Testing 1...2...3

by PumpkinDoodles

Summary

For Darcyland Crackfic 2019.
Prompt #6: Must Include Glow Sticks

Darcy embarrasses herself. Repeatedly. She really needs to get over this whole unrequited thing.

Notes

I own nothing!
“Jane, I’m going to marry him,” Darcy announced on their first full day at SHIELD.

“Which him?” Jane asked, unlocking the door to their lab. “Steve?” Several members of STRIKE Alpha had just walked by, accompanied by Captain America. Steve had introduced them to Jane and Darcy.

“No, no, Commander Rumlow,” Darcy said, as if this was obvious. “He’s my ideal, like Barbara Stanwyck says in The Lady Eve. Did you see his forearm tattoos when he shook your hand? All those tats are belong to me. I got dibs, Janey.”

“Oh, okay,” Jane said absently. Truth be told, Jane didn’t take it seriously. Darcy also vowed to marry Shemar Moore whenever she saw him on television. Jane couldn’t have told someone who Commander Rumlow was. The tall Australian one? The blonde one? Darcy would forget about it, probably. Jane certainly hadn’t noticed anyone special. Once you’d been to Asgard, regular guys tended to recede into the woodwork, even if they did have tattoos or work with Captain America.

Two weeks later, Jane had totally forgotten about it and Darcy had baked “test” mini pound cakes for her and Thor the night before for unexplained reasons. Jane, mid-theorem, had forgotten to ask what the test was. Thor had been too busy eating the results and getting crumbs in his beard.

“Jane, I refilled your coffee and I’m going down to floor twelve!” Darcy said. She was carrying the bag of cakes.

“Huh?” Jane said, looking up. It was eleven-thirty-four.

“I’m delivering my test mini bundts to his hotness,” Darcy said.

“Prince Harry? He’s married now—” Jane said, frowning.

“Please, I’m so over that, Jane,” Darcy said, rolling her eyes.

“All right,” Jane replied. She was briefly puzzled. Who was His Hotness if it wasn’t Prince Harry anymore? Where was she going?

“Floor twelve,” Darcy supplied, seeing Jane’s expression of confusion.

“With decorated bundt cakes for—?” Jane said. She’d wrapped the pound cakes and decorated them with ribbon. Had Darcy seen it in a movie? Darcy was always going on baking binges after she saw something online or in a movie. That was why it was dangerous to let her watch Chocolat, unless you were craving soft, cocoa-dipped truffles or oodles of hot chocolate. Steve had developed sort of a fixation about suggesting it during their movie nights. He was nursing a minor hot chocolate problem.

“For my future STRIKE husband, helllooo, Midgard to Jane! Midgard to Jane!” Darcy joked before she bounced out of the lab. Then Jane remembered the future husband thing. STRIKE Alpha’s offices were on floor twelve. Darcy was still on that? That could be why she’d spent all night cooling mini bundt cakes and drizzling them with liqueur. But which one was he? Jane had forgotten to ask. Commander Whatsit. Rollo? Rimbaud?

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“Helllooo, gorgeous, are you free?” Darcy said, sticking her face around the door to Brock
Rumlow’s office and doing her best Barbra Streisand. It wasn’t *The Way We Were*, but Rumlow was behaving frustratingly like a diffident male lead in one of Streisand’s movies, stubbornly refusing to actually ask her out. “Can I tempt you with equally gorgeous pound cake?” she said, holding up the amaretto cakes. They were fluted in pretty shapes and slightly larger than donuts. Rumlow looked up and smiled. It was a good smile. Improved by his tortoiseshell reading glasses.

“Hey, sweetheart, that’s nice of you,” he said. He was working on paperwork. She’d had to go to the techs for assistance when he’d seemed oblivious in response to her inquiry about weekend plans on Tuesday. Cameron Klein had told her when he had office hours to do paperwork and meet with the probie field agents he trained.

“I didn’t know if you like amaretto or lemon, so I picked amaretto now, but I could always make you lemon later,” she told him, stepping into the small office. She’d made sure to undo an extra button on her snugly-fitted cardi before she walked in. He couldn’t miss the girls, right? She was taking her dress cues from pin-ups and Nigella Lawson during this op.

“I like both, actually,” he said. “And I’d never turn down something from you, Jane might portal me to Jotunheim,” he said, grinning at her.

“That’s right, I have all the power here, Commander,” Darcy said. “You have to listen to me.” She walked around to lean against his desk, so that her leg was just brushing his desk chair and placed the pound cakes gently on the stack of paperwork. He would get that it was ‘Pound me’ pound cake, right? Did she need to label it naughtily?

“That really looks good. Do you cook a lot?” he asked. Pleasantly, but not flirtatiously. What in the world, Darcy thought.

“I bake a lot,” she said. “Thor eats in quantity, so I always have a taste tester.”

“Yeah?” he said. The man was pretty, Darcy thought, for about the millionth time. She’d taken to peeking out Jane’s lab windows whenever his quinjet landed, just to see him stroll around the nearby helipad in aviators and black tactical gear, being all pretty and whatnot. Sometimes, he was pretty in short sleeves. She was looking forward to her first DC summer now.

“I wouldn’t mind a backup guy, though. You interested in volunteering?” she asked. Instinctively, she reached out and toyed with the ends of his dark hair. He looked up at her and smiled gently, then scratched his jaw. His expression turned sheepish.

“I would, but, uh, I’m a paleo guy, been doing that for years. This”—he patted the wrapped cake gently—“is a special treat for me, really.”

“Oh,” Darcy said, momentarily flummoxed. Of course, he’d be the only one not devouring the damn things. All the STRIKE Alpha guys in the main office adjoining his had practically lept on her big shopping bag of wrapped and beribboned cakes. If she listened, she could hear them chewing and talking happily like they were fourth graders on someone’s birthday and she was the mom who’d brought the sheet cake. Still, she’d have them on her side in future field exercises for Operation Seduction.

“I really appreciate it, though,” he said. “My whole family’s in New York, so nobody bakes for me, except at Christmas. I mostly live on protein bars and, uh, steak and chicken breasts,” he said.

“Yeah?” Darcy said, wheels turning. She was determined to get through to him. Maybe Jack had a key to Brock’s apartment? What if she snuck in and cooked him a protein-rich dinner? Was that too stalkery? “I do a really good chicken paillard,” she told him. That was technically true. She’d
learned to cook a few balanced meals so Jane wouldn’t die of vitamin-deficiency in Norway. Serious Eats were her people now.

“Really?” he said. “Could you send me the recipe?” Oh my God, Darcy thought. It’s like I’m not even registering as a woman. What gives?

“Of course,” she said. “But I’d be happy to give you an at-home cooking demonstration, too. I don’t know about you, but I’m a hands on learner.” She winked.

“Oh, don’t worry about it, sweetheart,” he said mildly. He patted her arm gently and Darcy felt herself blush. He was so tanned and warm. “I’m sure you’re busy.”

“You’d be surprised,” she said, half-archly, half in frustration.

Darcy walked out of his office feeling wildly perplexed. She practically ran into Jack Rollins’ tall frame in the hallway. “Whoops, I’m sorry, Jack,” she said, apologetic. He was pinkly tanned and relaxed-looking. He’d just returned from visiting his family in Australia.

