it," Michael said raising his hands defensively. "And I'm not that popular."

"Sure..." Sarah replied sarcastically. "You already got the attention of a few girls," she said changing the subject.

"Really? Who? Because I'd like you to point them out for me."

Sarah sighed, "You honestly have no idea? You have two sisters and you never figured out how to read a girl?" She chuckled, "Who do you think?"

"Uh? If I knew I wouldn't have asked..."

"Irena and Eva, to name a few, silly," Sarah responded with a smirk. "They've been crushing on you so hard for years."

Michael raised a brow, "Really?" He shook his head, "Nah! We're just all best friends. Besides they would've said something by now if they really did have a crush on me."

Sarah rolled her eyes, "You have no idea how girls work do you?"

"We're just friends, Sar," Michael replied, using a shortened version of her name that he started to use recently. Sarah actually liked the nickname.

Sarah sighed, "Well... don't say I didn't tell you."

Outside Michael's room, Peggy smirked at the last part of her children's conversation. Michael was a lot like his father in respect of not really understanding girls much like Steve when Peggy first met him.

But her smile faded when she began to dwell on what she overheard earlier about Michael wanting to do sports, and, mainly, him saying that she doesn't trust them. After years of being overprotective of her kids' abilities, she finally understood why Steve was arguing the topic the way that he did. Peggy was undoubtedly worried about so many things concerning the kids playing sports and ran through a series of negative "what if's" in her head. She had to stop herself before she went down that rabbit hole and shut out the possibility of letting her kids ever participate in sports.

Peggy sighed and conceded. Steve turned out to be right in the long run because subconsciously, she probably didn't trust her kids enough to manage their enhanced abilities. Peggy needed to make a quick change and needed to trust her kids' judgment and their self-control more, especially Sarah and Michael since they are now teenagers and are heading to high school. Angela and John, however, Peggy figured she can still be a little overprotective of their abilities until they reach high school.

"Hon?" The sound of Steve's voice brought Peggy back to reality.
"Hey, sorry, I was just... thinking," Peggy calmly responded as she pushed herself off the wall and fixed her dress. She noticed Steve was leaning on the opposite side of Michael's doorframe from her with his arms crossed comfortably.

Steve gave a small smile in response and sensed she was thinking about something.

"What's up? Dinner smells good by the way," she said with a smile.

Steve nodded, "Thanks. It's ready by the way. Dinner, I mean." He leaned forward and peered into his son's room and knocked on the open door, "Kids, dinner is ready."

Michael's head snapped to the door and saw his mom and dad by the door, "Coming." He looked at Sarah and whispered, "Crap, I don't know how long mom and dad were there. Do you think they heard us?"

"Nah. We're okay, I'm sure of it," Sarah confidently said as she rolled off her twins' bed.

Steve looked back in the room, "Can you grab your brother and sisters too?"

Michael stood up from his seat, "Okay!" Michael and Sarah walked out of his room together and smiled at their parents as they walked past.

"Smells good, Dad," Sarah expressed as she strolled over to John's room and Michael to Angela's.

After a few seconds, all the kids were out of their rooms and on their way downstairs to the kitchen for dinner, leaving Peggy and Steve alone in the hallway. Steve briefly glanced over his shoulder to double check that they were alone before returning to face his wife. "What's on your mind, Peg?" He curiously asked.

Peggy sighed, "Our kids." Steve didn't say anything, silently allowing his wife to continue. "You were right."

"About what?" Steve finally responded.

"I need to trust our kids more when it comes to them controlling their abilities. Well, give more leeway to Michael and Sarah since they're teenagers and heading into high school this fall." Peggy shrugged, "I'll still keep more of an eye on Angela and John though since they're still kids."

Steve frowned, "Peg, I didn't mean to say that you—"

Peggy gave a reassuring smile, "I know what you meant, darling. I get it and I realize that now."

"So does that mean you—"

Peggy gave a reassuring smile, "I know what you meant, darling. I get it and I realize that now."

"Allow Michael to try out for the football team? Yes. I'll let the kids play school sports in high school," Peggy said with a nod. "I'll talk to Sarah and Michael during dinner, maybe after, I don't know."

Steve grinned, "That's great!" He nodded toward the stairs, "I'm guessing you talked to him?"

Peggy shook her head, "No... I overheard him talking to Sarah." She frowned, "That's what made me change my mind. She shrugged, "I'm just worried, Steve. About people finding out about them at this age—"

"I know, Peggy, and to be honest I am too. They're at the age where they want to be more individualistic and move away from us and be more with their friends. They want to be more
independent, and that's okay too." Steve shrugged, "So letting them do sports and other things, and trusting in their self-control will be a challenge and worrisome, but it'll help them grow." He chuckled, "They'll fail things, practice others, scare us…a lot, but even though they're moving away from dependence to be independent of us, we'll always be there for advice and to counsel them in things. During high school there'll be plenty of 'teachable moments.' Believe me."

Peggy made a small smile, "You're right."

"I'm worried too, Peg. Don't get me wrong." Steve chuckled, "I just hope we don't fight with the kids about the car or…other things…"

Peggy rolled her eyes.

"If we're lucky and do things right to the best of our abilities, our kids won't be super rebellious," Steve replied with a smile.

"Yeah," Peggy responded. She stepped closer to her husband and gripped his shirt and brought him close for a kiss. After a moment they broke the kiss, "Here's to beginning our adventure into the teenager years."

Steve chuckled, "Yeah… and the dating phases."

Peggy chuckled, "Sorry for snapping at you earlier."

"It's okay. You had a trying day today," Steve said leaning forward and kissing his wife.

"We should probably head downstairs to eat dinner," Peggy said leaning back with a smile.

Almost on cue, Sarah's voice echoed from downstairs, "Mom, Dad, are you coming?"

Steve chuckled, "We're coming!" He called back as he turned around and headed to the stairs with Peggy close behind.

Fox Meadow Elementary School

Early the next morning before the start of school, Peggy and John sat in front of the principal and John's first-grade teacher, Mrs. Brooks, who stood behind the principal's desk. Principal Jerry leaned forward on his desk, "Mr. Rogers, I'm sure your mother already talked to you and punished you. But, again, you can't skip school, understood?"

John nodded, "Yes, sir."

"What were you thinking?"

Peggy looked over at her son and waited for her son to respond the same response he gave her last night. John frowned, "I-I, I just wanted to stay outside and play. I wanted to go into the woods. I like the outdoors and nature," he said truthfully.

The Principal nodded, "I appreciate your honesty, young man. But again, not to belabor the point, you can't do this ever again. You can't skip school, understood?"

John nodded, "Yes, sir."

"Now, the other thing is the forged sick notes we received from you and your two friends, Mr. Haytham, and Mr. Condon." He leaned back in his chair, "Care to explain?"
Peggy again looked back at her son and waited for his response. John swallowed and spoke nervously, "It was my idea, sir."

"I know. But who wrote the notes?" Principal Jerry calmly asked. John didn't respond and remained silent. "Mr. Rogers?" The Principal asked raising a brow.

John didn't respond again, afraid to tell the principal who was to blame for physically forging the sick notes. Peggy looked at her son and frowned, "John, answer him."

John frowned, "Charles…Charles wrote it."

The Principal smiled proudly, "Thank you, Mr. Rogers." He leaned forward and chuckled, "We knew who wrote it. We just wanted to know if you were willing to tell us the truth while you were in trouble. So thank you for being trustworthy, John."

John nodded in response but frowned because he was still in trouble. Peggy, however, proudly smiled at her son for telling the truth as she crossed her legs.

"Now, Mr. Rogers, your mother was no doubt worried about you when we called her that you weren't at school. But your teacher, Mrs. Brooks, was also worried that you were missing from her class." He nodded to his teacher, "She cares very much about you. Please apologize for worrying her."

John looked up at his teacher, "I'm sorry, Mrs. Brooks. I'm sorry for making you worry." He began to cry, "I'm sorry for always upsetting you when I talk to my friends and disturb the class." He looked down and cried, tears streaming down his cheek.

Peggy quickly shifted in her seat and leaned over to her son, hugging him tight, "Shh. Don't cry, darling. It's okay."

John leaned into his mother chest and sobbed into her suit jacket and blouse, "I don't want her to hate me," he said referring to his teacher.

Mrs. Brooks made a small smile and walked around the principals desk and squatted down in front of John. "John, I don't dislike or remotely hate you," she said genuinely. John stayed in his mother's chest and continued to sob. "John, will you please look at me."

Peggy leaned back and let John sit up and look at his teacher.

Mrs. Brooks smiled, "Sweetheart, I don't dislike you. I promise you that. You're a good boy. You just make mistakes like everyone else. It's never bad making friends or talking with them, but when it disrupts class, I have to discipline you. But when I discipline you, it's out of teaching not out of anger. Okay? I don't hate you. I can never hate you, okay, sweetie?"

John nodded silently.


John nodded, "Yes, Ma'am."

"Good," she said standing back up.

The Principal nodded, "One last thing. You and your friends have detention after school for the rest
of the week and next week."

"Yes, sir," John replied calmly.

"Did you learn your lesson?" John nodded quietly. The Principal smiled, "Good, then that's all I have for you. You're excused, Mr. Rogers." Principal Jerry then stood up, "Mrs. Rogers, thank you for coming this morning."

Peggy stood up and smiled as she shook the Principal's hand, "Sorry for the trouble."

Principal Jerry smirked, "No trouble at all, this is part of my job. Your kids aren't bad kids; they're just kids. They make mistakes like everyone else."

Peggy nodded and turned to her son, "Come on, darling. It's almost time for school to start." John hopped off the chair and walked over to the door with his mother close in tow.

Mrs. Brooks smiled at John, "See you in class, John."

John waved and walked out of the principal's office with his mother.

The mother and son walked down the hallway and into the waiting room where John saw his two friends, Charles and Ben, sitting on the couches with their mother's. John immediately left his mom's side and walked over to his friends, and sat down on an adjacent couch next to them. At that same moment, Charles' mother stood up from her seat and walked over to Peggy to talk with her.

John briefly eyed Charles' mother then returned his attention to his friends, giving them an apologetic look to his friends, "Hey, guys. I'm sorry I got you into this mess and got you all detention."

Charles looked at John and shrugged, "Lessons learned." He smiled, "I chose to follow you so it's not your fault," he said taking a very mature stance on the situation.

Ben frowned, "Yeah…It's okay. I'm not mad at you if you're wondering that. We're still friends."

John just nodded apologetically.

Charles' mother stopped next to Peggy and greeted her in a friendly tone, "Good morning, Peg."

Peggy smiled, "Hey there, Kels," she said using her friend's nickname.

"Too bad it took our kids getting into trouble together for me to see you," Kels replied humorously.

Peggy nodded, "Yeah, I'm sorry, Kels. I've been meaning to spend time with you and the others, but it's been busy at work recently."

Kels chuckled, "I keep forgetting you're the head of SHIELD. I keep thinking you're one of the normal housewives around here."

"Yeah. I promise I'm not trying to avoid you," Peggy replied with a smile.

"I know."

Ben's mother flicked her son's arm. "Ow," reacted Ben, rubbing his arm in pain.

Ben's mom frowned, "Ben, don't you understand that John and Charles just got you in trouble. They're part of the reason you have detention all week and why you're grounded for twice that," she angrily said.
John frowned, "Mrs. St—"

"Hush. Do not interrupt me," Ben's mother replied harshly. She focused back on her son, "Now, Ben, tell Charles and John you don't want to be friends with them anymore. They're a bad influence, do you understand?"

Charles shook his head, "But—"

"Hush! What did I just say?" Ben's mother snarled then looked down at her son with an angry look.

Ben frowned and looked at John and Charles, "My—" His mother flicked his arm again causing him to wince in pain. "I," Ben began, correcting himself, looking fearful around his mother. A look that Peggy didn't miss from her spot in the middle of the room. "I can't be friends with you anymore," Ben said, avoiding eye contact with the two boys. John and Charles could only frown in response. The two boys didn't say a word to avoid getting yelled at by Ben's mother again. Ben slumped in his seat and frowned.

Peggy heard the whole conversation and spoke up, "Boy, I think it's time for you to go to class."

The three boys nodded and stood up from the couch. Both John and Charles walked over to their mother's to hug them goodbye for the day. Peggy bent down and kissed her son on the cheek and hugged him briefly, "Okay, darling. Enjoy your day, and listen to your teacher while you're in detention. Your father will pick you up after you're done, okay?"

John nodded, "Okay."

Peggy then whispered into her son's ear, "I'll talk to Ben's mother for you." She kissed him on the cheek and stood up, "I love you, sweetheart."

John smiled, "I love you too, Mama." He looked over at Charles and saw his mother kiss him on the cheek and pat him on the head. After that, the two boys walked out of the office together to head for class.

Ben soon followed the two boys out of the office after what appeared to be a stern talk with his mother. The boy looked upset, sad, and frustrated as he left. At that moment, to Peggy and Charles' mother, it was unclear if Ben took it seriously when he said he didn't want to be friends with their sons anymore.

Peggy quickly snapped a look at Ben's mother, "What are you doing, Julie?"

Ben's mother stood up, "What am I doing? What are you doing?" she expressed angrily. "Why don't you parent your son better to not skip school and drag my boy into his stupid misadventures!"

The Principal's secretary in the waiting room quickly chimed in from her desk, "Um, ladies. Please, you don't have to do this."

Peggy frowned, "My son made a mistake. So what? He'll learn from it and so will all your kids," she said referring to Kels' son too.

