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**Just the Flu**

by **Swankyo0**

Summary

Steve and Tony have left their son in Bucky's care for one weekend. One weekend, and the kid is going to die of the flu because Bucky is a god damned push-over.

Notes

The flu killed thousands of people in 1918. Steve nearly died from the flu, probably several times a year. Lots of guys in WWII died of the flu. The flu vaccine wasn't developed until 1943. Bucky is gonna freak out about the flu, ok?

Steve was too much a hero, that’s where the trouble really started for Bucky. Stevie, bless his heart, just didn’t know when not to jump on the grenade, to not try to save the day. So of course, when Tony Stark asked Steve to adopt a child with him, Stevie found the frailest, most sickly child in the system.

The kid looked so much like Steve, too, before the serum. Flat, golden hair, bright blue eyes, pale, pale skin that turned ruddy and splotchy as he coughed, nothing but skin and bones. Who better to provide for his needs, Steve argued, than a billionaire and the strongest man on earth? There was never a chance in hell that Stark would say no.
Bucky was too much of a sucker, maybe that’s where his trouble started. Just a weekend, Stevie had cajoled, Bucky could watch one seven year old child for three days so Tony and Steve could go celebrate their ten year anniversary. Bucky held out an admirable amount of time, really, but then the puppy dog eyes had come out and, as established, Bucky was a damned sucker.

Bucky put on a good show of being annoyed but in reality he loved spending time with the kid. Aaron was smart, playful, and just as stubborn as either of his fathers. And maybe Bucky was a bit of a push-over for the kid, but it had never been a problem. Until now.

They’d spent most of the day running around outside. It was cold, the snow on the ground wet and heavy, sticking to the bottoms of their boots and pants. But Aaron was having so much fun, and so was Bucky. Around the three hour mark, Bucky tried to convince Aaron that they should head in and warm up, but the boy had argued for another hour and Bucky had caved.

It wasn’t until they were inside, dry and warm, that Bucky got the idea that he might have fucked up there. Aaron had the sniffles for the last hour and a half they were out in the snow, but Bucky had, too, so he thought it was just the cold. Bucky’s sniffles went away after about ten minutes in the warmth, but Aaron’s just got worse.

Bucky made some hot soup and grilled cheese, figuring they needed the calories and that the soup would clear up Aaron’s head. There wasn’t anything wrong with the soup, Bucky had several bowls without a problem, but Aaron had only made it through half his bowl before deciding he didn’t feel very good.

Two hours later Aaron was curled up under a blanket on the couch complaining of a head and stomach ache. An Hour after that the coughing had started and just seemed to get worse. Half an hour into the coughing, the vomiting started and just didn’t end. By the time they’d been home for 6 hours the boy’s fever had climbed to 104.2 and Bucky decided to bring Aaron in to the ER.

Bucky had been sitting in the waiting room, Aaron draped over his front, for only about 15 minutes before the doctor could see them. He wasn’t sure if he should be relieved or worried about the speed at which they were seen. It was just about when the nurse started swabbing Aaron’s throat that Bucky’s stomach start tying itself into knots. Less than half an hour later the doctor was back, and Bucky was sweating bullets.

“Good news, it’s just the flu. Keep him-” Blood rushed into his ears and Bucky didn’t hear what else the doctor said.

The flu, just the flu. He’d given Steven Roger’s son the flu. God, Bucky had to call Steve right away. Stevie’s only uncle died of the flu in 1918, before Steve was even born. It almost took his father, too, and then Stevie never would have known him either. And they were full grown men. Aaron was just a kid and already so sickly, so much like Steve. How many times had the flu almost killed Stevie? How many guys had he watched the flu kill in his life? What the hell was Bucky going to do?

“Mr. Barnes? Are you alright?” The doctor’s voice broke through Bucky’s panic.

“Can you do anything for him?” Bucky asked, the fear evident in his voice. The doctor seemed taken aback by his tone.

“I can give him a prescription for an antiviral, but he mostly just needs rest.”

“Just rest?” Bucky could hear the panic in his voice. He needed to calm down before he scared Aaron. Bucky took a deep breath before continuing, his voice much steadier. “Right, rest. What-what else can I do?”
“Keep him hydrated, Gatorade is a good option. And if he complains of pain you can give him some Tylenol.” The doctor smiled reassuringly and clapped Bucky gently on the shoulder. “He should feel better in about 4 to 5 days, perhaps less with this antiviral.” He handed Bucky a slip of paper before shaking his hand and leaving the room. Bucky stared after him.

Ok, right, Bucky just needed to keep his cool. Maybe this Tylenol really helped. And Gatorade certainly made him feel better after a really hard training session or battle. It would be fine, the doctor said it would be fine. Bucky took another deep breath before turning to Aaron.

“All right kid, we just need to stop at the pharmacy for some stuff and then it’s home to rest up.” Bucky tried to pull himself together. He need to get Aaron home and in bed ASAP. Gatorade, prescription, Tylenol. Right. Bucky could do this.

Finding the right stuff in the pharmacy took longer than Bucky would have liked. There was a line at the prescription counter that took longer to get through than it had taken to be seen at the hospital. Aaron was tired and cranky, whining in Bucky’s ear about wanting to go home. Bucky tried to reassure him, tell him they would be home soon, but he felt pretty helpless here. He needed to get Aaron home before the flu got worse.