“That’s all right, love,” Jack said. “Those mini cakes are bonzer. You could crack me on the head, I’d still forgive you.”

“Thanks, but I’m striking out with a certain STRIKE Commander,” Darcy confided. “Does he not date women? Or is there somebody?” she asked, frowning and huffing out a sigh. Rumlow was so nice, but resolutely not getting it, unless he had a person already and was too polite to tell her, for whatever mysterious reason. Jack chuckled at her.

“Oh, no, he does date women and he’s not seeing anybody,” Jack said, rubbing the back of his neck and looking particularly homicidal in thought, “they’re not usually as young and pretty as you, though.”

“Bullshit, Jack. Flattering to my ego, but total Aussie bullshit,” Darcy said, wagging a finger at him and moving to walk away. “That won’t get you more cakes, pal.” Jack grinned at her.

“I ‘ppreciate the cakes,” he called.

“If you want more, you’ll get me a date, Jack,” she said. “I’m not above bribing federal agents to get laid.”

“Noted, love!” he called back, laughing.

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Jack found Brock in his office. “Mate, what are you doing?” he asked incredulously.

“Yearly reports,” Brock grumbled. The ARs were the worst part of the job. “These fucking questions. Would you say you feel appreciated by me as a boss?” he asked. “On a scale of 1 to 10?”

“I can tell you who don’t feel appreciated,” Jack said, swiping a hunk of the amaretto cake that Brock had opened and laid out on a napkin on his desk. “Darcy Lewis.”

“Hey, that’s mine–” Brock began. “What?”

“Woman’s crazy about you,” Jack said, popping the cake fragment into his mouth. “Wants to date you, that one does.”
“C’mon, Jack,” Brock scoffed. “You got sunstroke or some shit? I’m twice her age and it’s Darcy.” What was she, twenty-seven? Maybe thirty, max? There was no way someone that young and gorgeous would want a fifty year old triple agent who’d barely survived the HYDRA Uprising and had to have his burns patched up by Helen Cho, Brock thought. He was too damn old. She probably had dozens of men at her beck and call. He couldn’t imagine her spending a night alone unless she wanted to. That red sweater she’d been wearing this morning had been distracting. Also, he liked the way she wore her dark hair wavy and the way she kneaded her upper lip with her teeth when she was thinking….

“So?” Jack said, interrupting his fantasy of what she would look like with her dark hair pooled across the pillows on his bed.

“So, I’m not some creepy old man like Gregorovich,” Brock said. Agent Gregorovich was a balding fifty-something in Tactics who always talked about his “crush” on that sad-eyed Sokovian girl that Cap knew, Wanda Maximoff. It made Brock’s skin crawl. Wanda Maximoff was practically a child and these middle-aged weirdos seemed to sense her vulnerability and hover. Like vultures. He might think about Darcy sometimes, but he wasn’t gonna vocalize it in front of Maria Hill and make jokes about celebrating the day a cute girl turned eighteen as a national holiday, like a damn freak. Cap really needed to put Gregorovich through a window, come to think of it.

“Darcy made you the best of these,” Jack said, raising an eyebrow.

“I saw her talking to some of the techs the other day,” Brock said, frowning at his paperwork, “guys her age. That’s probably who she dates. Some guy like Cameron Klein who understands whatever it is Foster’s doing upstairs.”

“Sure, sure, it’s not that she collects intelligence on your whereabouts from Klein,” Jack said skeptically. “So, she can find you and hug you.”

“She’s young,” Brock insisted. “People her age joke around and are, uh, touchy-feely, or whatever. It’s platonic, I’m sure.” He’d worked hard–ironic pun–not to let his attraction show whenever she touched him.

“Right-o,” Jack said, with evident sarcasm, swiping another piece of cake as he stood to leave.

“Hey, asshole, cut it out,” Brock muttered, “that’s mine.”

“You should take Darcy to dinner sometime as a thank you, mate,” Jack said.

Once he was alone again with his paperwork, Brock sighed. He needed fucking reading glasses and flecks of gray had started to appear in his hair. All his damn hair. Pretty soon, he’d be one of those old men from his Bronx neighborhood who sat around Domenico’s and whined about how expensive everything was now and needed to trim their fucking nose hairs. There was no way in hell that Darcy Lewis viewed him as anything more than one of her sympathy cases. Cap had mentioned that she liked to nurture people, feed them. She was a hugger and a feeder. He ate a piece of the amaretto cake. It was damn good cake. Did those kids in tech know how lucky they were? If he was fifteen years younger, he thought glumly. Then he could respond differently when she ran a palm up his forearm and complimented his Thai tattoos. Or caught him in a hug because someone had told her it was his work anniversary as a STRIKE commander and she thought “occasions should be celebrated–wildly and often.”

He’d really wanted to make a teasing joke about doing things wildly and often. But he wasn’t gonna be that guy. Fuck no. The last thing he wanted was to see her eyes flash _creep_ when she
looked at him.

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“I do not get men,” Darcy said to Jane, back in the lab. “I’m hella cute. How could he not think I’m cute?” She scrunched her nose and looked at her reflection in a shiny piece of equipment. She was a little wavy, but the hair was good, the boobs were great, and she knew the cake was fantastic. Thor had eaten eight of them last night and she’d had to put the others behind a bag of canned goods to hide them in the kitchen.

“You’re hella cute,” Jane said firmly. “This guy is ridiculous.”

“Do you even know who I mean?” Darcy asked.

“The blond barista at that coffee shop?” Jane said, guessing wildly.

“Ahhhhnt!” Darcy said, making a no buzzer sound. “But thank you anyway,” she said, patting Jane affectionately on the head.

Darcy had gone for coffee when Jack Rollins came to see Jane. “Can you help me?” he asked the scientist.

“Who are you?” she said.

“I work with Brock. She’s got a thing for him, he’s mad about her. I want to get them together. I’ve got a plan,” Jack said. “But I need help.” He passed her a blueprint and a plan of action.

“Security codes for the elevator?” Jane said. “Wait, who is she?”

“Darcy,” Jack said patiently. He’d worked with Brock for years. His patience was fairly infinite.

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Jack was behaving bizarrely, Rumlow thought. He’d told his boss that STRIKE Alpha’s latest bullet model—made to go through the scales of those Chitauri flying worm bastards, Jotunheim frost beasts, etc.—was stuck in R&D and that Rumlow’s signature was needed to get them. So, Brock was headed upstairs. The elevator doors opened and Darcy got on. “Hi,” Darcy said. Nothing was off. She lacked her usual brightness.

“You okay?” Brock asked.

“Yeah,” Darcy said. Two floors later, she sighed softly.

“Lewis,” Brock said coaxingly. “What’s bugging you?” He stepped closer. As he did, alarms began to sound and the elevator stopped with a violent jerk. Darcy stumbled forward, trying to save her coffee and her balance. Brock caught her, arms wrapped around her waist.

“Oh,” Darcy said, blushing furiously. She made to move away, but the lights went out at the same time and it startled her so much that she wobbled again.

“You okay?” he said.

“Yeah,” she said, sighing. He looked around. It was completely dark. No emergency lighting?