"Your son got mine into trouble! They skipped school together! That's a big deal! I hope you punished him severely for it," Ben's mom expressed angrily.

"I know. He made a mistake, I get it. But John isn't perfect. Your son isn't perfect and Kels' son isn't perfect. No one is perfect; everyone makes mistakes. I have to trust that he'll learn from this situation, and if he does it again, believe me; I will take the appropriate measures," Peggy replied. "But how I
punish my son and how I parent him is none of your concern."

Charles' mother spoke up, "Julie, you can't solely blame Peggy's son that your son is in trouble. Your son also decided to skip school and had a choice not to. Much like my Charles did. Did John influence them? Perhaps. But Charles and Ben decided to follow him on their own. They bear full responsibility for skipping school themselves." She nodded, "You cannot blame other people for things.

Ben's mom shook her head, "Peggy, your child is a bad influence. I've heard; he keeps getting into trouble with the teacher, disrupting class, and talking when not supposed too. You should be stricter on him or else he'll be a screw up all his life." She sighed, "You need to be a better parent. Shame, such a troublesome kid coming from such a prestigious pedigree…"

"What did I just say? Maybe you should focus on yourself other rather than me. Because from what I've seen and heard, is that Ben is fearful of you and his father. Want to talk about how to be a good parent? Then check yourself. Your son fears you. You're setting your child up for failure." Peggy held her ground, "I'm strict on my son, but he doesn't fear me. I promise you that John will learn from his mistakes. If he doesn't the first time, then you can bet that I'll be considerably harder on him the next time."

Ben's mom shook her head, "Peggy, you're very arrogant. I don't know how—"

"I'm done," Peggy said interrupting her, deciding it wasn't worth the extra headache talking to someone who only wants to insult her and her son. "I suggest you leave because if I have to hear you talk bad about my son or how I raise my children again, I will personally introduce you to the ground. And trust me your relationship will be intimate," she said sharply.

Ben's mom eyed Peggy a moment, trying to duel with her ice cold stare, but conceded to excuse herself quietly and leave the office.

When Ben's mom finally left, Peggy sighed. Kels laughed, "Well… that was interesting."

"That's now exactly how I wanted the conversation to go," Peggy replied with a frown.

Kels chuckled, "I kind of wanted to see you toss her." Peggy smirked and shrugged in response. "Looks like you need a coffee or a cup of tea before heading to work."

Peggy nodded, "I do. I'm already late, might as well grab a cup of tea and some biscuits or something."

Kels smiled, "Great. I know just the place."

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Long(ish) Chapter

Apologies for taking so long with this, been really busy.

Well time is moving on along, wanted to make a chapter with John Steven Rogers so we can get an exposure of all the kids' personalities.

Stay tuned for Steve as Captain America very soon.

For those of you who didn't pick it up yet, Sarah and David's friendship is based a lot on Kim Possible. LOL. I don't know if it'll be exactly the same though ;)
Thanks for reading.

Glad I got this chapter out before the Avengers End Game Premier
August 1961

Time Square, New York City, SHIELD: AEGIS HEADQUARTERS

Peggy, dressed in a dark blue business suit with skirt and heels, walked into her office and headed straight for her desk and picked up a thin file she left a few minutes ago. As she opened to the front page of the portfolio, she tucked a long stray band of dark brown hair behind her ear and started to skim the first page. As Peggy read, Agents Jack Thompson and Kathryn Ottis walked into the office and quietly stopped a few paces behind her.

"There's a murder in Queens I need your team to check out," Peggy said as she flipped the page of the file.

Thompson nodded, "Got it, but… since when did we investigate random murders?" he asked curiously.

Peggy closed the file and turned back to her agents, "This isn't random. Local detectives in the area called us personally." She handed Thompson the file and nodded, "Take a look."

Thompson opened the file and saw a photo paperclipped to the inside cover, a black and white image of the Hydra skull branded on the back of the victim. He looked up at Peggy in surprise, "What the hell?"

"That's why they called us," Peggy responded as she leaned onto her desk and crossed her arms. "I'm tasking your team personally to go down to the local PD station and find out more. SHIELD is taking over the investigation but utilize the local police assets as necessary."

"You got it," Thompson responded.

"One last thing; find out if the victim is connected to Meyers at all." Peggy stood up, "It's been four years since he escaped and we have made no progress in finding him. He's still at the top of our kill/capture list, so if you can find anything that connects the victim with Meyers, preferably something that will help us on tracking down his whereabouts, the better. We need to find him."

Kathryn frowned, "That's a big stretch, Director."

"I know, but it's worth a shot to see if the victim is connected. Meyers is careful, and he knows how we operate which makes him that much more dangerous in Hydra." Peggy nodded, "It is a stretch to find any sort of connection, but it wouldn't hurt looking into it. Forest for the trees."

Thompson nodded, "We'll get on it, Boss," he said as he and Kathryn excused themselves and head out of her office.

"Jack," Peggy called out to her lead agent causing him and Kathryn to stop at the door and look over to her. "If Lucienne gets upset, tell her she can blame me," she said referring to his wife of a few years.
Thompson smiled, "I'll let her know if I end up staying late," he said as he walked out of the office with Kathryn closing the office door behind them.

As her agents left her office, Peggy walked over to her desk and sat down, letting out a deep sigh as she leaned back in her chair. It's been a long and busy day, and she couldn't wait to go home for the evening. Looking at the pictures of her husband and kids on her desk, Peggy couldn't help but smile at the joy that her family brought her. Although she loves her job, Peggy deeply valued her time with her family and looked forward to the simple life at home away from the stress of work. Family life away from her usual mission-oriented mindset of protecting the security of the United States and the free world offered her a break from all the madness. Steve and the kids were her anchors to normalcy and joy.

Peggy ran a hand through her flawless dark brown hair and stared out into space, continuing her short break from work. But her little hiatus from work was quickly interrupted with a loud knock on her door.

She sat up straight and looked over at her door, "Yes?" she called out.

Rose opened the door and greeted her, "Director, Mr. Stark is here to see you."

Peggy looked confused, "Is he?" She shook her head, "Go ahead and send him in please. Thank you, Rose," she said standing up.

Rose smiled, "No problem, Director." She stepped aside and held the door open, "Go right ahead, Mr. Stark."

The older looking Howard Stark with a thicker brown mustache and more wrinkles on his face, walked in with a black briefcase in hand, "Thank you," he coolly said to Rose. Rose nodded and left the office, closing the door behind her.

Peggy smiled, "Howard, what are you doing here? Aren't you supposed to be in New Jersey right now working on your project?"

Howard nodded, "I am, but there's something we need to talk about," he said, taking a seat on one of the chairs in front of her desk, placing his briefcase down by his feet.

Peggy sat down too and nodded, "What's on your mind, Howard?"

"This is about the research I've been doing on the serum the past few years. Specifically, the part on you, Steve, and your kids," Howard calmly said, remembering the

"Go on."

Howard leaned back in his seat, "Don't shoot me, but…you're…what? Forty-years old?" He rose his hands defensively, "Trust me this is all relevant."

"I'm forty-one," Peggy responded evenly.

"Are you, in the slightest, surprised that you look so youthful? Not a single wrinkle on your face or even the slightest hint of grey hair? That you don't look a day over thirty even after years of working a full-time job in SHIELD and raising four children?" Howard asked plainly.

Peggy shrugged, "I'm sure you're referencing the serum, but I like to think I live a healthy life in general. I don't smoke and don't usually drink, but I'm sure there's more to my… youthful look than what I put into it."
Howard nodded, "That's what I'm getting at, Peg. Hollywood actors and actresses don't look as youthful as you and they got all the money in the world to work on their image. Granted most of them smoke and drink which we know adds years to your life."

"Yet, you still drink and smoke, Howard," Peggy retorted with a grin.

"Hey, I know I got problems." Howard waved his hands, "But this isn't about me. What I'm getting at is, even though you don't drink or smoke, you would've naturally aged regardless. A hint of a wrinkle, a hint of gray hair, pretty much any natural sign of aging. But since I ran the first tests on you and Steve, you two didn't age at all."

Peggy looked at him with an unsure look, "Okay…That's a lot to comprehend. And you're saying this has to be linked with the Steve's serum?"

Howard nodded, "Exactly. Look at me for example. I'm forty-four, I have no human enhancements what so ever, and I already have pronounced wrinkles and a handful of gray hair. Much to my discontent, I have aged significantly."

Howard wasn't lying. He has grown older since running the first medical tests on the Rogers family in '48, nearly thirteen years ago. But inversely, Peggy and Steve for that matter haven't looked aged physically at all. Peggy who turned forty-one last April still looks like she's in her late twenties and Steve who turned forty-four last July also looks like he's still twenty-one. Steve who looks forever young is especially surprising because after fighting two different wars he still looks youthful especially since war has often made young boys look older, but not Steve.

"I've been researching Doctor Erskine's Serum since the war and studying the effects it has on you and your family. But I think I have underestimated the result it has in your bodies." Peggy listened intently as Howard explained. "Particularly, I've underestimated the effects on you and Steve. Remember how the serum has unique protective system of regeneration, right?"

Peggy nodded, "uh-huh."

"Well, you might find this stupid or absurd, but this is what I discovered after years of doing tests on you and your family. I don't have the technology yet to dive in too deep into your cells, or DNA to see all the details and the change the serum did to you, but I've seen enough to come to a conclusion." Howard paused and took a deep breath, "From what I've studied, the change in you and your family, at the molecular level brought all of you to the absolute pinnacle of human physical perfection. I'll get to the kids later, but specifically for you as an adult, you have everything Steve does but slightly less. This you already know."

"Go on," Peggy calmly said.

"In any case, you already know what you're capable of because of the serum. But right now I'm not talking about how strong you are or how fast. I'm talking about aging. Specifically, you're aging slower."

Peggy looked confused, "Didn't we talk about this before?"

Howard nodded, "Yes, but…I didn't know the extent, and it was all a theory back then. Now after years of studying your blood and cells I discovered the serum is causing you to age much slower. Even went to a microbiologist down in Philly to back up my work." He raised his hands slightly, "Anyway, I won't bore you with the science because it's really complicated. But put it simply, aging pretty much revolves around cells and genes within DNA. Anyway, yours, Steve's, and your kids' cells have an abnormally large number of cell divisions, eats a lot of antioxidants, and your cells
recover from DNA damage very quickly. I.E., a protective system of regeneration within your cells."

Peggy nodded, "Cell divisions…" she said trying to follow with the science.

Howard nodded, "Yes. There is a number of times a cell can divide. Our cells, normal human cells, have a limited number of cell divisions due to a bunch of stuff within DNA and damages toward it. Anyway, after the cell limit is reached, it dies. When it dies, it can't be replaced anymore, and that's basically the slow decline into aging. After studying your blood, Steve's blood, and your kids, your cells continued to divide and replace each other continuously."

Peggy furrowed her brows in confusion, "So what you're saying is, we're not aging?"

"Not exactly," Howard said shaking his head. "You're aging, but significantly slower. Much, much slower. How slow? I don't know, but I'm not saying you'll live forever. The serum that's still in your genetic code is making you age considerably slower than anyone else. My best guess is that you and Steve will probably live a whole life again before biology finally catches up and overcomes the serum. My theory is the serum will eventually lose its effects on you, but not for a while. I'll save that for later."

Peggy leaned back in her seat and remained silent for a while. After a moment she spoke up in disbelief, "Wow. That's, that's a lot to take in, Howard. I know you're probably right, but it's just hard to believe." She shook her head, "I…" She sighed, "And the Kids? Are they going to be…"

Howard shook his head, "Your kids are maturing normally, no problem there. The serum will affect your kids greatest when they reach puberty, and that I know for a fact because of Sarah and Michael. Also since they were born and 'created' with the serum, they will live considerably longer than you. How long? Again, I don't know." He nodded at her, "By the way, how are Sarah and Michael doing?"

Peggy shrugged, "You were right about the kids hitting puberty. Both Michael and Sarah still experience extremely severe muscular and growing pains. Usually in the evenings and the early mornings. There's nothing we can do about it though, but it is excruciating for them. They're generally just episodes, and the worse ones occur after the kids get back from physical activities. Michael especially has more intense pains since he plays football at the high school now." She shrugged, "At least they fade away by the time they get to school the next morning. Usually."

The twins have recently hit puberty with Sarah reaching it around twelve and Michael reaching it earlier this year. For a while, Sarah was taller than her twin, but when Michael hit his growth spurt, he surpassed his sister in height. But due to inheriting the serum from their parents, both Michael and Sarah didn't just sexually mature and undergo a growth spurt, but also had a rapid increase of molecular density of their cellular fibers, their skin, and muscles.

Though the twins are fast growing and becoming more physically mature, they're still shorter than their mother. But they won't be for long.

Howard nodded, "Hm. Generally, growing pains aren't supposed to be super painful, but the twins are maturing so the serum is changing their bodies, making everything denser and stronger which causes some pain."

Unlike the kids' father during Project Rebirth who was saturated with Vita Radiation to stimulate the serum's rapid growth of his superhuman body, the children's natural biological process of reaching maturity functioned as stimulation that occurred over months and years as they grew. Since conception, the serum's properties have been present in them and made it possible for it to change their bodies as they got older, causing them to ever grow up as superhuman. Fundamentally, as the
"Right," Peggy responded evenly.

"Think of Steve. During his operation the Serum changed him that very moment and caused him severe pain," Howard responded.

"How could I forget," Peggy responded, remembering the agonizing scream she heard from Steve while he went through the procedure in the capsule.