When he got to the counter and was told it would take about a half hour to fill the damn prescription Bucky had to take another deep breath. He unclenched his teeth, nodded, and headed off to find everything else he needed. Gatorade was easy enough to find, but there were so many types of Tylenol Bucky’s head spun. Eventually, Aaron picked up his head, looked around and shot his hand out to grab a purple box off the shelf.

“I like the purple better than the orange,” Aaron explained. Bucky nodded and added the box to the cart feeling completely useless. A seven year old knew what to do better than Bucky did. Lord he wished Stevie was here. Right, he needed to call Steve.

Bucky pulled out his phone, his stomach somewhere around his Adam’s Apple. Steve was going to freak out. The line rang twice before it was answered by a rough voiced, out of breath Steve.

“How’s Aaron?” Bucky glanced at the phone, catching the time. No wonder Steve was worried, it was well after midnight. Bucky hadn’t even told him about the flu yet. He swallowed thickly and opened his mouth.

“No,” he croaked out. “He’s- he’s got the flu, Stevie”

There was a sigh on the other side of the line, Bucky could hear Stark in the background, Steve’s reply muffled and soft. “It’s nothing, Tony. Go back to sleep.”

“Steve?” How could he be so calm? Did he not want to worry Stark? Bucky was practically shaking in his boots here.

“Is that Daddy?” Aaron lifted his head from Bucky’s shoulder and reached for the phone. “I want to talk to Daddy.” Bucky gently brushed his hand away, it was much too easy. Aaron was obviously pretty weak.

“In a minute, buddy.”

“It’s ok, Buck,” Steve replied soothingly. Bucky felt his shoulders relax at the tone. “The flu’s pretty easy to treat at home, now.”

“What?” Bucky blinked. Easy to treat?
“Yeah. We got him vaccinated but sometimes, not often but sometimes, it just doesn’t take. Especially for a kid like Aaron.”

“Vaccinated,” Bucky repeated and blinked again.

“Yeah, Buck, there’s a vaccine now. They figured it out a couple of years after I went into the ice. Really, the flu isn’t like it was.”

“Oh my god,” Bucky heard in the background. “You didn’t tell him that people aren’t dropping like flies from a common cold anymore?”

“Tony.”

“It’s flu season, Steve. Is he panicking? He is, isn’t he? Is he making Aaron panic?”

“Is that Daddy?” Aaron asked again. “That sounds like Daddy. I want to talk to Daddy.”

“I’m sure he’s not, Tony And it won’t help anyone if you panic about the idea of Aaron panicking.”

“Stevie?” Bucky croaked again. There was a rustling on the other side of the phone and then Steve yelped and Stark came on the line.

“Buckaroo!” Tony sounded down right cheery, but Bucky could hear the thread of worry in his voice. At least someone was taking this seriously. “Let me talk to the nugget.” Bucky obediently handed the phone to Aaron.

“Daddy,” Aaron whined into the phone. “I don’t feel good”

Bucky couldn’t hear the other end of the conversation any more, but he watched Aaron gently nod before laying his head back on Bucky’s shoulder and listening intently. After a few minutes, Aaron replied.

“Ok, Daddy. Do you want to talk to Uncle Bucky, again?” He asked before handing the phone back to Bucky.

“Look,” Stark sounded much less worried now, and Bucky started to think maybe Steve wasn’t just trying to keep him calm. “Just give him some Tylenol if he says anything hurts, feed him some chicken broth and Gatorade, and keep him in bed until his fever goes down. It’s easy. Even you can’t screw it up.”

“Gee, thanks,” Bucky drawled, rolling his eyes. “That’s basically what the doctor said. He gave me a prescription, we’re getting it now. I just- well, I thought you guys would want to know.”

There was a rustling and then Stevie was back on the line. “Buck? Honest, it’ll be just fine. Do you or Aaron need us to come home?”

Bucky glanced over at the kid resting on his shoulder. He already seemed cooler than he did before going to the hospital. Gatorade, prescription, Tylenol. Bucky took a steadying breath. He could do this.

“No, I think we’ll be ok.”

“Just call if you need anything, alright? He’s gonna be fine, Buck,” Steve said gently. “I promise.”

Bucky hung up the phone and headed back to the prescription counter. He might be feeling much better, but he still had a sick boy to get into bed.
When Steve and Stark returned the next day they found Bucky bundled up on the couch watching Disney movies, Aaron pulled tight to his side under the blankets. They both looked pretty miserable, with deep circles under their eyes and hair sticking up akimbo.

“Hey, how are my favorite guys doing?” Aaron’s head flew up from Bucky’s shoulder, his glazed eyes crossing for a second.

“Daddy! You’re home early!”

“Yeah, nugget,” Stark drawled. “You’re father couldn’t stop worrying about you and Uncle Bucky for one minute last night, so we came home to ease his mind.”

Steve rolled his eyes. “Yes,” his voice perfectly droll. “That is exactly what happened.” He shared a put upon glance with Bucky, making it obvious that it was Tony who had been worrying all night.

Stark sat carefully on the other side of Aaron, pulling the small boy into his lap and checking his forehead for fever. Aaron pushed his hand away.

“I’m fine, Dad,” the way Aaron cuddled down into his father belied his statement.

“Well, Uncle Bucky has lots of experience taking care of the flu.” Steve smiled at Bucky. “We knew you would be just fine with him here to take care of you.”

Bucky smiled back. He wasn’t so sure about his ability to treat the flu from experience- the internet had said that almost everything they used to do to treat the flu was wrong, after all- but at least modern medicine had the flu well in hand. He’d have to have Steve sit down and tell him what else modern medicine could do before the kid got sick again, though. Just so he was prepared.

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