“This is the first time I’ve ever missed that damn glass elevator in the old building,” he said. “I don’t think I have a flashlight.”
“Oh, hold on,” she said. “I have a solution, please take my coffee,” Darcy asked. He took her cup—there was a lot of blind fumbling and touching, he tried not to find it erotic to feel her hands on his in the dark—then, as his eyes adjusted, it was clear she was fumbling in her messenger bag. “Ah ha!” she said. “Success!” She passed him something.

“What—what is this?” he asked.

“Glow stick,” she said, “just snap it. Snap and shake, hot stuff.” He heard a crack and her face was lit with a green glow.

“Oh, okay,” he said, glad she couldn’t have seen the grin when she’d called him hot stuff. *Fucking tech analysts,* he thought. “Why do you have these in your purse?” he asked. *Why was he so old? Couldn’t R&D shave four years off his age or some shit?*

“Oh, it’s the neatest thing. I’m learning how to twirl with them while Jane has her sixteen-hour science binges. Sort of a lab rave, but with coffee? We were in Germany and saw this artist at a science thing—she was the entertainment, basically—but she dipped these into neon paint and would swing them over canvases to make abstract art in the dark. It was really nifty, you know?” Darcy said. “Especially compared to the science arguments.”

“Yeah,” he said. He had no fucking clue about performance art, but he liked the enthusiasm she brought to everything. “How do you twirl these?” he asked curiously.

“You need shoestrings,” Darcy said. “Or fishing line.”

“I’ve got tactical laces on,” he said. “Would you show me?”

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“I hear giggling!” Jane hissed into her cell phone, creeping away from the elevator. “It hasn’t worked.”

“It’s got to have worked by now,” Jack said. “They’ve been in there twenty minutes. How do you know it hasn’t?”

“Give me some credit, Rollins. We lived together in tiny, thin-walled apartments all over Europe. If she’s giggling, she’s not impressed by what he’s laying down. Giggles aren’t her good sex noise. Turn on the cameras,” Jane said.

“If I turn on the cameras, it reactivates the whole elevator,” he said. “We’ve got VIPs upstairs.”

“Do it,” Jane said. “You’re going to have to think of something else to get your sugar fix.”

“What do you do?” Jack said.

“I pay her, let her play on social media during the work day, and pretend I don’t know she’s really going to Sephora at noon when she says it’s her doctor’s appointment,” Jane said.

“Oh,” Jack said. “Bloody hell. I can’t do that.”

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Darcy was mid-double twirl when the elevator’s lights came on and it started to move again. She realized Rumlow was smiling at her from the floor and was momentarily uncertain. “Ummm,” she said. “This is it? It’s kind of dorky, but I think counts as lab cardio? I tried hula hooping, but I
kept falling down.” She pulled a face and he laughed.

“Very cool–” he began.

Beside them, the elevator doors opened. “Miss Lewis,” Nick Fury said, tilting his head at her. Behind him were several Congressmen. Darcy tried to hide her glow sticks. She succeeded in hitting herself with them.

“Ow,” she said. Rumlow winced in sympathy.

“Commander Rumlow,” Fury said to the man on the floor as he stood.

“The elevator stopped, director,” Rumlow said smoothly. “We were demoing portable safety flares for enclosed spaces. As a training exercise. Impromptu.”

“Yes,” Darcy said, nodding.

“Commander Rumlow is the head of STRIKE Alpha–and you appear to have lost your shoelaces, Commander,” Fury said.

“Oh, I’ve got those, sorry,” Darcy said, wanting to melt into the floor in embarrassment as she untied them from the glow sticks.

“Why don’t you step off the elevator and give them back?” Fury suggested.

“Of course,” Rumlow said, guiding Darcy off the elevator, her coffee in his hand.

“I’m so sorry,” she said, genuinely upset that she’d embarrassed him in front of one-third of the Congressional Committee on Terrorism, probably. She handed him back his shoelaces and fled.
“Carter, can I ask you, uh, a weird question?” Brock said. He had run into her in the break room after their latest mission.


“Sorry,” he said reflexively.

“It’s fine, I’m just teasing you,” Sharon said. “What is it?”

“I heard you set up Agent Hernandez and Davidson? If you know anyone who would be interested in dating me, that, uh, would be nice?” Brock asked. Sharon was on the verge of joking that Darcy Lewis was a shoo-in, when he spoke again.

“I’m looking for a woman closer to my age. I don’t want to be a creep,” he said. “Someone at least forty?” He’d been thinking about since he’d been tempted to make a move with Darcy during that elevator thing a few days ago. It was lucky they never saw each other. And obviously, she’d bolted. He’d started wondering if it was because she was afraid he’d ask her out and she’d need to let him down gently or something? She’d practically scurried off. He’d decided to give her space.

“Oh,” Sharon said. “Really?”

“Yes,” he said, sighing.

“Not every old guy is a creep, you know,” Sharon said. She stirred her coffee and looked down.

“I didn’t mean you and Cap,” Brock said. “He’s only, what, thirty-one in awake years anyway? And he looks right with you.”

“Looks right with me?” Sharon said, raising an eyebrow.

“I’m fifty, Sharon. Fifty year olds dating people in their twenties look older. And dumber. They’re sad guys. Remember Thompson’s last wedding?” he said. Sharon pulled a face. Thompson was pushing fifty and on his third marriage—to a DC college student-slash-barista. It was awkward. Like he was supposed to be the father of the bride, not the groom.

“Yeah, I gotcha,” Sharon said. “I might know someone who’d be perfect for you, actually. She just broke up with her boyfriend and is looking for someone more mature, but she travels between here and the West coast for her company? Is that okay?”

“Yeah, someone who travels for work will get us, right?” Brock said. “She wants someone more mature?” he said curiously.
“Her last boyfriend is a really good guy, but he still plays with Happy Meal toys and she’s ready for something more adult, you know?” Sharon said. “I think you’d get along. She does martial arts”—Brock visibly brightened—“and her father used to work for SHIELD, so you wouldn’t need to lie about your whereabouts, either. I think she’s thirty-nine? Is that old enough for you?” Sharon said.

“That sounds like a good fit,” he said. “Thirty-nine, huh?”

“Trust me, she’s a very sophisticated, polished woman, no one will think you’re one of those sad men,” Sharon said.

“Good,” Brock said, nodding. He handed Sharon a card, writing his personal number on the back.

Sharon called him that night. His blind date was all set up. Coincidentally, she was in town wooing Congressmen for one of her company’s new projects. She could meet him tonight for a drink, if he was free. Brock said yes. Sharon told him to wear a good suit. “Am I going to need a tie?” he asked. He loathed things around his neck.

“Nah,” Sharon said. “Besides, you’ve got that nice clavicle,” she told him. “Don’t button your shirt too high, that’s my advice.”

“I have a nice clavicle?” he said baffled. “You’ve noticed my clavicle?”

“Other people have mentioned that you have a nice clavicle sternum situation,” Sharon confided. She’d heard Darcy talking about it at girls’ night. Extensively. She had a whole monologue. Sharon couldn’t believe he didn’t want to date Darcy. Darcy was wild about him. It was weird.

“Huh,” he said. “Clavicle.”

When Brock got to the hotel bar, there was a woman in a dark dress waiting. When he walked in, she looked up and the edges of her bobbed hair swung gently. She met his eyes as he walked around the bar, her gaze never breaking. “Are you here to meet someone?” she asked him. She was strikingly attractive, he thought, noting the defined muscles in her arms.