Howard nodded, "It's the same thing, but instead of the serum forming all of its changes in an instant in the kids, it's changing them as their bodies mature. Especially, during puberty, and Sarah and Michael proved it." He chuckled, "They'll be almost as strong as Steve."

Peggy sighed, "Oh boy. Don't make me regret letting my son play sports."

Howard smiled, "Oh that's right, he's going to be in high school soon. How's he doing in football? Got a position yet?"

Peggy shrugged, "Apparently, even though he's been taking it easy, the coach put him on the junior varsity team as a freshman. Making him their starting quarter back."

"Wow? Good for him," Howard replied proudly. "He's going to be a real football-hero."

Peggy smiled with pride in her eyes, "Michael is obviously strong, so he could throw far but I didn't know he could throw that accurate. Steve said Michael was damn near perfect in all his passes." She chuckled, "He has a real talent for football."

Howard nodded, "Well, biologically, Michael can see farther and has far better coordination than most people."

"That's true. I'm still proud of him though," Peggy replied with a smile. "I can't wait to see him play in his games." She chuckled, "Anyways..."

Howard picked up his briefcase and opened it on his lap then removed a thick manila file loaded with a stack of papers and photographs. He closed the briefcase and put it down back on the floor with one hand still gripping the thick folder. "Here," he said handing the thick folder to Peggy.

Peggy took the heavy folder and looked at him with a confused look, "What's this?"

"Copy of my research. Everything we talked about, but in greater detail and all the science behind it. I circled all the key points with red pen. If you want to know more about how the serum is effecting your aging, everything is in there." Howard shrugged, "Or you can ask me."

"Great, thanks, Howard."

"No problem, I'm just glad you let me study the effects of the serum on your family."

Peggy smiled, "Good thing we let you because this is good to know," she said tapping the folder. She leaned back in her seat, "This is a lot to take in though, Howard. The fact that we're aging slower hasn't quite hit me yet."

Howard shrugged, "I understand. This stuff sounds like it's in the realm of science fiction. Things you see in books and movies, but never in real life." He nodded, "But I promise you that the science
"is sound."

"I know, Howard," Peggy replied. "It's just going to take me a while to actually believe it."

"I hear you, Peg."

Peggy let out a sigh, "So, how're your other projects going? Like your study on the Tesseract and your private Arc Reactor project."

Howard leaned back and interlaced his fingers together in a relaxed position. "Well, I'm still studying the Tesseract. It's been over ten years, and I still haven't unlocked all of its secrets. I barely scratched the surface. However, that little blue cube seems to contain an infinite amount of energy. The energy that we can use to benefit humanity." He shrugged, "And possibly if I could harness the cube's energy, it can be able to power the arc reactor and be a clean source of power."

Peggy nodded, "Do you have enough funding to continue your research? I can get more government funding approved to your sector to get you what you need."

Howard waved his hand, "We're doing alright, Peg. I appreciate it. But discovery is like a puzzle, I just have to put the pieces together and unlock a new chapter in science. This Tesseract, I'm sure, is our key to the future." He smiled, "And quite possibly our key to be the dominant power in the world."

Peggy smiled, "Well, keep me posted on your research."

"I will."

"Is there anything else you want to talk about?" Peggy asked curiously.

Howard nodded, "Yeah. One last thing since I'm here. Kind of personal."

"Oh? What is it?"

"Well," Howard paused and chuckled. "How do I say this—"

"Spit it out, Howard. You've never been shy in talking," Peggy replied with a smirk.

"Remember Maria? Maria Carbonell?"

Peggy nodded, "Yes, I remember her. The really young blonde woman you brought around a few times." She looked off into space, "I remember her from the Expo a few years back and that Christmas Party last year at the convention center."

"Yeah, that's her."

"What about her then?" Peggy pressed.

Howard chuckled, "I think I'm in love with her."

Peggy raised a brow, "Really?"

"Yeah. She doesn't know though... I honestly don't know how to describe the feelings I have when I'm around her," Howard responded.

Peggy was genuinely surprised by where the conversation went. "You realize, thinking that you're in love doesn't mean love, right?"
Howard waved his hand, "Yeah, I got it, I know I'm new to this whole serious relationship and love stuff, but I'm telling you that I have serious feelings for this girl." He shook his head, "And she's half my age. But there's something about her that I love so much. I can't explain it."

Howard made an uncharacteristic nervous laugh, "Peggy, ever since I met her a few years ago, I…I couldn't forget her. After that Expo in '57, I met up with her a few times, and we joked, talked, and drank. Like friends who know each other all their lives without a care in the world." He shook his head, "It was all normal. I don't know how else to describe it."

"Wow," Peggy responded in surprise. "I don't believe it."

"I'm serious, Peg. She occupied my thoughts so much that I ended my playboy lifestyle." Peggy raised her brows in surprise. "I continued to run into her over the years, and we would catch up for a while like friends. We eventually even spent time together as friends." Howard sighed, "I tried to put her in the back of my mind and return to having flings with wo—" He looked at Peggy and shrugged, "Well you know."

Peggy chuckled.

"Well, we became good friends. But even though I tried not too, and resisted for a while, I've fallen for her." He sighed, "I'm not some hopeless romantic, Peg. I've never allowed myself to be that way, but she… she makes me feel different. Makes me feel good."

"Sounds like you've had these feeling for a while. Even when you two spent time together as friends," Peggy said evenly.

Howard nodded, "Yeah. I did."

Peggy chuckled, "Never seen you like this. Very uncharacteristic of you to be flustered over a woman. She must be very special to you."

"She is. I quit that rich playboy lifestyle over a girl who may not even want to be with me," Howard said straight.

"So, why are you telling me about this?" Peggy replied in question.

"I don't know. Maybe get some advice on how to approach her and seriously ask her on a date?"

Peggy chuckled, "Howard Stark, the man who used to have a girl around each arm, doesn't know how to ask Maria on a date."

"She's different! She's sophisticated and intelligent and—"

"I'm only joking, Howard. Relax," she responded with a disarming smile. "Well, how did you ask all those high class women to go home with you?"

"Oh. I can't do that. Maria isn't interested in money, status, and all that fancy stuff."

Peggy nodded, "Ah. I remember. Well, be yourself—"

"I can't do that either, she'll slap me."

Peggy sighed, "Not what I'm talking about you, wanker. Be the kind, generous, and charismatic man I know you are." Howard raised a brow in confusion. "Yes, you are those things, Howard. You've shown it to me. You've shown great humility over the years, especially in your work. You may not
see it, but you've also proven that you're selfless and generous. Take the time you spent with my daughter and all the things you've done for her as an example."

Howard raised his brows, "Wow, that's probably the nicest thing you ever said to me," he said with a smirk.

"Don't let it go to your head," Peggy replied with a smile. "What I'm getting at is that you need to show her that side of yourself. The side that is gentle, caring, and generous. From my brief experiences with her, she doesn't care about money or status, so you need to show her the human side of you not the rich side of you."

"I see."

"I also recall that she didn't want to be one of your conquests, so you have to prove to her that you're genuine with her." Peggy smiled, "I can tell that you actually deeply care for this girl, since I've never seen you so…nervous and unsure."

"Thanks, Peg."

"Actions speak volumes, Howard. Don't drown her in gifts and flowers that'll only discourage her. Spend quality time with her, say kind and gentle things, and if she needs help with something then help her. There's more to wooing a woman than just money, social status, and a handful of fancy words. Of course, everyone is different, but that's just my experience, and Maria doesn't strike me as that time of woman anyway."

Howard nodded, "Thanks a lot, Peg. I mean it." He paused for a moment and clapped his hands once, "Well." He then stood up and grabbed his briefcase, "You gave me a lot to think about."

"You're welcome, Howard," she said standing up as well.

"I'll probably ask her on a date sooner rather than later," Howard said with a smile.

"Let me know how it turns out. I'm serious. And Give her my best regards too, please."

"I will. Thanks, Peg. Anyway, I'm going to get out of your hair," Howard said reaching out to shake Peggy's hand.

After the two shook hands, Peggy smiled, "Have a good day, Howard."

"See you soon, Peg. Give the kids my best," Howard replied as he turned for the door.

"I will," Peggy replied as she sat back down.

As Howard left, Daniel Sousa came in, with a folder in hand, knocking on her door.

Peggy looked up and quickly saw her Deputy Director at her door. She stood up and smiled, "Daniel, what can I do for you."

Daniel walked in without a limp or a cane thanks to his new prosthetic leg that helped improved his gait and made walking more comfortable. He stopped in front of Peggy's desk and nodded, "Got the reports from the boys down in the Office of Special Projects."

Peggy took the file from Sousa and began to skim its contents. "Thanks," she said without looking up as she scanned the documents of the folder. Satisfied with what she read thus far, Peggy closed the folder, "Perfect," she said looking back up at Daniel. She smiled and placed the folder down next
to the one Howard handed her earlier, "How's your new leg treating you?"

Daniel smiled, "Way better than my old one without a doubt. No cane and no limp. Well, mostly no limp."

Peggy chuckled, "Well you look better. If I didn't know you, I wouldn't be able to tell that you had a prosthetic."

Daniel only recently got his new prosthetic leg from the clinic, and it was much better than his old one that didn't bend and required a cane for him to walk correctly. Without a doubt, he was much happier with his new leg especially now since he can keep up with everyone without a struggle.

Daniel smiled, "Thanks, Peg." He nodded, "I also got good news."

Peggy sat down, "Yeah?"

"Well, I'm not supposed to tell you because she wants to, but I'm too excited. Found out earlier today," Daniel said with a growing grin. "Angie landed the lead female role for a movie in Hollywood," he said proudly. "Movie called The Roman."

"Really? That's outstanding, Daniel. I'm so proud of her!" Peggy gladly said. She smiled, "That's great news."

Peggy is so proud of her best friend, Angie. From starting as a struggling actress and waitress in an automat to becoming a nationally famous Broadway actress, and now making her debut into movies, Peggy couldn't help but feel pride in her friend. Angie certainly worked hard for her career and her goals and deserved her shot in the movies. Though Peggy knows nothing about The Roman, she is looking forward to seeing her best friend's Hollywood debut.

"Isn't it? She's been working so hard. I'm so proud of her."

"Me too." Peggy cocked her head to the side, "Does that mean, you're thinking of moving to Los Angeles since she's now going to be working with Hollywood? If that's the case I'm sure I can—"

Daniel shook his head, "No, Angie doesn't want to uproot our family to move to Los Angeles. Especially with David starting Junior High soon." He shrugged, "She figured, she will just travel back and forth to shoot the movie. And if this movie does well and she gets another roll than she'll continue commuting."

"That'll be a challenge, don't you think?"

Daniel shrugged, "I mean, it is, but we'll make it work."

Peggy gave an understanding smile, "I understand. If it wasn't for your children, I'd offer you a transfer to SHIELD headquarters in Los Angeles."

"I appreciate the offer, Peg, but both she and I rather stay in New York. Mostly because of the kids. Also all our friends and family live here, so that's also a factor." Daniel chuckled, "Also, Angie doesn't have any problems landing roles here on Broadway either, so that's a good backup."

Peggy smiled, "I understand. I'm proud so proud of her. She's been through a lot to get to where she is now."

"Yeah," Daniel replied with a proud smile. "Well, don't tell her I told you because she's probably going to surprise you."
Peggy nodded, "That's probably why she was so excited to set up a meeting for tomorrow."

"Probably," Daniel replied with a chuckle. A comfortable silence fell between them for a moment. After a few seconds, Daniel broke the quiet, "So any plans for your Friday night? Plans with the family?"

Peggy smiled, "Actually it's date night tonight. It's been a long time since Steve and I have gone on a proper date even though it's summertime and the kids aren't in school." She chuckled, "After I wrap up everything here, I'll head out. Shouldn't be long…. Hopefully."

Daniel smiled, "Well, I'll get back to work and let you finish your stuff, so you can have a date with your husband."

Peggy smiled, "Thanks, Daniel." Daniel nodded and left.

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**Stratosphere, Midtown Manhattan, New York City**

The Stratosphere, a luxurious and glamorous restaurant and bar, located on the 65th floor of a skyscraper is a class of its own, and unlike any other late night destination in the city. With a balcony and tall panoramic windows lining the restaurant, guests get an excellent view of the city skyline. With a magnificent view, fancy furniture, and lighting fixtures, the restaurant produces a romantic and modern atmosphere. The Stratosphere also serves classic and contemporary American cuisine that makes it one of the best restaurants in the city. Along with the beautiful decorations and furniture, the restaurant has a large circular dancefloor in the center under a gorgeous crystal chandelier and a stage for a full band or orchestra at the far end of the restaurant.

It was just after sunset and Steve and Peggy sat across from each other at a small table by one of the panoramic windows. The dim restaurant lighting and the red-orange sunset, coupled with the pleasant and slow live music from the band created a perfect romantic atmosphere. Steve and Peggy were looking forward to tonight for a while, and after a long day at work for the two of them, they couldn't wait to spend some quality time together. Just the two of them.

Peggy, beautifully dressed in a long elegant form fitting, low cut pink and black dress, smiled at her husband, "So that's about it," she said running her finger over the top of her wine glass.

Steve, dressed handsomely in a dark blue suit and tie, raised his brows in surprise, "I know I shouldn't be surprised, but I kind of am." He shook his head, "Slower aging. That's unbelievable. Still makes me feel like I'm the weirdest thing in science." He smiled, "Looks like all of you are part of that now too."

"Crazy isn't it? I couldn't believe it at first either," Peggy responded quietly. "But Howard assures me that the science is sound. Even gave us a copy of his research."

Steve smiled, "I got to take a look at that later."

Peggy nodded and took a sip of her wine. "We're going to live a long time together, Steve. Think you can handle it?" she said sweetly as she lowered her glass.

Steve smirked, "I think I can manage it. Think you can stick up with me for another lifetime?"

"Hm. I don't know if I could. You are pretty high maintenance," she responded humorously.

"Speak for yourself," Steve said with a grin as he took a sip of wine.
"You know? We made a good life, you and I."

Steve smiled, "Yes we did." A comfortable silence fell between them as they continued to eat and drink, enjoying each other's company. He then locked eyes with his wife and broke the silence, holding up his wine glass, "To us and a wonderful life."

Peggy returned his loving gaze and raised her glass, "cheers, my darling." The two of them simultaneously took a sip of wine while maintaining their warm looks at each other.

The comfortable silence returned between them as they stared into each other's eyes. Nothing needed to be said to fill the void. They're just happy to have a nice evening together, just the two of them on a normal date night.

The band changed tunes and began to play a relaxing love song that filled the room with a harmonious melody. The rhythmic duet between the lead alto saxophone and the piano further grew the romantic ambiance in the restaurant. With this beautiful music, couples throughout the room got up and enjoyed a lovely dance with each other on the dancefloor.

Steve leaned forward in his chair and smiled at his wife who was taking another sip of wine. "Care for a dance?"

"I never thought you'd ask," Peggy replied with a seductive grin.

Steve stood up and offered Peggy his hand. She smiled up at him, taking his hand and slowly stood up without breaking eye contact with him. The two of them then made their way to the dancefloor arm in arm.

Once they got to the center of the room, Steve wrapped his arm around the small of Peggy's back, and she wrapped hers around his muscular frame. Peggy then rested her cheek against his chest and smiled as Steve took her hand in his and began to sway to the music. As the band played its smooth and romantic tune, the Rogers' continued to dance slowly in each other's arms. Peggy smiled against Steve's chest, feeling his strong heartbeat as she swayed with her husband.

After a while of dancing together, Peggy looked up at her husband, "I missed this," she softly said.

Steve smirked, "Dancing?"

"No, going out, just the two of us," Peggy responded.

Steve nodded, "Yeah, but we do our best to go out when we get the chance."

"But most of our time is focused a lot on our kids, which isn't bad at all." Peggy gripped his hand, "I just…miss going on these simple dates with you. It's hard to fulfill that once a week commitment we promised."

"If you're worried that the romance died—"

Peggy shook her head and smiled, "Just kiss me, Steve."

Steve smirked and leaned forward and captured Peggy's lips as the smooth music continued to play.

After a while, Peggy broke the kiss and rested her forehead against Steve's, "I love you," she whispered.

"I love you too, Peggy."
Steve woke up by a slight tugging on his arm which caused him to moan as he tried to hold onto sleep a little longer. But the tugging persisted, so he slowly opened his eyes, discovering the source of the disturbance. His youngest daughter, Angela, stood by the side of the bed, fully dressed. It took him a second to fully realize and register that his daughter was standing by him with a curious look plastered on her face. Steve didn't initially react at all because he was still half asleep and still struggling to get the bearings of his surroundings this early in the morning. Seeing this, Angela gave him another tug on the arm.

"Daddy, get up. There's a phone call for you."

Steve looked to his left where Peggy was slowly waking up on his bare chest. She yawned and rubbed the sleep from her eyes, but did her best to keep them shut. "Goodness, Angela, what time is it?" she asked tiredly.

"It's six," Angela responded calmly.

Peggy opened her eyes and groaned, "It's six on a Saturday? Why are you up so early?" she asked rolling off Steve's chest and keeping the duvet up to cover her own bare chest.

"I couldn't sleep," Angela frowned. "And the phone rang, so I answered it."

Steve rubbed his eyes, "Can you ask them to call back later?"

"Steve, just go and answer the phone, but do it downstairs," Peggy sighed.

Steve nodded, "Do you know who's calling, sweetie?" he asked Angela.

"Someone from your work, Dad," Angela responded.

"Oh, yeah. I definitely need to take that," Steve responded sadly.

"But do it downstairs," Peggy responded in frustration.

Steve smirked, "Angela, sweetheart, can you go back downstairs and tell them I'll be there in a minute."

Angela nodded, "Okay."

With that, the eleven-year-old turned and left the bedroom, humming a random song to herself.

Peggy tiredly glanced over at her husband, "Why didn't you just go with her?"

Steve raised a brow, "Because, I'm minus underwear and any sort of clothing."

"Oh right. I'm minus a bra and knickers at the moment too," Peggy said with a tired grin.

"Do you think the kids heard us last night?" he asked as he sat up, the duvet and blankets falling to reveal his toned and muscular torso.

"You said they wouldn't," Peggy responded as she rubbed her husband's back.

"I don't think they did."

"I sure hope they didn't. They shouldn't have been up anyway at that hour," Peggy tiredly said.
Steve chuckled, "I'm just asking because Angela said she couldn't sleep."

"Hm. Let's not entertain that thought, darling," Peggy said with a smile. "Last night was amazing and I loved it. So let's just leave it at that."

Steve nodded, "Sounds good, Mrs. Rogers." He leaned down and kissed Peggy on the lips.

Peggy smiled then quickly turned to her side, grabbing all the blankets and wrapping herself nice and snug. "Now, I'm going back to sleep. Hurry up with your phone call and return back to bed."

Steve sighed and smirked before pressing a tender kiss to her cheek. Reluctantly, he clambered out of bed, grabbing his boxers, sweats, and a t-shirt off the floor, before heading downstairs. As he walked into the hallway, he bumped into Athena who was waiting by his door, wagging her tail happily, and the two of them walked down to the kitchen to join Angela.

Steve walked into the kitchen and smiled over at Angela who held the phone in her hand, "Did you let Athena out?"

Angela nodded and held out the phone to her dad, "Mhmm. She went to the bathroom and everything."

"Good," Steve said, taking the phone from his daughter. "Thanks for answering it too, sweetheart."

Angela nodded and turned her attention to the black German Shepard and began to pet her and play with her.

"This is Rogers," Steve spoke into the phone as he smiled at his daughter playing with their dog.

"Mr. Rogers, this is Dean from security. Sorry for calling you on a Saturday."

"What can I do for you?" Steve replied respectfully but clearly sounded like he didn't want to be called from his work on a Saturday.

"I have three men from the White House here to see you. They said it's important."

Steve sighed, "White House? Did they say what they want?"

"No, they wouldn't tell me, sir."

"I'll be right there. Tell them I can be there in an hour," Steve replied with a frown.

"Yes, Sir." With that, Steve hung up the phone and sighed.

Angela stopped playing with Athena and looked up at her dad. "Have to go to work today?"

Steve nodded, "I'm afraid so." He frowned, "Not exactly something I want to do on a weekend either. It's not like I can refuse to come in because it has to do with the White House."

"The White House? What happened?" Angela asked curiously.

"That's why I have to go and find out."

Angela frowned, "I guess that means no pancakes today?"

Steve chuckled, "I mean, I'm sure mom can make them for all of you today."
"But…Mom doesn't make them as good as you do."

Steve smiled, "Well…I tell you what. Let mom make breakfast today and I'll make pancakes tomorrow before Church. How does that sound?"

Angela nodded happily, "Sounds good."

"Well, I got to get going," he said stepping over and hugging his daughter and kissing her on the top of the head. "Make sure Athena gets her breakfast."

"I will, Dad," Angela nodded.

"I love you loads," Steve said as he stepped back to go upstairs.

"I love you too, Dad!" Angela happily replied back.

Steve quietly walked back into the master bedroom and saw Peggy still fast asleep and wrapped in the duvet and blankets just how he left her earlier. He silently walked over to her and gently sat down on the edge of the bed on his wife's side and just watched her for a moment. Smiling down at his beautiful wife, Steve felt terrible for having to leave her and his family on a Saturday morning for work.

Peggy stirred and felt a weight on her side of the bed. She slowly opened her eyes and saw her husband sitting by her with a warm smile on his face. "Why aren't you here," she tiredly said as she reached behind her and patted his usual spot on the bed.

Steve frowned, "I have to go to work. Sorry."

"Why?" she asked in a sleepy tone, shutting her eyes again.

"Three men from the White House are there and need to talk to me," he replied evenly.

Peggy opened her eyes and furrowed her brows, looking troubled at his response. "The White House? What for?"

Steve shrugged, "Your guess is as good as mine." He frowned, "I'm just going to go there, see what they want, and come back."

Peggy frowned, "Hm. Okay, darling. Hurry home though."

Steve leaned down and kissed her on the lips, "I will."

"Kids will miss your pancakes," Peggy said with a tired smile.

"I promised Angela that I'll make them tomorrow before Church."

Peggy smiled, "Okay. Safe drive, darling."

Steve stood up and smiled, "I'll be back before you know it."

"Oh, don't forget, the kids want to go see a movie tonight," Peggy said rubbing her eye tiredly.

Steve smirked, "I didn't."

"See you when you come back home. I love you," Peggy said closing her eyes again to fall back into sleep.
Stark Industries: New York City Facility, Manhattan

Steve, dressed in nothing more than a casual collared shirt and slacks, walked down the hallway toward his office and saw two men in black suits and ties standing on either side of his open door, and a man in a grey suit sitting on a chair in front of his desk with his back toward him. Though confused as to who these men are, Steve didn't pause or hesitate and made his way toward his office.

As he neared his office, one of the men by the door greeted him. "Captain Rogers," the man said calmly and briskly.

Steve nodded, "Good morning," he greeted in return as he passed the two men and stepped into his office.

Upon hearing Steve's name and voice, the man in the grey suit stood up and turned around to greet him. "Captain Rogers, a real pleasure to meet you. I'm Kenneth O'Donnell, Special Assistant to the President," the man said confidently, holding out his hand.

The O'Donnell stood tall at about six feet and had broad shoulders like a football player. He looked aged with pronounced wrinkles on his face, but wore his age confidently with his greying brown hair is combed neatly and dressed sharply in a fancy suit. Just by how he presented himself without saying much, Steve could tell that he was in the service at some point.

Steve looked surprised as he shook the man's hand, "Special Assistant to the President? What can I do for you?"

O'Donnell nodded, "First, I apologize for dropping in on your Saturday."

"It's not a problem," Steve said as he walked over to his desk. "But what can I do for the Special Assistant to the President?" he asked, sitting down at his chair.

O'Donnell took his seat and nodded, "What let me cut to the chase. The President request for you to come back as Captain America."

Steve looked confused, "Come back? Like recall to service? Because I don't recall the President issuing a National State of Emergency."

"Not exactly a recall," O'Donnell responded. "But the President requests you come back to SHIELD as Captain America."

"Requests?"

"Yeah, request," O'Donnell responded evenly. He sighed, "As you know, relations with the Soviet Union are fragile and tensions are only rising between Kennedy and Khrushchev. As I'm sure you're aware that the President relies on SHIELD as the prime intelligence arm since the Bay of Pigs fiasco."

Steve nodded, "Yeah."

"And such he depends on them for everything from gathering intelligence to protecting our backdoor."

"Get to the point," Steve responded evenly.

"The President is going to ask SHIELD to commit to a variety of high-risk operations, operations
that need to be successful, in order for us to defeat Soviet influence around the world. Essentially, confront the Soviets by any means without fully engaging in a direct conventional war."

"So what does this have to do with me?"

O'Donnell nodded, "You're presence and your abilities will greatly increase our chances of success in these global operations."

Steve sighed, "If you're looking for a super soldier, SHIELD has Barnes. He's a super soldier too. And SHIELD has the Special Purpose Unit, one of the most efficient and lethal tactical teams in the world. I'm more than positive they can handle any operation they're assigned to."

"It's not just the super soldier, Mr. Rogers. We need you in particular. You represent liberty, justice, and American power. Success in our operations against the Soviet Union with you present would not only win us a strategic victory but a victory of hearts and minds of those you liberate from Communism," O'Donnell said confidently.

Steve shook his head, "I was just a man with a shield and a red, white, and blue suit, Mr. O'Donnell. Barnes has the shield, he can be your representation."

O'Donnell shook his head, "He isn't you, Steve. He doesn't have the same charisma or influence as you do. Besides, he hasn't used your shield since you put it down after Korea." He sighed, "He won't get the same results as you do as Captain America."

Funny how O'Donnell said that about Bucky because back during the war, Bucky used to be remarkably charismatic. He used to be very popular, especially with the girls, and no one ever had anything negative to say about him. Unfortunately, after Hydra and the Soviets captured him, part of him died, and he was never the same. O'Donnell did have a point that Bucky didn't carry himself like Steve. But Steve believed in Bucky and knew he could bear the shield and the mantle of Captain America.

Steve shook his head again, "I believe in Barnes. I believe he's the man for the job. He can be the next Captain America and I know he can grow into it. With that, I have no doubt." He leaned back, "Besides, if all you need is someone to fight and be a symbol, he's the man for the job."

O'Donnell leaned back and sighed.

"Since this is a request from the President. I respectfully but firmly refuse to return as Captain America." Steve sighed, "Look… I've always tried to do the right thing in my life, but right now the right thing to do is to be a good father to my children and be a loving husband to my wife. I did my duty. I fought in two wars, and killed more men than I'd like to count." He shook his head, "I'm sorry, but I can't go back as Captain America. My duty now is here. This may sound selfish, maybe it is, but without a state of emergency, my duty is to my family."