“Ms. Van Dyne?” he said, extending a hand. “Brock Rumlow.” They smiled at one another.

“Call me Hope,” she said.

“It’s a good name,” he told her.

“You think so?” she said.

“Everyone needs hope, don’t they?” he said.

“Do you?” she said.

“Frequently,” he told her. “I jump out of planes for a living.” She laughed then. He laughed when she jokingly invited him upstairs after their second drink. “Sure, you want a piece of this,” he said reflexively gesturing to his face. “You can’t resist it.”

“Actually, that was a serious invitation,” Hope said. “What, do you have low self-esteem or something?” He paused and looked at his glass.

“There was a whole building collapse thing at SHIELD,” he said, frowning. She nodded. “I was in it at the time. The building. I survived, but there was about a year in between that and Helen Cho
healing my burns. People don’t like to look at you when you’re hurt like that, much less go to bed with you,” he told her seriously.

“Things change,” Hope said, tilting her head towards the elevators and smiling. He stood up to follow her.

“You don’t have low self-esteem, huh?” he asked.

“Not particularly,” she said, as they stepped on the elevator. “I’m incredibly competent at a lot of things.”

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Brock ran into Darcy at work. She was making coffee. “Hey,” she said, looking a little nervous. “How are you?” she asked, not meeting his glance. He decided to put her at ease, if she was worried that he’d hit on her or something.

“Great,” he said. “My, uh, girlfriend and I are going to an art museum thing tonight. You have any tips for surviving modern art exhibits with half of Congress?” he asked, trying to be light about it, make her comfortable.

“You’re seeing someone?” she said, looking distinctly startled. Her gaze had turned towards his.

“It’s new, but I think you’ve met her at one of Stark’s parties? Hope Van Dyne?” he said.

“Hope Van Dyne,” Darcy repeated. “Yeah, I know her.”

Before he left the breakroom, Darcy told him to have a good time at his museum event. “I’ll try,” he said jokingly. “These politicians, all they talk about is fundraising for the next election. I might miss having you there to twirl some glow sticks and break the tedium,” he said, tapping the door frame.

Lewis was really a good work friend and a fun person to be around, he thought as he left. She was really entertaining at staff meetings. It’d be a shame to lose that connection because he was thinking with his dick. Hopefully, she was reassured now.

That turned his feelings towards the other Hope in his life. Brock liked dating Hope. She worked a lot, but so did he. It was a comfortable, quiet relationship, maybe the most stable one he’d ever been in. Nothing crazy. He was her date for all kinds of things–the museum event, a DC gala with members of the Senate Committee on Homeland Security, a cocktail party–over the last few weeks. It was boring, but she’d forewarned him ahead of time that these events were usually a drag. She made an effort to be interested in his hobbies, too. They ran together and she joined his boxing gym. Everything was good. He didn’t get that excited, anticipatory feeling like he remembered from dating someone new and fun, pre-Triskelion, but that was what getting older was like, wasn’t it?

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In the breakroom, Darcy tried not to cry. It wouldn’t be good to cry at work. He’d telegraphed Not Interested as clearly as a man could, she thought. Jane had been teasing her about moping around, having the baking sads, and just generally sighing in the lab all the time since The Incident of the Elevator, but grew quiet when Darcy came to the lab and told her about Hope. “Shit,” Jane said, “that’s not good news, Darce. I’m so sorry.”
“Yeah,” Darcy said. “I bet Scott is devastated, too. He loves Hope.”

She spent all of Saturday in her apartment in sweatpants, eating mint chocolate chip ice cream straight out of the carton. It was a good thing she had company. Sorta. “What about the third season of Miss Fisher’s Murder Mysteries?” Scott Lang said. His voice was tinny over the speakerphone. They were grief Netflixing together. She’d called him to see how he was and the whole story had come tumbling out. He’d known Hope was dating someone at SHIELD because Hank Pym had a huge cow about it, apparently. Hank and Hope were fighting again.

“All that repressed chemistry between Phryne and Jack makes me want to eat more ice cream?” Darcy said, sighing. Like a dope. She was a total idiot.

“You’re right, too much Phrack,” Scott said. “What can we Netflix that makes us feel better about being sad singletons?”

“Hmmm,” Darcy said. They’d already done Bridget Jones.

“I’ve got it!” Scott said.

“Who?” Darcy said.

“Frasier. He gets slapped and left by dates for, what, eleven years? And he has a Harvard Ph.D, I’m way less of a disaster than that, right?” Scott asked.

“Totally less of a disaster,” Darcy said, clicking play on her remote. “Where are we starting? Am I a Roz or a Daphne?”

“Please, you’re clearly the Niles to my Frasier,” Scott said.

“I am?” Darcy said, licking her spoon.

“You’re more delicately-built and feminine than I am, more knowledgeable about the arts, and you really do drink that much coffee,” Scott said. “I could totally see you marrying a rich heiress and then feeding her Valium in cheese. That’s practically your job now.”

“I never give Jane narcotics, that was just a benadryl for stress itching, okay? She scratches when she worries about a grant proposal, but refuses to take anything,” Darcy said. They were midway through a later season episode where Daphne was dating Niles’s divorce lawyer and Niles was pining when Darcy sighed. “You’re right? This is totally my life,” she said. “Scott? Did you fall asleep?”

“No,” Scott said, sounding odd. “This is it. This is what we’ve got to do!”

“What?” Darcy said. “Go to a weekend cabin and hunt ducks? Scott, no.”

“No, no, no. Niles pretends to date the lawyer’s ex to get Daphne’s attention and make lawyer guy jelly. We can do that. We’ll pretend to date each other, Hope will get jealous, because obviously, your guy is not me—”

“Scott, he’s awesome,” Darcy chided.

“Phfft, she still loves me, okay? I know it. We were great and she got mad because I did my card magic at a gala, but I know she misses me. If she sees me and you together, ostensibly having fun, she’ll come back to me and shazam, your guy’s single again,” he said.
“You actually think this will work?” Darcy said.

“It’ll totally work. You can comfort him with baked goods and your ample bosom,” Scott said. “Besides, like TV-Niles says, Darcy-Niles, *why should two people be okay when four people can be ecstatic*?”

“I think he said happy, Scott, not okay,” Darcy said.

“It’s the same word, basically,” Scott said.

“You’re selectively editing. Are we sure Brock and Hope aren’t happy?” Darcy asked.

“I dunno, look at her Instagram,” he said.

“You don’t?” Darcy said.

“Cassie blocked my access to the app. She said I was wallowing,” he said.

“Yeah,” Darcy said. She thumbed through Hope’s public account and sighed. Was it her imagination or did both of them look…bored?

“Well?” Scott said.

“This might be wishful thinking….” Darcy began.

“I’ll change my Facebook status first, you put up some of those pictures from the last time you and Jane were here, okay?” he said, sounding elated. “This will work. All my plans work.”

“I feel like I’ve heard that before,” Darcy said dryly. She was thinking of Loki. Whose plans never worked.

Chapter End Notes

Chapter Title inspiration: Rupa and the April Fishes' "Wishful Thinking"
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RGcAp3GBk6k
“......so, Scott is picking me up for our first real, in-person date after work,” Darcy said to Jane, a few days later. The two women were sitting in the lab. Scott had come to DC to begin phase one. Also, to get Natasha to autograph some things for Cassie’s upcoming birthday party. Cassie was totally into bugs now and had expanded from ants to bees and spiders.