O'Donnell nodded, "I can respect that Captain."

"Besides, I'm helping people here at home. And that's enough for me."

O'Donnell made a small smile, "I'll pass it along."

Steve cocked his head to the side, "I got one question though."

"Shoot."

"Why did you come to me directly? If you wanted me back at SHIELD, why didn't you just ask my
wife? She's the Director."

O'Donnell chuckled, "We figured you're easier to convince than her. We knew she would shoot down the idea in a heartbeat." He smiled, "She would say something similar to you, but little more forceful."

Steve chuckled, "That sounds like her."

O'Donnell stood up and held out his hand, "Well, thank you for your time."

Steve stood up and shook his hand, "Not a problem. I promise you, Barnes can get the job done."

"I'll tell the President," O'Donnell said as he turned for the door. He suddenly paused and looked back at Steve, "For the record, Captain. The Kennedys never agreed to Truman's Executive Order to restrict you." With that, Kenneth O'Donnell, Special Assistant to the President, left Steve's office.

Steve simply put his hands in his pockets and thought for a moment.

Stratosphere is based off the Rainbow Room in Rockefeller Center, Midtown Manhattan, New York City. (Stratosphere was the original for the Rainbow Room)
Howard Stark, we're now transitioned from the actors Dominic Cooper to John Slattery lol

Gathered stuff from aging based on the Hayflick Limit and other science stuff.

For those of you who watched End Game, this is where I treat the serum differently than the MCU.

TO all those who love this story and reviews and such, I love you 3000. 3

Things will pick up again. As Always please Review, love to hear your voices
"Hi, Director Rogers, Good morning," the unseen male interviewer said from behind the camera.

Peggy, in a blue business suit and skirt with her wavy hair down, and red lipstick, sat on the couch in her living room with a cup of tea and saucer on her lap and smiled. "Good morning," she replied cheerfully.

"Thank you for sitting down with us again."

"Oh, It's my pleasure," Peggy replied with a smile.

"We spoke a great deal yesterday about the days of the SSR and into the introduction of SHIELD. Today we would like to move on to—"

"Steve Rogers?" Peggy interrupted with a big smile.

"Yeah, yeah." The interviewer took a breath, "What was your initial reaction when you heard about Project Rebirth? Obviously, we only have what's not classified."

"I thought it was lovely in the same way Peter Pan is lovely, or the Knights at the Round Table," Peggy said with a chuckle.

"So you were skeptical."

Peggy rolled her eyes, "To put it mildly. But, when I met Doctor Erskine and Howard Stark, and then, finally, Steve. I must say my opinion changed a great deal after that."

"Correct me if I'm wrong, but the intention of the project was to create an entire army of super soldiers, correct?"

Peggy nodded, "Yes, but uh, Steve nearly made up for that discrepancy himself."

"Many of his exploits are still classified."

"Yes, well, I think Steve prefers it that way. He doesn't enjoy parades in his honor, but people still celebrated him regardless when he finally came home from the war." She shrugged, "Suffice to say; the world would be a very different place if we hadn't been there to protect it."

"Did Captain America have an effect on you?"

Peggy cocked her head to the side, "Beg your pardon?"

"Well, obviously, he did because you two are married, but initially, did he have an effect on you?" There was a slight pause, "I mean, it must've been a remarkable experience getting to work with him."
Peggy nodded, "Well at the start, life in the military demands a certain level of detachment, particularly from a woman. Sometimes it's necessary to give and to receive orders without dwelling on the cost of the individual. The mission trumps all, and Steve never let me forget these were real lives and real deaths we were dealing with." She paused and made a small smile, "he also treated me like a person from the start." She chuckled, "Which I very much appreciated from him."

"I recently spoke to several soldiers who credited Captain America for saving their lives."

"Oh. Well, there are a lot of men who can give you that interview," Peggy replied proudly.

"This was outside the small town of Wiltz in 1944."

Peggy nodded and took a sip of her tea, "Yes, that was a difficult winter. We were in Belgium during the Battle of the Bulge. A blizzard had trapped half of our Battalion behind the German lines. Steve fought his way, nearly by himself, through a Nazi blockade that pinned our allies down for months. He saved over a thousand men. Including hundreds of civilians, mostly women and children."

"How would you describe Captain Rogers?"

Peggy nodded, "He's defined by his courage and righteousness. Steve has always had a noble and honest spirit, intolerant towards injustice and abuses of power. He was always compassionate." She smiled, "Despite being transformed into a perfect human and super soldier, he maintained his original spirit and character. He never changed." Peggy paused, "He's not afraid to do what's right for the greater good and make the tough choices even if it might be costly to him personally. As—" She paused, "he showed when he disappeared during the war."

"Obviously, Captain Rogers was found alive when his plane went down, and you were the last person to speak to him before he went missing."

Peggy nodded, "I was."

"Can you tell us what that was like? What he said to you?"

Peggy looked down, "I haven't thought about those memories in a long time." She shook her head, "I rather not if you don't mind."

"It's okay. Obviously, everything turned out for the better. You two married, started a family, and even settled down and have a simple life."

Peggy smirked, "As simple as it can get."

The interviewer chuckled, "Right. You're the Director of SHIELD, not much of the simple life." He spoke in a cheerful tone, "How is Captain Rogers as both a husband and a father."

Peggy smirked, "Since he left the service and SHIELD a few years ago, he's been a dedicated family man even with his new career at Stark Industries. He's a very loving husband and caring father to our four kids." She chuckled, "He always makes time for family. Steve often jokes that his time as Captain America prepared him to be a father of four."

The interviewer chuckled, "He's a good man."

"He's amazing, isn't he?" Peggy replied proudly.

"Well this leads us to talk about you and being the head of SHIELD." There was a slight pause, "You've risen the ranks rather rapidly through the SSR and SHIELD."
"I wouldn't say rapidly. It was a struggle initially," Peggy responded.

"But in your first few years as the head of SHIELD, you thwarted an assassination attempt on the President."

"It was a team effort," replied Peggy.

Captain Steven G. Rogers "Captain America," Stark Industries

Steve, dressed in a black suit and tie, sat in front of a grey backdrop and an American flag on a ceremonial pole, nodded toward the camera. The unseen interviewer spoke up formerly, "So, Captain Rogers, from what I hear is that you've been a fighter your whole life."

Steve chuckled, "You could say that, yeah, but I wouldn't say I'm a professional fighter, though. Wouldn't say I'm someone who enjoyed fighting, either." He shrugged, "Before I joined the Army, I got into a lot of street fights, particularly with bullies. I never won any fights, but I was never one to live on my knees at the mercy of someone else. That wasn't who I was." He shrugged, "I don't like bullies, no matter where they're from."

"So after Project Rebirth, which much is still classified, and you became a super soldier, you were sent to war. In fact you went on to fight in two separate wars. Was being a soldier something you always wanted to do?"

Steve shook his head, "No. I kind of wanted be an artist."

"An artist? I must say that's surprising," the interviewer expressed in surprise.

"Yeah," Steve chuckled.

"What made you want to be a soldier?"

Steve nodded, "The War. Being a soldier wasn't something I always wanted to do, but when the war erupted, I felt like it was my duty to serve my country. Do my part." He shook his head, "I didn't join to kill, I joined to make a difference. The Nazis, Hydra, they're evil and needed to be stopped. I fought them because of that."

"I see. But you continued to work in SHIELD and eventually fought in Korea as well right?"

Steve nodded, "Yes. Well, I left SHIELD a year before the Korean War started in hopes of finding peace and settle down. But I was recalled to service and found myself in another war."

"You've must've been in a lot of battles. From the Second World War to Korea. Even though you were a super soldier, were you ever afraid?"

"Yes," Steve responded quietly.

"Peggy and many of your fellow soldiers who served under you mentioned that you showed extreme bravery in the worst of circumstances."

"And I was always afraid." Steve shook his head, "But I think the fear of letting my comrades down was worse than the fear of death. At least that's what it was for me." He shrugged, "Fear of death was always present though."

"Is there a particular example that you can recall fear as your time as Captain America?"

Steve furrowed his brows, "I had plenty. But one of the worst ones I can recall is, and I haven't
really thought about this in a long time, is probably the moments before I crashed that Hydra plane into the sea." He frowned, "Time seemed to slow down in that moment," he said plainly.

"What was that like for you? I understand you were speaking to Peggy at the time you made that decision to crash the plane."

Steve shook his head, "I, uh, don't really want to talk about that, it's a pretty hard memory."

"I understand."

Steve spoke in an optimistic tone, "But I will say this though. Things seem to work out even though you don't see it a lot of the time. For instance, there were so many factors in my survival of that crash. I could've easily just been killed on impact, froze to death instead of being in suspended animation, or Howard could've just easily given up on me. If I hadn't become a super soldier and Howard didn't persist in his search, I would've never returned. So, uh, you never know, what events will transpire to get you home."

"Ok, Captain Rogers, no stranger to fear." The interviewer cleared his throat, "Well, we must ask, do you regret putting down the shield?"

Steve smirked and smiled, "No. Not even a little bit. I mean, I miss it sometimes, yeah, but... I have all I need right here. I like the simple life, settling down, and raising a family." He nodded proudly, "I'm relaxed."

"You have four kids, right?"

"Yup. Two boys and two girls."

"Ever think about picking the shield up again?"

Steve hesitated to answer, "I—"

By August of 1961, tensions between the Soviet Union and the United States only worsened. The situation in Germany didn't help relations between East and West and climaxed into a human rights disaster. The city of Berlin became the focal point of the deteriorating ties and the center of attention of the world in the summer of ’61. Inevitably Berlin would go on to become the centerpiece of the Cold War.

The city of Berlin, located deep in East Germany was split in two at the end of World War II with West Berlin occupied by the Western Allies of the United States, Britain, and France, and East Berlin controlled by the Communist German Democratic Republic (GDR) and the Soviets. Throughout the late 1940s and the start of the 1950s saw a mass exodus of East Germans fleeing to West Germany in fear of further Sovietization and the ruthless actions taken by Stalin. Though Stalin died in 1953 and was succeeded by the more liberal Nikita Khrushchev, that didn't stop the Soviets from tightening its grip on the Eastern Bloc countries, primarily in Germany. Fearing the brutalities of a harsher communist East German regime backed by the Soviets, people all over East Germany continued to flee in mass numbers into West Germany. Professionals, Intellectuals, scholars, and young people which lead to the East German "Brain drain" fled in fear of being purged by the GDR officials much like the Soviet Purge of 1936. This brain drain of the brightest and best-qualified individuals and human capital substantially hurt the East German economy and the legitimacy of the government.

In response to years of the mass exodus, the GDR closed down the borders between East and West, implementing a "special regime on the demarcation line," preventing any travel between the two
Germanys. It was the Soviet approach to controlling national movement which called for restricting emigration and was emulated by most of the Eastern Bloc. The border between the two Germanys became known as the Inner German Border or IGB, constructed in 1952, became one of the world's most heavily fortified frontiers, defined by a continuous line of high metal fences and walls, barbed wire, alarms, anti-vehicle ditches, watchtowers, booby traps, and minefields. Additionally, it was patrolled by over 55,000 armed East German guards who opposed thousands of NATO soldiers and guards on the opposite Western end of the border.

But with the borders closed, the only place for people to flee to the West was Berlin, a blue oasis in the desert of Red. Berlin was known to be the more accessible place to make the East to West crossings due to the many routes, including train travel, into the city. But that soon changed. The ever increasing amount of people fleeing for the West damaged Soviet influence and the GDR's ability to control its citizens. The brain drain of professionals had become so damaging to the political credibility and economic viability of East Germany that the re-securing of the German communist frontier was imperative to the GDR. Further steps were made much like the IGB closure, but this time in Berlin.

On Sunday, the thirteenth of August 1961, police and units of the East German Army closed the border to West Berlin. Following the closure, construction of a series of barriers and barbed wire fences began along the border, and security checkpoints erected. These barriers would eventually evolve to be something more menacing and become the symbol of communist tyranny within the iron curtain.

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**Sunday, August 13, 1961**

**White House, Washington DC**

**0900**

Peggy, dressed in a black suit and pants with a white blouse, walked quickly with her SHIELD briefcase in hand through one of the luxurious hallways of the White House on her way to the Oval office. With her is Rose, her aid, who also wore a black suit and carried a black business folder, followed her wherever she went. As the two ladies rounded the corner toward the Oval Office, they ran into Jacqueline "Jackie" Kennedy, the First Lady, dressed elegantly in a violet blouse and skirt, and carrying a toy truck in her arms, standing just outside the office.

Jackie Kennedy quickly noticed the two women and smiled. Peggy in return smiled at the First Lady, "Good Morning, Jackie."

Jackie smiled, "Peggy, it's wonderful to see you again. I'm sorry you had to come by on such short notice on a Sunday of all days."

Peggy shrugged, "It's part of the job. Obviously, it's important if I have to be here on this particular day."

Jackie nodded, "Right. Well, he really needs to see you, so don't let me keep you," she said referring to her husband in the office. "We'll catch up later."

Peggy smiled, "Of course," she said turning with Rose for the door to the Oval office. She glanced back at Jackie, "John Jr. leaving his toys under the President's desk again?"

Jackie chuckled, "Mhmm. That's what happens when my husband lets the kids play in his office."
Peggy smiled, "I'll talk to you later, Jackie," she said as she opened the door to the President's office.

Peggy worked with many President's and knew their families in some degree, but the relationship with the Kennedys was much different. The relationship between her and the First Lady was much more personable than the other's she's met throughout the years. Peggy and Jackie Kennedy unintentionally bonded and are now on a first name basis with each other. The two families officially met last July during the Independence Day celebration on the South Lawn of the White House. Though, Peggy was on a first name basis with the First Lady and knew the President's kids, Peggy kept it professional at all times when she was around the President himself. President John F. Kennedy was nothing more than the President to her because his position and title held a certain and clear degree of respect that needed to be upheld at all times.

Peggy stepped into the oval office and saw the President standing by his desk with his arms crossed, and the National Security Advisor, McGeorge "Mac" Bundy, CIA Director, Allen Dulles, sitting on one of the two white couches in front of him, and three other gentlemen standing off to the side including Kenneth O'Donnell, Special Assistant to the President.

Peggy greeted the men, "Good Morning."

President Kennedy nodded at Peggy, "Good Morning, Peggy," he greeted plainly.

Mac stood up to greet her too. "Peggy," he greeted with a warm smile as he adjusted his glasses.

Dulles stood up and nodded, "Director," he said briskly.

Peggy walked over to the couches and stopped by Mac while Rose stayed toward the side of the office and waited until she was needed. Peggy looked over at the President who nodded at the CIA Director. "Tell her," he said calmly.

Dulles nodded and sat down, "Right, so here's part of the reason why we needed you on a flight early on a Sunday morning."

Peggy and Mac both sat down and listened intently.

Dulles looked at Peggy, "As I'm sure you're aware, of the developing situation in Germany?" Peggy nodded. "Since the border closure in '52, the GDR has been tightening its grip on their people and around Berlin. Earlier this morning around midnight, Central European Summer Time, the GDR closed the border to West Berlin and started to tear up the streets running alongside the border to make them near impassable to most vehicles."

"I'm aware of the reports," Peggy said calmly. "I'm also aware they began to install barbed wire entanglements and fences along the ninety-seven miles around the three western sectors, and the twenty-seven mile border that divided West and East Berlin."

Dulles nodded, "Right."

The President spoke up, "Get to the point, Allen. SHIELD knows the general situation as much as the CIA does."

Dulles nodded again, "We have significant assets in East Berlin that are in danger now with the Berlin border lockdown. With the border closure, many of our foreign contacts don't have a safety net and are fearing the GDR will tighten control and surveillance, and are worried about potentially being captured by State Security and held in State-Detention. For all that implies."

Peggy nodded in understanding because SHIELD too has foreign contacts in East Germany who are
worried of tightening GDR control.

"The point is, one of our valuable foreign contacts in East Berlin wants us to extract her and her daughter. Where SHIELD comes in is that she mentioned a name in her last dead drop. Billy Meyers."

Peggy shot Dulles an intense glance.

Dulles smiled, "I knew that would get your attention."

The CIA has been aiding SHIELD in the search for Billy Meyers since the assassination attempt on Peggy in the summer of 1957. However, both SHIELD and the CIA's global search have turned out unfruitful for the past four years, and in those years, Meyers remained at the top of SHIELD's High Valued Target list. Any lead would be of great interest for the security of the United States, and especially for SHIELD. Meyers is not only wanted for orchestrating the assassination attempt on the Director of SHIELD, but also espionage for Hydra and the Soviet Union, and he also resembles a SHIELD security breach since he worked as an officer for a considerable amount of time.

Peggy nodded, "What's the assets' name?"

Dulles picked up a manila folder off the coffee table and handed it to Peggy, "Anja [Ahn-yah] Becker and her six-year-old daughter, Jeane Becker. Anja is a secretary with significant security clearance within Stasi Headquarters in East Berlin. Her position as a secretary provides us legitimate and hard intelligence from within the State Security, making her the best source of knowledge for us. She has proved her worth over the years, and we need to get her out. ASAP."

Peggy nodded, "I'll get a team to extract them."

She opened the folder and saw three black and white photographs paperclipped to the first page. The first photo is an ID headshot of a blonde woman with pronounced cheekbones and an expressionless look on her face. The second is of the same woman, but next to a young dark-haired girl who looked to be about six, both smiling happily, and the third is a picture of four men with one of them circled in red.

Peggy looked up confused, "What's the significance of the third photograph?"

"Her husband is a member of an elite Stasi assassination team. His name is Ulrich Becker. This is the only photograph we have of his team." Dulles nodded, "We know their names and their faces but we can never find them. We believe they're responsible for assassinating many East German defectors before they could talk to us all throughout West Germany and other Western European countries." He sighed, "They're extremely dangerous and killed many of our officers and agents. They're ghosts to us."

Peggy frowned, "Hm. So, we'll go in quiet and have back up on standby in case things go south."

President Kennedy nodded and finally spoke up, "This is part of why you're here today."

"For what?" Peggy asked in question.

"We need Captain Rogers," Kennedy said plainly.

Peggy leaned back in her seat and pursed her lips, realizing why she was called into DC personally. "I see," she said hiding her frustration at the statement from the President. "you want Steve to pick up his shield again. She shook her head, "I'm sorry, Mr. President, Steve retired for a reason. He told Mr. O'Donnell that already last week."
Dulles shook his head, "It's not about that, Peggy. Situation's changed."

Kennedy nodded, "Anja asked for him personally. Only him."

Peggy frowned, "Why him in particular? What's the connection?" she asked confused, not really believing what she was hearing.

Dulles nodded at the folder in her lap, "Look at the last page of the file."

Peggy flipped to the last page and saw another black and white photograph, this time of Steve in his old WWII combat uniform carrying a blonde girl wrapped in blankets in his arms through the snow, taken in the winter during the war. The girl looked like she was in shock and had a blank expression across her face. Peggy shook her head in disbelief and flipped back to the first photograph of the blonde woman. She continued to flip back and forth between the two photos and realized that the woman in the first photograph is the same girl in the last picture. The eyes and cheeks gave it away.

Dulles spoke up, "Anja placed this photo in the last dead drop with Billy Meyers' name. Agency analyst say it's her as a little girl during World War II. Looks like she credits Captain Rogers for saving her life as a child. Makes sense why she requested him personally."

Peggy sighed, "You Can't be making this up," she said under her breath. She looked up at Dulles, "Never seen this photo before."

"What we can tell, it looks like it's from the winter of '44. I believe, from what I remember of the reports, Captain Rogers fought through a blizzard and heavy Nazi fortifications to rescue a Battalion trapped in a small town." Dulles leaned back on the couch, "I think this rare photo is from that."

"I remember. That was a difficult winter," Peggy replied calmly. "You can't be making this stuff up," she said in frustration. She was in a difficult position between duty and her personal feelings of not wanting her husband to go back overseas and face danger. Not only that, but Peggy enjoyed having her husband nearby home and the family.

The President uncrossed his arms, "He's been out for over five years, Peggy and his obligation to his country and the armed forces is up. I can technically recall him back to service for a limited time, but I don't want to do that." He shook his head, "Given a state of emergency I can recall him back to service for an indefinite period of time, but thankfully we're not in that position yet. We need him to willingly do this."

Dulles leaned forward, "Peggy, Anja Becker has significant intelligence of East German State Security and, most importantly, of our people and us. She's brilliant and knowledgeable, and we can't risk her getting seized by the Stasi. With the border lockdown, it's only a matter of time before the GDR commit a federal probe into everyone, especially into their own people working in State Security." He sighed, "With all the intelligence she's given us, I don't think Anja would be able to hide from increased surveillance. She's asking for his help."

Peggy crossed her arms and thought to herself.

"Look at this way, Peggy. Getting Captain Rogers to do this mission will help you get Meyers and gets us valuable information from the GDR. It's a win-win."

The President spoke up, "I understand this is a difficult thing for us to ask, Peggy. Steve has more than earned his peace, but we need him," the he spoke in calm. "I respect his desire for peace which why we gave him an option to return last week rather than command him too. But now we need him, and I don't want to recall him just for this." He shook his head, "You'll have greater success getting
him to return if he hears it from you than anyone else."

Peggy nodded, "I'll talk to him." She understood the greater good and needed to put her personal feelings aside. She didn't like it, but mission accomplishment and security of the United States had to be her top priority in this case.

"Thank you, Peggy," the President said in a grateful tone. Dulles just nodded in response. "I understand what we're asking is tough."

Peggy nodded, "Security of the nation first, Mr. President."

President Kennedy stood up, "Now that's out of the way, we need to discuss the geopolitical ramifications of this crisis, and what this does to our interests in Europe." He put his hands in his pockets and nodded, "National Security Council will be meeting in the cabinet room within the hour, but I want a brief rundown on our position, responses, additional assets, and security posture during this Berlin Crisis."

Peggy leaned back on the couch and spoke calmly, "SHIELD sources in Moscow suggest that Khrushchev suggested the border closure. We also have reports that the GDR and the Soviets are going to construct a large concrete wall around West Berlin and militarizing the checkpoints, effectively isolating the Western sectors from the East."

Kennedy crossed his arms, "Hm."

"The CIA confirms, Mr. President," replied Dulles.

"Mr. President, Khrushchev is challenging you. He's treating your youth and political inexperience against the Soviets as a weakness against his undiplomatic aggression," Peggy stated plainly.

Kennedy nodded, "I know." He shook his head, "We need to respond, but how? We need to make a political, psychological, and a morale response in support for the West Berliners now isolated by the Soviets."

Dulles nodded, "This is something that should be discussed with the National Security Council."

"I agree," Peggy said plainly. Though she didn't always get along with members of the National Security Council, she did respect that everyone had a role and a purpose to advise the President.

The President nodded and quietly walked over to his window and stared into the clear blue summer sky, deep in thought of his next course of action.

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**Steve & Margaret Rogers Residence, Scarsdale, NY**

It's late in the afternoon on this sunny Sunday, and the heat of summer still lingers in the air. On the driveway of the Rogers home, Steve and Sarah busied themselves fixing the family blue and white 1955 Station Wagon. The six-year-old car needed a little tune-up, and the father-daughter duo decided to fix it together. Though it's hot outside, Steve and Sarah worked diligently in the heat to fix the car. Although Sarah didn't know anything about fixing cars, she wanted to learn from her dad, so her father happily showed her.

Steve and Sarah hunched under the open hood of the car while fixing the engine, both of their hands and shirts covered in oil and grease. Both of them wore more or less the same thing consisting of oil stained t-shirts and jeans, except Sarah also wore a blue bandana around her long brown hair to keep it clear from oil and grease.
Steve nodded at Sarah wrenching a bolt to the radiator, "So once we finish up with the radiator, we should be close to being done."

Sarah smiled, "What do we have to next," she said as she continued to wrench the bolt.

"Add coolant into the radiator and check the oil, and then we'll be done, and it'll be time for dinner," Steve replied cheerfully. "I can do all that by myself though if you want to wash up and do something else."

"No, I got nothing else to do. Besides, this is actually pretty fun," the teenage girl replied with a big smile.

Sarah enjoyed doing things with her dad, no matter if the activity was considered a "boy activity." She was always close to her dad, and the pair eternally valued their father-daughter time together. Sarah also never stopped looking up to her father and dreamed of being like him and aspired to join S.H.I.E.L.D when she got older. Truthfully, Sarah also grew up to be very similar to her father in many ways. Like him, she's loyal, confident, people oriented, and intolerant to injustices, particularly to bullies. Though Sarah is a little different in terms of the ambitious aspect of her personality, her mother would often joke that she and her father were mirror images of each other.

As a teenager, Sarah often runs into normal teenage insecurities, such as being overly concerned for her image, and occasionally being embarrassed by her parents, but even, then she is still family-oriented and holds strong bonds with her family.

Though Sarah enjoyed doing many "masculine" things like sports and martial arts, she also enjoyed doing feminine things too, especially with her friends and her mother. The Rogers family tended to be more progressive than what society in the 1960s dictated. Girls Sarah's age was supposed to strive for beauty, elegance, marriage, and other stereotypical demands on women. Meanwhile, popular culture ignored the fact that not all young girls and women, like Sarah, did not all fit the mold that tradition had proscribed them. Sarah, like her mother, wasn't going to let societal norms prevent her from doing anything.

Steve laughed and nudged his daughter, "Glad you like it so much. It can get tedious sometimes and down right frustrating."

"Oh I can see that," Sarah chuckled as she moved to another bolt.

Steve stood up and wiped his hands with a rag, "Thanks for being my helper. I can always count on you," he said proudly.

Sarah chuckled, "Don't thank me just yet, Dad. I could've messed up all the things you told me to do and make the car worse."

"Can't pull that one on me, kiddo I watched you do all your parts," Steve laughed, patting her on the back. Sarah also laughed with her dad.

Suddenly, Steve spotted Peggy's all white 1956 Chevy sedan approaching from down the road. "Oh, looks like your mother is finally home," he said calmly.

Sarah looked up from the engine and saw her mother's car heading toward them. She looked up at her Dad, "Why did Mom leave so early in the morning again? I know you said work, but what was she doing on a Sunday?"

Her father shrugged, "The President called a last minute meeting with her, so she had to leave super early to fly to DC."
"Oh," Sarah simply replied. "She would've liked the message today in Church."

Steve chuckled, "Yeah, she would have."

As Peggy drove the last yards to the house, she spotted her husband and oldest daughter working on the family car on the driveway. Despite the stressful meetings earlier in the day, a small smile grew on her face upon seeing the two of them working together. Peggy got to the house and carefully turned onto the driveway and parked by the family car, giving her husband and daughter space to work.