“I’m so excited,” Jane said. “I’ve always thought you and Scott would be great together, if he were ever single. Oh my God! Oh my God!” She hopped up and down and then hugged Darcy. “How long has this been going on behind my back?”

“Um,” Darcy said, feeling a pang of guilt at the way Jane was just beaming at her, “we’ve mostly had a string of really intense telephone bonding seshes lately? Netflix and flirt?” Darcy and Scott had decided that they would keep their plan a secret. The circle of trust had been expanded to include Cassie, mostly because she could 100% tell when Scott was lying. But no one else could know, because SHIELD was such a gossip-fest and the plan could easily find its way to Brock and then to Hope.

“Where is he taking you?” Jane asked. Darcy shrugged.

“No idea,” Darcy said. “But I’m sure it’ll be somewhere fun.”

Darcy went outside at five with Jane to wait for Scott. Jane was so excited that Darcy felt her own little bubble of excitement, too. “How’s my hair?” she asked jokingly. Jane had insisted she change into a cuter outfit and paint her nails; they kept backup clothes in the lab in case of accidental fires. Smoky clothes were no bueno.

“You look great,” Jane said. Darcy was wearing a little dress from Modcloth and had picked a red glitter for her fingers, to match Scott’s Ant-Man uniform. “I wonder where he’ll take you…” Jane’s jaw dropped as a long, large vehicle pulled into the cul de sac at the new SHIELD entrance, honking loudly.

“Oh my God,” Jane said, “it’s the Oscar Mayer wienermobile.”

“Hey,” Scott said, leaning out the window and waving cheerfully. “The security gate guy was totally dubious, but I called Cap and he vouched for me. How cool is that? Darcy, you look great!” His voice was mic’d and multiple people turned to stare at the echoing voice. “I’m super excited to be taking you out tonight!”

“My boyfriend has a really big wiener!” Darcy yelled out loud, starting to laugh.

“She said it, not me. I was just implying it,” Scott said over the mic. “But I know everyone was thinking it, right?” Scott waved a staring SHIELD agent. “It was totally on your mind?”
“I love it!” Darcy said. She shrieked so much that she had to lean against Jane, shaking with laughter, until Scott disembarked and scooped her up. Ant-Man was actually fit.

“Jane, I’m stealing your assistant,” he said. “I may return her or we may elope to Vegas, who knows?” Scott was still mic’d.

“You have my blessing,” Jane said, smiling. They were standing there when Cap and STRIKE Alpha strolled out of the building. Darcy tried not to look at Brock.

“I had to see this,” Steve called out. “Guys, this is Scott Lang, he works for Hank Pym and he once beat Sam in a fight.”

“Wilson?” Jack said. “Really?”

“Uh-huh,” Steve said.

“Hey, Cap. I’m still really sorry about that,” Scott told Captain America.

“Sam’s over it,” Steve said. “Mostly.” He grinned. “What are you doing here?”

“I’m here to take my girl on a date!” Scott said excitedly.

“I’m the girl,” Darcy explained.

“You don’t say,” Steve said, putting his hands on his hips and grinning at her. Darcy was at eye level with the nipples of Truth and Justice, which was also fun.

“You look astoundingly heroic and that is an incredibly tiny t-shirt,” Scott said.

“I know, right?” Darcy said. “We love whoever buys your t-shirts, Steve. Jane and I want to buy them chocolates—”

“Count me in, also,” Scott said, beaming. He had a Cap crush. It was adorkable.

“It might be me buying the t-shirts,” Steve said, grinning. “But I accept payment in chocolate, if anybody feels inclined. What’s that?”

“Wienermobile!” Scott said. “Did you want to drive it?”

“No, that might cause an international incident, you guys have fun,” Steve said. “We’re headed off to a mission.”

“Good luck!” Darcy said. She realized Rumlow was looking at her and smiled. He didn’t quite smile back.

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“Where are we going?” Darcy said, once Scott had carried her on board and turned off his microphone.

“I thought he could see how many major DC landmarks we could get selfies of with us in the wienermobile?” Scott said. “Also, I got snacks. But I got dibs on that Snapple. I like the messages on the cap.”
Darcy looked at the beach bag Scott had packed. Inside was an assortment of fun junk foods. “Cheese Puffs!” she said excitedly. “Scott, this is maybe the best date I’ve ever been on.”

“I know, right?” he said. “Is that him?” he asked as they pulled away. Brock was frowning at the Wienermobile. “That’s him, isn’t it?”

“Yup,” Darcy said, snagging a Diet Cherry Coke. She waved at Rumlow. He raised a hand back. Scott turned on the Wienermobile’s radio. His phone was plugged in.

“What do you say?” he asked. “No Doubt?”

“Absolutely,” Darcy said, as Scott looked in the rear-view cameras. SHIELD was disappearing around the corner.

“God, it’s annoying that he looks cooler in everyday clothes than in a suit. Like, super annoying,” Scott said, meaning Rumlow.

“His tattoos are super cool,” Darcy said, turning up “Sunday Morning” to full blast. "Just dreamy," she added.

“Hope doesn’t even like tattoos, though,” Scott said. “When Luis got a new one, she forbade me to get my own arm sleeve.”


“Nah, I don’t really think I have a tattoo face,” Scott said. “That was her point. He has a tattoo face. I have a Snapple face.” Scott sighed.

“But Hope loved your Snapple face. Don’t give up hope, Scott!” Darcy said.

“That is a terrible pun,” Scott said, as Darcy giggled.

“Yup, I love bad puns. Also, this is fantastic,” she told him, looking around. They had a great view of the streets. “You can see everything.”

“Yeah, once you’ve been forty feet tall, you kinda miss the view. Plus, I thought maybe you needed to have more fun,” Scott said.

“Is that why you picked this particular rental car?” she asked him, opening the Cheese Puffs bag with a pop.

“Yes. The wienermobile is integral to my plans for multiple reasons: one, I’ve always wanted to drive one,” Scott said, ticking off a list at a stoplight.

“Obviously,” Darcy said, nodding in agreement and waving back as he honked when people waved from the curb.

“Two, everyone at SHIELD is now talking about us and what a chill, fun couple we are,” he said seriously. Darcy passed him a Cheese Puff. “Thank you. That gets the word out in a way that seems less planned.”

“True,” Darcy said.

“Three, you keep talking about how embarrassed you were over that elevator thing with Hot Tattooed SHIELD Commando and that bums me out. Don’t let these squares suck your fun out, buddy. That is super not cool. We’ve got to keep our inner child alive, it’s what makes our skin so
pretty,” Scott said. Laughing, Darcy nodded.

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“Scott Lang,” Rumlow said, on board a quinjet. “Where do I know that name?” he asked out loud. Steve cleared his throat awkwardly, looking embarrassed.

“Steve is trying to convey that he used to date your girlfriend,” Natasha Romanoff said coolly.

“Oh,” Rumlow said. “That’s the Happy Meal toy guy?”

“It would not surprise me. He has a ten year old daughter, however, so allowances must be made,” Nat said. “I’m sure Jane is pleased.”

“Why?” Rumlow said, looking up from where he was searching Scott’s file.

“She has said that she wishes Darcy would meet someone as nice as Scott on several occasions,” the Russian said cleanly. “They are ideally suited, are they not?”