She stepped out of her car and grabbed her briefcase off the passenger seat, and greeted part of her family. "How's everything, darlings?" Peggy asked in a caring tone to mask the stress she's harboring.

Sarah smiled at her, "Hi, Mom."

"Hi there, sweetheart," Peggy greeted as she walked over to her husband and daughter.

Steve smirked, "How was your day trip to DC?"

Peggy stopped by her husband and leaned on her hip and shrugged, "It was…eventful to say the least," she replied in a somber tone.

Steve picked up on the inflection in her voice, which made him give her a questioning look. He then leaned over to Peggy and kissed her on the lips to greet her, keeping his dirty hands away from her clean suit. Peggy gladly reciprocated the gesture and gripped his arm affectionately. He broke the kiss and whispered, "Are you okay?"

"I'll tell you later," she replied quietly.

Steve leaned back and nodded, "Well, welcome home. We all missed you today during church."

Peggy put on a smile, "I'd rather be with my family than at DC, believe me." Steve smirked and glanced back over at Sarah to monitor her progress on bolting in the radiator.

Peggy stood by them silently and watched her husband and daughter fix the car together. The two of them laughing and joking while they work showed the tight-knit bond Steve and their older daughter shared. Steve was in his element with the kids, and he always enjoyed teaching them new things and doing activities with them no matter how hard, ridiculous, or trivial it may seem. Being with the kids was satisfying enough for him, and he took great joy in being a father. Steve was undoubtedly a family man, and watching him teach Sarah how to fix the car, warmed her heart.

Seeing her husband and their daughter working together like this made it hard for Peggy to ask Steve to pick up his shield again. Although it would only be this one mission, she still found it difficult to ask him to return. Peggy knew Steve would come back if she asked him too, but she hated the idea of asking him to leave their family like this. But the mission has to come first before her family, and this particular mission specifically required her husband. Peggy has a job to do, and she's going to do it.

After a moment, Peggy spoke up in a serious tone, "Steve, there's something I need to talk to you about; it's important."

Steve looked back at his wife and furrowed his brows, "Hm. That sounds serious. Want to talk about it now or—"
"Now," she quickly replied. Sarah looked up at her parents and watched their exchange with curiosity as she absentmindedly continued to work on the car.

Steve nodded, "Is this something you can't talk about in front of Sarah?"

"Not yet. I need to talk to you about it first."

"Right then. I'll meet you in our room in a few minutes. Let me make sure Sarah has everything all under—"

"Shit!" Expressed a startled Sarah as she accidentally dropped the wrench on the ground, causing a loud metallic bang against the concrete.

Steve snapped a look at his daughter, "Language."

"Yeah, language," Peggy repeated, looking at her sternly.

Sarah slumped, "Sorry." She picked up the wrench and went back to work on the car.

Steve smirked, "As I was saying. Let me make sure Sarah has everything under control here then I'll go wash up and we can talk."

Peggy nodded, "Sounds good."

"Is everything okay, hon?" he asked concerned.

"I'll tell you soon, darling. I promise." With that, Peggy turned for the garage and walked into the house.

Sarah looked up at her father, "Hm… what was that all about? Is Mom okay?"

Steve shrugged, "I'm going to find out real soon."

In the master bathroom, Steve finished washing his hands in the sink and began to dry his hands with the hand towel. His tank top undershirt replaced his oil-stained t-shirt from earlier, revealing his muscular arms and toned upper body. As he got done with drying his hands, he peered at the mirror and saw Peggy sit down at the edge of their bed, now in a comfortable, light blue shirtwaist dress with a matching blue belt around her waist. Steve noticed she wore a troubled look on her face as she fixed her dress from any wrinkles.

Steve put the towel back on the rack and walked into the bedroom. He strolled over to the bed and sat down next to his wife and nodded at her with a warm look. "What's going on?" he asked in a calm voice.

Peggy frowned, "There's trouble in Berlin. Again."

Steve nodded, "We heard. It was all over the news today. It's all everyone wanted to talk about. The Press is saying the Reds are erecting a wall of hate and splitting families apart."

"The press isn't wrong. The GDR and the Soviets are going to construct a concrete wall around West Berlin. It won't be just barbed wire fences and barriers. It'll be something way worse."

"Yeah, I thought so," Steve replied evenly. He sighed, "Was this the thing you wanted to talk to me about?"
Peggy shook her head, "It's part of it, but not the thing I wanted to talk about." She stopped and hesitated to say another word which raised concern in Steve. She was acting strange and out of character from her usual confident and collected self.

"Peggy, what's going on? Are you sure you're alright?" Steve asked with concern.

Peggy hesitated again, "I'm sorry."

"Take your time, hon," Steve replied in understanding.

"This is hard for me to ask of you, darling."

"Take your time. You can ask me anything, Peggy," Steve said reassuringly.

Peggy nodded and took a deep breath. She looked at her husband in the eyes and finally spat it out, "I need you to do a mission for me. For SHIELD."

Steve nodded, "Hm, I see. Is this what was so hard to tell me?"

Peggy nodded, "Yes. And one of the reasons why I was in DC today."

"The President asked you to bring me back, didn't he?"

"Sort of, but not in the capacity you think. Not like last week." Steve cocked his head to the side with a confused look. Peggy sighed, "The situation in Berlin is fragile and a lot of our foreign assets who fed us information need to get out. Many are worried that the GDR will increase local surveillance and purge people like what Stalin did in the Soviet Union."

"I see."

"And the CIA has an informant within Stasi Headquarters in East Berlin who dropped the name 'Billy Meyers' in her last dead drop to them."

Steve instantly shot a look at his wife upon hearing Meyers' name.

"That's the same look I had when I heard when Dulles told me the same thing," Peggy said evenly.

"But what does this have to do with me doing a mission for SHIELD?" he asked.

"The contact asked for you specifically to get her out of East Berlin. Only you."

Steve looked at Peggy with a confused look, "Me?" He shook his head, "Who is this person?"

"Her name is Anja Becker, secretary with significant security clearance within Stasi Headquarters in Berlin."

Steve looked down at the floor, "Anja Becker. Anja." He shook his head, "It can't be her," he replied in disbelief as he recalled the familiar name.

Peggy reached into her dress pocket and removed a small photograph and handed it to her husband, "Her."

Steve took the picture and saw it was of him during WWII in the winter with a little blonde girl wrapped in blankets in his arms. He instantly recognized the little girl's face, "Anja..." He nodded, "That Anja."
"She credits you for saving her life," Peggy responded.

Steve handed the photo back to Peggy.

The super soldier serum did more than improving his body, but it also developed his mind. The serum gave Steve an eidetic memory, which means he has perfect recall and never forgets anything. This ability gave Steve an edge in many combat situations because he quickly learns new tactics and applies them to fit his needs. Additionally, since the serum has passed to the kids and Peggy, they too, also have developed an eidetic memory.

Wiltz, Belgium

December 1944

The sun hung low and shined through the broken clouds to the snow-covered Belgium town. The surrounding area seemed strangely peaceful, the rolling hills and the forests were blanketed with snow and resembled a picture-perfect winter wonderland. But the peaceful scenery didn't match reality as the town lay in ruin from war. Impact craters from artillery pocketed the countryside closest to the town. Bodies lay limp and helpless in the mud and snow. Most were soldiers both American and German, but there were also dead Belgium civilians, both young and old, caught in the turmoil of war. Though the shooting has stopped and the artillery ceased, the area was anything but peaceful, scarred by the Second World War.

Steve walked through the blown out town with his helmet on and shield strapped to his back, passing by the withdrawing remnants of the two infantry companies he fought his way to rescue. The wary soldiers limped and dragged their feet, many of them wounded, as they passed by him. Their uniforms now faded into grey and tattered, and nearly all of them had gone unshaven for months. Almost every soldier looked at Steve with tired eyes and thousand-yard stares, few managing to give him anything more than a grateful smile. Steve understood and didn't need any recognition. The tired and battered soldiers of the under-strength infantry companies wanted nothing more but a break from all this madness, the madness of war.

Behind Steve was the rest of the Battalion, also wary and tired, and attached Sherman Tanks coming to secure the town and replace the understrength units leaving the line. For the past few months, the Battalion has repeatedly been attempting to punch through the German lines to rescue the crippled companies in the town but to no avail. When Steve and his commandos finally arrived at the front, he and his team were outnumbered and faced an enemy with superior positions and weapons. It took his team two hours to breach the German line and reach the town, allowing the rest of the Battalion to follow and capitalize on the initiative. German forces crumbled shortly after. Aside from Steve's superhuman abilities, his attack on the German line was a classic example of small-unit tactics and leadership against a superior force.

Steve walked into the square of the town and stopped as he watched the soldiers pass him. He frowned as he continued to watch their passing tired faces. Every soldier looked like ghosts or people with their souls torn out. Steve couldn't blame them. It's just war. No other way to explain the reality everyone like him faced. He stepped to the curb to make way for the small column of Sherman tanks to pass him slowly.

As the lead tank passed him, the tank Commander gave Steve a small wave which he reciprocated with a nod. Steve then sighed and rubbed his neck with his hand, mentally exhausted after today's battle. He suddenly felt a pat on his shoulder, causing him to turn in that direction and saw his best friend, Bucky with a Thompson submachine gun slung over his shoulder, looking at him with a tired look.
"You okay?" Bucky asked calmly.

"I should be asking you that question," he replied.

Bucky chuckled, "Hey, I'm not the one who practically broke the German lines by himself, alright. But to answer your question. I feel like a million bucks." He turned serious, "I'm just glad there was still soldiers here left to save. These guys have been here for months, getting relentlessly pounded by the Germans."

"Yeah," Steve replied quietly.

Bucky smirked at his friend, "This attack you pulled off. It's got to be one for the books."

"Yeah. I'm just glad I didn't lose any of you, and got to these guys in time," he said quietly. "The fire we were taking was pretty intense."

Bucky nodded, "Yeah, it was. But let's be honest, you made this attack by yourself. The commandos were just mopping up after you."

"It was a team effort, Buck."

Bucky smiled and raised his hands defensively, "Hey, we're okay with giving you the glory, don't need to worry about us." Steve smirked and shook his head. "But this proves that we'll follow you come hell or high water, no matter what. To the end of the line, pal," he said confidently.

Steve nodded, "You've already proven that."

Bucky shrugged, "I'm just saying, to anyone else, what you did was a suicide mission. There was a lot of machine gun fire and mortars aimed at you. Not to mention the ground you crossed had little cover." He smirked, "No one in their right mind would willingly run into that."

"Just another day at the office," Steve responded humorously.

Suddenly, Steve heard the faint rumbling sound of falling artillery. "Incoming!" Steve called as he grabbed his shield off his back. The first few artillery rounds burst in the center of the square, sending a grey cloud of hot debris and shrapnel into the air, evaporating the nearby snow.

Steve grabbed Bucky and bent him down and covered the two of them with his shield as steel rain fell from the sky. Artillery continued to fall into the town, impacting the streets and nearby buildings. Soldiers and townspeople dove for cover in any place they could find it as the Earth shook from the high explosive shells. A few artillery rounds hit buildings directly, either collapsing the whole structure or only parts of it. The munitions fell indiscriminately and didn't distinguish between military or civilian.

The artillery abruptly ceased just as fast as it appeared. Once the explosions subsided and the dust began to settle, the town became filled with screams from wounded soldiers and civilians calling for help. Medics, with their red cross on their sleeve and helmets, were the first on their feet as they ran throughout the town to help those crying out for them.

Steve and Bucky stood up and observed the damage. From where they stood, they could see a handful of dead and wounded soldiers and civilians in the center of the square. Steve figured the Germans had the center of the town zeroed with artillery to kill as many of the Americans reinforcing the area as possible. He sighed and holstered his shield on his back again. After a few minutes, the unharmed, but shaken, soldiers in the town stood up and continued with what they were doing — either leaving the town or reinforcing it.
Steve suddenly heard a muffled cry from a baby, catching his attention. He looked over in the direction of the cries to a nearby battered three-story building. The structure, like much of the town, was peppered with bullet holes and large portions of it were blown out from explosions. The top floor looked nearly exposed with the roof caved in from mortars and artillery.

Bucky noticed Steve's troubled look, "What is it?"

"Do you hear that?" Steve responded.

"All I hear are people screaming and tanks rolling down the road," Bucky replied.

"I hear a child crying," Steve said. Figures he's the only one to hear the cries.

"There's a lot of people crying out here, Steve," Buck said confused.

He stepped to the building, "Follow me." Bucky nodded and followed him without question.

Steve and Bucky crossed the street and walked into the crumbling building through a massive hole in the wall, broken glass and shards of debris crunched under their feet. The first floor of the structure looked like it was once a café. Broken tables and bricks lying around the floor, the wallpaper was chipped or peeling, and bullet holes scarred the walls. But without pause, the two soldiers followed the cries of the baby upstairs, taking the stairs on their right.

At the top, the two men felt a cold breeze blowing through the holes in the walls and the collapsed roof. Steve and Bucky paused at the top of the stairs and listened to the baby's cries and heard it coming from down the debris-filled hallway.

Bucky looked over at the room at the far end of the hallway, "Coming from over there."

Steve nodded and briskly walked down to the far end of the corridor with Bucky close behind. The two men slowly approached the room and entered cautiously only to see a disturbing sight. Under piles of stone, brick, and wood debris were two adults, one male, and one female, crushed to death. Their eyes open and blood congealed to the side of their cheeks and mouths. Next to the two bodies, at the far corner of the room, was a shivering little blonde girl in a dirty dress cradling a crying baby wrapped in a small grey blanket.

"Jesus," Bucky whispered under the sound of the loud cries from the baby.

Steve noticed the girl looked to be in shock; her eyes showed no emotion and stared blankly at the bodies. Her parents. He carefully approached the little girl and the baby and kneeled beside them. "Hey," Steve quietly greeted the girl.

The girl didn't respond and continued to stare at her dead parents, the baby in her arms, continuing to cry loudly.

Steve looked around the room and saw a grey blanket on the floor by Bucky. "Buck, can you get that blanket for me?" he asked nodding to the blanket by him.

Bucky nodded and picked the blanket off the floor and walked over to him and handed it to him.

"Thanks," Steve said, draping the thick blanket over the girl to try and keep her warm. The girl continued to shiver and look blankly at her dead parents. Steve frowned and tried to talk to her, "We're Americans. We're here to help you," he said to the girl over the loud cries from the baby. The girl didn't respond but slowly looked at him. That's progress at least.
Steve glanced over at Bucky, "Buck, can you take the baby. Keep her warm and take her to a doctor or a medic or something."

"I'll take care of her," Bucky responded as he kneeled to take the baby from the little girl.

As Bucky gently took the baby, careful to support the head, the girl slowly turned her attention to him. "I-Mmm-mmm," the girl began but couldn't speak, still overcome by shock.

"It's okay, I'll keep her warm and get her help," Bucky reassured the girl as he stood up with the baby cradled in his arms. Neither he nor Steve was sure if the girl spoke English, but it was worth a shot to talk to her.

As Bucky stepped away, the girl tried to speak again, "Mmm-Mmm." She couldn't say anything and could only watch as he walked out of the room with her baby sister.

Steve hugged the girl to keep her warm, "It's okay, he's going to get her help," he comforted quietly. The girl silently looked back at him but still couldn't say a word. Steve frowned at the condition of the girl. "I'm going to get you out of here, okay? I promise you'll see your baby sister again."

Steve wrapped the girl up with the blanket then cradled her in his arms and stood up. As he was about to leave, Jim Morita entered the room with the radio strapped to his back.

"Captain," Jim greeted.

"What is it?" Steve responded as he carried the girl toward his radio operator.

"Agent Carter and the Colonel need to see you. Something about destroying those guns that just shelled us," Jim replied evenly.

Steve squeezed by Jim and carried the girl out of the bombed out room, "Tell them, I'll be there in a second," he said as he walked away.

Jim nodded in response as he watched Steve walk away.

"Is this why she asked for me?" Steve asked.

"Mhmm," Peggy hummed in response.

"And this is why the President asked you to bring me back."

"Yes. To extract her." She sighed, "Extracting her gives us two big things, information on Meyers and valuable insight into the GDR's state security."

"I see. But extracting Anja, especially right after today with the East Germans erecting barriers around Berlin, would be risky. The National People's Army would be all over East Berlin."

Peggy nodded, "I know."

Steve shrugged, "At least the government talked to you first. Went through the proper chain of command," he said with a slight smile.

Peggy nodded, "They figured you would listen to me." She smiled, "I guess they think you wouldn't believe them if they went to you first. Especially after last week."

"Probably wouldn't," Steve replied with a grin. His smile faded away and he sighed, "So. Before I
answer, what do you think?"

Peggy shook her head, "I truly don't want you to go, but that's selfish of me. Anja has information about Meyers that we need. He's been avoiding us for four years, and he poses a significant threat to national security, and Anja, so far, is our only way to find him."

"Not to mention Meyers orchestrated a hit on you," Steve said evenly.

She sighed, "Right. But no matter how much I want you to stay and be safe at home with us, I know that this has to take priority over that; this is bigger than our family." She frowned, "I just hate to see you go back into action again. Even though I know you could take on anything, I'm still going to worry, and that kills me." She sighed, "And I'll miss you. I've been so used to having you home and not worrying about you when you travel." She frowned, "This is really hard for me. Asking you to do this and to leave our family, but it's my job to—"

Steve nodded, "I know." He reached over and gripped her hand on her lap. "It'll be okay. It's just this one mission, right?"

Peggy nodded, "Just this mission."

"Okay. I'm letting you know that I don't plan on returning to SHIELD fulltime," he said with a small smile.

"I know and I wouldn't want you to either," she replied softly.

Steve leaned into her and kissed her lips briefly, wrapping his arm around her and bringing her close.

Peggy reciprocated the kiss, but after a moment she broke it and gave her husband a small but adoring smile. Steve could tell in her eyes that she was worrying. He didn't blame her and knew that Peggy had to ask him to do this task. Steve didn't want to go any more than she wanted him too, but this mission in retrieving Anja is essential for SHIELD and U.S. Intelligence. If there were any other options, he knew Peggy would've considered them first before asking her husband and the father of her children to go back into action after years of being retired from SHIELD.

A few years ago, Steve would've been okay with coming back to SHIELD if asked to, but his attitude changed after years of working with Stark and raising his family. He found and enjoyed his new purpose of raising his kids and helping many other people without the need for violence or his shield. It was a good and ordinary life, and Steve enjoyed it. Though he found love in helping everyday people, raising his children, and being a loving husband to Peggy was his ultimate sense of joy. After fourteen years of marriage, the bond between Peggy and Steve never faltered, and the couple cherished the time they have together.

"When do I go?"

"Tomorrow morning at 8," Peggy softly responded as she rested her hand against his chest. 

Steve nodded and looked down, "Probably shouldn't tell the kids that I'm going to Germany as Captain America."

Peggy nodded, "Yeah, we shouldn't. Best to tell them that you're going on another business trip for Howard."

"I'll tell them at dinner time," Steve said evenly. He sighed, "I hate lying to them…"

Peggy nodded, "Me too. But—"
"I know. I know, Peg," Steve responded.

Peggy didn't say anything else after that. She didn't need too. The two of them stayed in each other's embrace for a while longer and shared a kiss before moving forward with the evening.

Later that evening, with the setting sun casting its red-orange glow into the kitchen, the Rogers family sat around the table and enjoyed a nice family dinner with each other. With an assortment of delicious home-cooked food on the table, including a delightful lamb roast as the main course, Peggy's favorite, the family certainly savored a hearty dinner along with quality family time.

Sarah, now cleaned up and now in a lovely blue day dress, swallowed another bite of lamb and veggies, "This is so good," she said happily.

Steve, dressed in a collared shirt and slacks, chuckled, "I'm glad you like it."

Sarah nodded and started to shovel more food into her mouth, hungry after working on the car with her dad all afternoon in the summer heat.

Peggy, now in a floral day dress, sat on the opposite end of the table from Steve, smirked at her oldest daughter. "Slow down, darling. I know you're hungry, but that's still no excuse for you to lose your manners."

Sarah swallowed her food, "Sorry, Mom. I'm just hungry."

Michael chuckled, " BEEN out in the sun for too long, sister." Sarah shrugged and smiled as she took another bite of food.

Peggy smiled at her oldest daughter, "But, Sarah. Thank you for helping your father with the car. I'm sure he enjoyed your help."

"I did," Steve chimed in happily.

Sarah grinned, "Of course! I enjoyed helping Dad."

Peggy swallowed her bite, "I sure hope it works properly after you fixed it."

Sarah smiled, "We do too. Because we don't know what to do if it doesn't." The whole family chuckled at her comment.

"There's always the shop," Steve replied with a shrug.

"Why pay for something that we can do ourselves. Besides, it's cheaper if we do it ourselves," said Sarah.

Angela grinned, "Yeah, until you have to push it down the street." Everyone laughed.

Steve calmed down from laughing and smirked at his youngest daughter, "That was pretty funny, Angela."

Peggy smiled at Sarah, "You're so much like your father, darling."

"Thank you, Mama," replied Sarah with a big grin.

Peggy nodded, "Break the mold, sweetheart."
"I will," said the teenage girl.

John, who sat by his mother, looked at her, "What does that mean, Mama?"

Peggy leaned over to her youngest son, "It means, do completely different things from what has been done before or from what is usually done."

"Oh. So Sarah broke the mold?"

Steve nodded, "Both your mom and your older sister broke the mold. Doing things not common for girls to be doing."

"Oh. Hurray for Sarah!" John cheered for her sister.

Sarah laughed, "Thanks, little John."

"And Mama," Peggy added with a grin.

"And Mama too!" John cheered again.

Michael looked at his twin, "I'm glad you like doing that laborious stuff, Sarah. Not a big fan of getting all greased."

Sarah smiled, "Don't worry. We all know I'm more of a boy than you are."

Michael laughed, "I'm well aware." Peggy chuckled at her two teenagers.

Steve smirked and looked down at his plate. His smile soon faded away as he thought to himself on how to tell his children that he has to leave on a last minute trip. Steve knew Sarah, Michael, and Angela would be okay with him going for a bit for "work," but the problem was little John. John doesn't have separation anxiety, but Steve knew his son would be sad about him going on a sudden "business" trip. His son and the rest of his family would miss him when he's gone, and Steve couldn't blame any of them. He would miss them too.

Angela noticed her Dad's sudden silence, "Dad? Is everything okay?"

Steve nodded. "Kids," he spoke up, catching the attention of his whole family. "There's something I need to tell you."

Michael raised his brow, "What is it, Dad?"

"I have to go on a trip for work. Very last minute, but I'll be gone for at least a week," Steve replied evenly.

Angela rested her elbows on the table and leaned forward to speak, but her mother instantly scolded her. "Angela, elbows off the table," her mother said sternly.

"Sorry, Mama," Angela said to her mother as she leaned back, removing her elbows off the table. She looked back at her dad, "Where are you going, Daddy?"

Steve smirked, "Your Uncle Howard is sending me to Germany for a conference and demonstrations." He glanced at Peggy who gave him a nod of approval with his choice in words.

John finally spoke up, "For at least a week? So… you might be there longer?"

Steve frowned and nodded, "At least."
"When do you go?"

"Tomorrow," Steve said evenly.

Michael looked at his dad with a confused look, "That's pretty last minute for Uncle Howard, Dad."

Steve shrugged, "Apparently the person he wanted to send originally was being difficult, so he called me instead."

"Oh. That makes sense," said Michael.

Sarah rolled her eyes, "Probably, Mr. Clark. Uncle Howard and Dad don't always have the best things to say about him."

"Probably."

Peggy smirked at her teenage twins.

Steve chuckled, "Good guess, Kids." He looked at Michael, "Well, since I'm gone, your mother is going to be picking you up from football for the next week or so, okay?"

Michael nodded, "Not a problem, Dad."

"And kids," Steve said glancing around the table at his family. "Make sure you help your mother around the house when I'm gone."

"We always do, Dad," commented Sarah.

Angela nodded, "We'll take care of Mama when you're gone. Promise!"

Steve smiled proudly, "I know you will. Thanks, Kids. Man can't ask for a better family."

Peggy nodded at her husband, "The kids will be fine when you're gone, darling." She forced a smile to hide her worry of the real reason why her husband is leaving for Germany. "We'll wait for your return."

Michael nodded, "It's going to get awfully quiet without you, Dad."

John frowned and slumped in his chair.

Steve noticed John's mood, "What's wrong, Buddy? Are you okay?"

Sarah smiled at her dad, "He's already missing you, Dad."

"Why do you have to go tomorrow all of a sudden," John said sadly, looking down at his plate.

Steve stood up and walked over to his youngest son, "It's for work, Kiddo." He squatted down by John's side and wrapped his arm around him, and spoke in a soft tone, "I know it's last minute, but I have to so I can keep my job. I'll be back before you know it, okay?"

John didn't say anything and merely nodded in response.

Steve kissed him on the top of his head, "I love you, kiddo."

"I love you too, Dad," John replied quietly.

Steve smiled, "Hey, when I get back, how about all of us take a long bike ride through the national
park as a family? What do you say to that?"

John looked at his dad and nodded, "Sounds good."

Steve kissed him on the cheek, "I'll bring back a gift from Germany for everyone." He then stood up and walked back to his seat to finish his dinner.

As Steve sat down, he looked across the table to Peggy who gave him a small smile. For the rest of dinner, the family ate, talked, and laughed together like normal.

Late in the night with the house quiet and the kids fast asleep, Steve and Peggy lay in bed together, wrapped in each other's arms, unable to go to sleep. Peggy spoke up in a hushed tone, "Can't sleep?"

Steve kissed his wife on the shoulder, "Yeah."

Peggy sighed and stared up at the ceiling. "Same thing that's keeping me up?"

"Mhmm," Steve hummed into her neck as he hugged her tighter.

Peggy gripped her husband's hand, "I don't want you to go, but this mission I'm sending you on, it's important. If there was any other—"

"I know. Peggy, I know," Steve replied quietly, kissing her shoulder.

Peggy frowned, "Darling, you're Captain America. I know you can handle anything that comes your way, but come back to us. Please. However long it takes."

"I will," Steve whispered. He leaned down and kissed her on the cheek and held her tight, Peggy gripping his arms tightly and cherishing his grip.

Steve Rogers has an Eidetic Memory IE has perfect recall and never forgets anything.

"Barbed Wire Sunday" Name given to Sunday morning August 13, 1961, when the military and police of East Germany began the construction of what would become of the Berlin Wall with the intention of preventing citizens of the East Germany migrating to the West.

Though the chapter didn't take place in Berlin, the incident on the other side of the world impacted our characters.

Stay tuned for Steve's "Brief" return as Captain America

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