“He’s Ant-Man?” Jack said, reading over Brock’s shoulder.

“He’s forty-six?” Rumlow said at the same time. He looked faintly horrified, Jack thought.

“So?” Nat said.

“That’s too old for Lewis,” Rumlow said. “She’s what, twenty-six?”

“Darcy is almost thirty-three,” Nat said. “It is only their interest in cereal for children and flirting with Steve that makes them both seem younger.”

“I don’t think I appreciate the implications of that sentence, Nat,” Steve said.

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They managed to get photos of the Wienermobile in front of the Supreme Court, the Lincoln Memorial Circle, and Constitution Avenue. It was stupidly fun. “I knew this was gonna be a good day when I saw my Snapple cap,” Scott said. “There’s one more place, though.”

“What did it say?” Darcy asked. “Your Snapple?”

“Broccoli is the only vegetable that is also a flower,” Scott said. “I’m gonna use that on Cassie when she refuses to eat her broccoli. She wants to be Bee Girl one day and obviously, Bee Girl loves flowers, right?”


“I’ll tell her you said that, too, maybe it’ll work,” Scott said. “Oooh, turn this song up. Who’s this?”

“The Lumineers,” Darcy supplied. “I love the chorus when he’s all ‘honey’ this and that. I don’t think people say honey enough anymore.” They drove out to Arlington.
“Woo, here is it,” Scott said, as Darcy’s Vance Joy piped through the speakers. “A prominent DC landmark, honey.” He winked. “That’s our new fake date thing, by the way.” Darcy looked out the window.

“I thought we were going to the White House, not a White Castle,” Darcy said.

“Excuse me, this is the McDonald’s where Jean-Claude Van Damme crash lands with his jet pack after he saves the President in Executive Powers. It is a classic,” Scott said.

“Oh my God, it is!” Darcy said, laughing. “The one where he steals a french fry from the kid’s plate.”

“Did you want fries and a shake? I’m going to see if we fit through the drive thru,” Scott said.

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“Uh, I’ve got news,” Brock said into his phone. “Some news.” He’d decided to call Hope and tell her. He didn’t know why it felt important, but it did. Especially since Romanoff seemed to think Lang was saying in town for awhile.

“You’re not going to be able to make that cocktail party on Saturday?” Hope asked. She was sitting at the table in her parents’ San Francisco house, visiting before her next DC trip. Janet was out. Hank looked up curiously. He was making coffee.

“Tell the SHIELD asshole I said hello,” he said cheerfully.

“No, I’ll be there. Barring terrorism, I mean,” Brock said, pretending not to hear Hank.

“Of course,” Hope said. “My father says hello.”

“It’s, uh, this is about your ex,” Brock said. “Scott Lang?”

“Scott?” Hope said, fiddling with the edge of her striped shirt, so she could touch her necklace. It had two charms: an acorn and leaf.

“What about Scott?” Hank said.

“It’s personal stuff,” Brock said, hearing Hank’s voice, “not work stuff.”

“Shh, Dad,” Hope said, waving at him. “Oh. What kind of personal stuff?”

“He’s dating one of my coworkers,” Brock said. “Jane Foster’s assistant, Darcy Lewis? I think you know her?”

“Yeah,” Hope said. “I do know Darcy.”

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“Scott and Darcy Lewis, huh?” Hank said, when she’d hung up and was preparing to leave. “Well, that’s good, isn’t it? He’s moving on and you’re moving on. And Darcy and Scott, well--”

“What, Dad? Darcy and Scott what?” Hope said, arm half in her jacket. She felt horribly sad. Why
did she feel horribly sad? She’d dumped Scott. She was sick of his juvenile antics. The card tricks, the drum set, the blanket forts….the blanket forts. God, she could crawl into a blanket fort and cry right now.

“Well, they’ll probably have a lot of fun together,” Hank said. “She’s much more like him than you are, Jellybean. You’re a CEO and an extremely accomplished business woman with a lot of irons in the fire. And Scott’s last meaningful thing before I found him was a job at Baskin-Robbins.”

“Yeah,” Hope said, opening the front door. “Bye, Dad, I’ll see you--”

“Sure thing, sweetie,” Hank said, returning to his newspaper. He didn’t look up when she returned seconds later, trailed by a wry-looking Janet.

“Scott is a really good guy!” Hope said heatedly. “You know as well as I do that the whole reason he had that Baskin-Robbins job is because this country doesn’t let people with criminal records rejoin society in meaningful ways. He has a master’s degree!” she said. “You gave money to that campaign to let felons vote again. You know this. It is a societal problem at the national level!"

“Uh-huh,” Hank said, not looking up. Janet leaned against the wall separating the dining room from the rest of the house and watched her daughter pace.

“And he was a great Baskin-Robbins employee! He still remembers all the flavors and seasonal specials, even if he refuses to set foot in one!” Hope said insistently. “And he’s a good friend and an incredible father to Cassie and--and--God, I miss him so much,” Hope said, collapsing into a dining chair with a thunk. “How was I so stupid?” She put her head on the table.


“I wouldn’t mind baklava,” Hank said, smiling at Janet. “And your mother is right. You were having a perfectionistic moment,” he told Hope. “You get that from me.”

“Is that what we’re calling it now? Getting frustrated with work and pushing people away is classic Hank!” Janet said from the kitchen.

“A classic Hank move?” Hank said. “I wouldn’t say--”

“Who haven’t you feuded with when you can’t make something work? All of SHIELD--” Janet said.

“All my tech works,” Hank said, sounding slightly offended.

“Not the point, Dad,” Hope said.

“When did my tech not work?” he said.

“Don’t argue with me, I have the receipts,” Janet said, returning to the room. “Here, Jellybean.” She gave Hope a plate of baklava. “Just learn from your father’s mistakes. Go tell Scott how you feel, apologize sincerely, and see how he feels?”

“You think he’ll forgive me?” she said.

“The receipts?” Hank said, slightly baffled.

“All the kids are saying it,” Janet said.
“Scott taught you that, didn’t he?” Hope said glumly, poking her baklava with a fork.

“Why are you eating that with a fork? How did you raise her that she thinks baklava needs to be eaten with a fork? See, this is her problem, I disappeared and you turned her into a tiny, serious adult,” Janet said to Hank. “This is why she needs a Scott in her life.”

“I do,” Hope said. She stood up and looked at her mother. “Mom, I’m getting him back. Or, at least, I’ll try--”

“I think that would be good,” Janet said. “Just try. See what happens.”

“I’m going to go pack,” Hope said, heading for the door. Janet watched her leave and sighed.

“She just carries so much around,” Janet said. “That’s the hardest thing for me to adjust to. It’s not that she’s older, it’s that she’s so serious now. I blame you for this,” she told Hank, with a blend of sharpness and affection.

“I’m still waiting for someone to explain how you have receipts for fights,” Hank said.
STRIKE Alpha was liberating several SHIELD agents being held for ransom in Indonesia. SHIELD had information that the hostages were being guarded by a handful of men in a remote section of jungle. “Cap, you ready?” Rumlow said.

“Yeah,” Steve said, checking to secure his shield. The pilot dipped the quinjet low above the clearing and Steve stepped into the empty air.

“I never get tired of watching that,” Jack said mildly, despite his terrifying expression.

“I know, you’ve got a little Cap problem,” Brock told him, checking the clasps on his parachute harness.

“Don’t think I don’t notice that you check Darcy Lewis’s social media every half-hour, mate,” Jack said.

“Excuse me, it’s every hour,” Brock said wryly. Jack looked at him. “She posted that she’s making the boyfriend Fruit Loop cupcakes this weekend,” he said, sighing. “I’ve never even had a Fruit Loop.”

“Try not to take it personally, mate. Besides, I thought you and Hope were doing well?” Jack asked.

“Yeah,” Brock said. They heard gunfire below. “There’s our cue.” He leapt from the plane. Jack followed him. They landed, ditched their chutes, and began stalking hostage takers through the trees and underbrush. Holding his SHIELD gun to his eye to use the infrared sight, Brock spotted an armed man trying to drag away an emaciated teenager. A fraction of a second later, the hostage taker had fallen. At least he was good at something, Rumlow thought.

He was back in town for Hope’s cocktail party with the Senate Foreign Relations committee with just a scratch over his eyebrow and a few bruises for his trouble. “You okay?” she asked, when she met him at the venue. They always met at the venue. Why, he wondered. She never stayed over at his place, either.

“Small incident in Indonesia,” he told her, kissing her on the cheek. “I heal quickly. You look wonderful.”

“Thanks,” she said. She was holding her purse in an awkward way. That seemed unlike her usual poised self.

“You ready to go in?” he asked.
“Yeah,” she said, taking his arm. It was a very boring cocktail party, but they usually were. He parried jokes back and forth with the committee chairman about the source of Fury’s eyepatch, SHIELD funding, and nursed one lousy drink, as normal. But Hope seemed off. He kept seeing her face fall whenever she wasn’t pretending to be animated and engaging. When they left, he looked at her.

“What’s wrong?” he said softly.

“Nothing,” she said.

“Bullshit,” he muttered.

“Excuse me?” Hope said.

“You’re bullshitting me and it hurts my feelings,” Brock said wryly.

“Come back to my room and we’ll talk,” Hope said, swallowing nervously.

“Good,” he said. “I’d like a stronger drink than whatever the hell that was.” They went back to her hotel, but she bypassed the bar.

“I’d like to talk somewhere I can’t be overheard,” Hope said. He nodded. To his surprise, Hope poured herself a scotch from the minibar. He’d never seen her drink scotch before.

“I take it you didn’t like Senator Richardson’s bartender either?” Brock asked.

“Richardson’s cheap, he tells them to water it down,” Hope said grimly, kicking off her shoes. “Do you want one?”

“I’ll take this,” he said, seizing a mini bourbon. “So, what’s wrong?” he asked her. Hope sighed heavily and sank onto the bed.

“I think I’m still in love with my ex,” she said.

“Mr. Wienermobile?” Brock said.

“What?” Hope said.

“He picked Lewis up in a wienermobile the other day,” Brock said. “I met him. He seems like a nice guy.”

“He is,” Hope said glumly. “I’ve never ridden in one of those.”

“Jealous?”

“Maybe.”

“You want him back?” Brock said neutrally.

“I don’t mean to upset you--” Hope began, but he waved it away.

“You’re great, but us? You and me? We’re boring. You don’t even want to fuck me before the cocktail parties, I know when I’m not wanted,” he said. “You’re in love with Ant-Man.”

“It’s not funny, it’s ironic,” Brock said. “It’s a goddamned Henry James novel, my life.”

“What?” she repeated, wondering if the scotch was hitting her too hard. Since when did he talk about books?

“I read,” he said, answering her eyebrow raise. “Your ex-boyfriend, the guy you want back so badly?” he asked. She nodded. “He’s dating the woman I want to be with,” Brock said, shaking his head. “Only I didn’t ask her out because I thought she was in her twenties and I didn’t want to be that desperate old guy chasing a younger woman and now she’s dating him. And he’s forty-six-fucking-years-old. I’m pissed I missed my window.”

“I think she’s in her thirties?” Hope said.

“Yeah, I didn’t check, I was eyeballing, okay?” Brock said.

“I bet you were,” Hope said.

“God, yes,” he said, grinning. “I have a recurring fantasy that involves cake frosting and her body…”

“No, no, TMI,” Hope said, gesturing.

“You said it first,” he said, sipping his drink. “So, what do we do?”

“I was going to ask him if he wanted me back, but then I looked at his social media,” she said. “They looked happy. I chickened out on calling today.”

“Did she make him those cupcakes yet?” Brock asked curiously.

“Yes,” Hope said. “And he got her a necklace with a coffee cup.”

“She loves coffee,” Brock said. “It’s a good choice.” Hope stared at her lap.

“I don’t know what to do. This is why I don’t do feelings for boys!” Hope said. Brock chuckled.

“You’ve got ‘em now,” he said.

“I hate feelings. Feelings suck. Can’t we just go hit things?” she said.

“Sure,” he said. “I’ve got 24/7 access to the STRIKE gym. And I have my best ideas when I’ve got gloves on.” He stood up, put down the bourbon, and looked at her. “We’ll go hit things.”

“Let me change,” she said, getting workout clothes and going into the bathroom. Brock grinned. She wasn’t changing in front of him; she really did love this Lang guy.

“I taught him how to punch, you know?” Hope said, as they circled each other in the ring. “I taught him that.” She couldn’t stop talking about Scott.

“You’re a first-class hitter,” he told her. “I admire your mean left hook, pal.”

“And he just moves on with the cupcake girl like we had nothing,” she said, shaking her head. Brock grinned.

“Technically, you moved on with me first,” he said, poised to dodge her blow. This was the best
part of their relationship, he’d realized. The gym side. They could keep that friendship, he’d told her in the car on the way over, while they sorted this shit out. He would still be her date while she needed one, too.

“Because you were running away from your persistent fantasies about cupcake girl,” Hope said grimly. “Because everyone just loves her and her glitter and her Pop Tarts and her goddamned novelty purses!”

“Does that make you want to hit something?” Brock asked wryly.

“Yes,” Hope said, hitting him with true force. He didn’t mind. He could take a punch.

“What you gonna do about it? You gonna get your man back?” he asked, laughing. Hope’s swing took him by surprise and he was knocked off his feet. He looked up at her from the mat and grinned.

“Yes, I’m getting him back,” she said. “Who’s laughing now, asshole?”

“Not me,” Brock said, holding his arms up in surrender. He started to laugh as Hope continued to fume. “I think we need to work on a plan.”

"A plan?"

"To get you and the boyfriend in proximity," he said. "You've got to be face to face, don't you?"

"Yeah," she said.

“What will you do?” Hope asked, as they left the gym and got in his vehicle. Brock stopped, his hand on the top of the car’s door frame. He looked at Hope.

“I’m going to distract Lewis for you while you get alone time with your ex,” he said, smirking. “She’s going to be very distracted.”

“Oh, how difficult for you,” Hope said sarcastically.

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“Do we look good together?” Darcy asked, as she and Scott sat on her couch. He was scrolling through their various social media posts documenting the first fake date and today’s goofing around: they’d gone for coffee, petted random dogs for selfies, and Scott had “given” her a necklace. Actually, the so-called gift was a coffee charm she’d taken off a broken charm bracelet and threaded on a chain. All part of the ruse.

“Yeah,” Scott said glumly. “We look cute. How are we so lonely when we’re this cute?”

“I dunno,” Darcy said. “How do we figure out if this has worked?”

“No idea, but I think you need to stop DVR-ing Investigation Discovery, these kidnapped women stories are stressing me out,” Scott said.
“Sorry,” Darcy said. “I think it’s a woman thing? Like doomsday prepping, only we prep to be murdered by our dates?”

“That is extremely disturbing, okay? I’m going to call Cassie and tell her that she can’t date until she’s thirty-five,” Scott said. He stood up and went to the kitchen, stuffing a cupcake in his mouth as she answered. “Mhnmph, hey!” he said. “Sorry, honey, your Aunt Darce just made me these sweet cupcakes. With cereal milk. Why didn’t you tell me that was a thing? You didn't know?” He looked at Darcy. “She didn’t know about cereal milk.”

“Cereal milk is awesome,” Darcy said. Scott turned back to Cassie.

“We’ll totally make a cake. Listen, we need to talk about when you can date. I’m raising the age again--no, no, listen, I have a good reason this time, I swear. This isn’t just a blanket, ‘all boys but Captain America are icky,’ okay?” Scott said. “Yeah, but Cap is too old for us, sweetie. He’s like really ninety.” Darcy laughed.

“And he’s dating Sharon!” Darcy called out.

“He is? But isn’t she his old girlfriend’s great niece?” Scott said, dumbfounded.

“Yup,” Darcy said.

“Okay, that is a little weird,” Scott said. “I’m glad you agree, Cassie. If you’re ever frozen in ice and revived, don’t date your girlfriend’s great-nephew. Or your boyfriend’s great-niece, whatever.”

She was still thinking about their project when he ended the call and came back to the couch. “So?” he said. “Got any new ideas?”

“We really need to be the same place as them, don’t we?” Darcy said.

“How can we do that, though? I can’t just crash your job and Hope won't be there,” Scott said, scratching his head and looking perplexed.

“I’ve got an idea. Cameron will help us! I’ll talk to him tomorrow. He can pinpoint their location and we’ll just show up there, okay?” Darcy said. “Like, crash a fancy event?”

“Make it look accidental?” Scott said. Darcy nodded.

“I hope so. But we'll need to get you a suit,” she said. "If it's somewhere fancy?"

“Oh, I've got a suit,” Scott said. He still looked perplexed.

"What's wrong?" Darcy said.

"Is there a rule that Cap can only date Carters?" he asked. "Like a law?"

“It wasn’t in any of my poli-sci seminars,” Darcy said. "Did you want the recipe for cereal milk Fruit Loops cake? I converted it to cupcakes."

"Yeah," Scott said.

"It could be an Army regulation. He told me once they don't let you store the weapons too near the barracks? That seems highly specific," Darcy said. "Maybe they made the rule. Would it be online?"
"I'm going to check the Pentagon," Scott said.

"Why?" Darcy said.

"If this doesn't work, we're both going to flirt with Captain America," Scott said firmly. "That might make them jealous, too."

"Brock knows about Sharon, though. He stabbed her during the whole Triskelion thing. With a knife in he keeps in his shoes. But they're still friends," Darcy said. "For awhile, I thought they might have had a thing, but no, it was just a minor flesh wound."

Chapter End Notes

Fruit Loop Cereal Milk Cake: https://www.sweetestmenu.com/froot-loop-cereal-milk-cake/
“Scott sent you an, um, edible arrangement?” Jane said, when Darcy came in with lunch. There was a cellophane wrapped head of broccoli on her desk, tied with a ribbon.

“No those are flowers, Jane, broccoli is a flower,” Darcy explained. “I got you a panini.”

“Awww,” Jane said, making the non-cartoon equivalent of heart eyes. “He is the cutest guy you’ve ever dated!” Jane squealed, as Darcy handed her her chips and sandwich.

“That’s certainly true,” Darcy said, wondering why her past boyfriends had been less fun than her current fake one. How funny, she thought. She hadn’t been able to catch Cam yet. They ate lunch and talked about Jane’s current project, speaking engagements, and fanmail. “Would you like coffee? I’m going to see if there’s a spare vase for those in the break room,” Darcy asked, picking up the broccoli.

“Oh my God, that’s so cute, I could actually squee,” Jane said.

“We have back up clothes for that,” Darcy joked. “If you accidentally squee.”

“Shut up,” Jane said.

“I still remember the time you met that eighty-nine year old astrophysicist and squeed a little in your pants. That was Copenhagen,” Darcy said, headed for the door.

“Dr. Estelle Rodenbacher is a personal heroine of mine!” Jane yelled.

“What was that? Did you say pee-roine?” Darcy teased.

“I can still fire you!” Jane said.

“Phhft, try washing your own clothes, Dr. Genius.”

To her surprise, Brock was in the break room. She’d spent enough time staring at him that she could recognize him from the back, like a total weirdo. “Hello,” Darcy said. He turned and--was that her imagination or did he light up a little?--and smiled at her. He was wearing a t-shirt that showed off all his nice arm muscles. He was so beautiful, she thought.

“Hey, Darcy,” he said. “Those are pretty...florets?” He tilted his head to one side and looked at bouquet curiously, frowning a little.

“Um, yeah, broccoli is technically a flower, so Scott sent me flowers,” she said, trying not to drool over Brock too obviously. Thankfully, he was several feet away. “He’s creative like that. I’m looking for a vase.” She opened the nearest cabinet, but the vases were on the highest shelf.
“Shoot,” Darcy said, before she heard footsteps behind her.

“Let me help you with that?” Brock said. Darcy realized he’d wedged her between his body and the cabinet. He was a solid wall of muscle, she thought, swallowing.

“Thanks,” she said, blushing when his arm brushed the side of her cheek as he reached up. “I’m foiled by my shortness again. I can never reach the highest shelf,” she said, trying to make light of their closeness. He set the vase in front of her on the counter.

“You know I’m always here to give you a hand if you need one,” he said, mouth close to her ear. “Anytime, Darcy.” She had to repress a shiver of delight.

“Thanks,” she repeated. She waited for him to move. He didn’t move. She turned, expecting him to move then. Rumlow just stood there, smirking down at her, as their bodies touched. Oh God, Darcy thought, what are my nipples doing? Down. Down! He grinned at her and licked his lips. Was he actually looking at her like she was--like--oh God, he’d never looked at her like that before.

“I’ve got a question?” he said, leaning even closer. Which was probably public indecency, but oh my God, her brain screamed. It was all she could do not to climb him like a tree.

“Yeah?” Darcy said, grinning wildly. Stupidly. She didn’t know what to do with her hands. She knew what she wanted to do with them.

“I got tickets for a movie and the friend who was going to go cancelled on me. Are you busy tonight?” he asked. “I’d love it if you came.” There was a pause. “With me.”

“Uh-uh, yes,” Darcy stammered. “I’d love to...come?”

“Good,” he said. “Can I pick you up at eight? Your place?”

“Uh-huh,” Darcy said.

“I’ll be there,” he said.

“Oh my God,” she murmured to herself, after he’d left. “This was not the plan.” She texted Scott.

**World’s Okayest Assistant:** Rumlow asked me to a movie? I am freaking out and sweating, Scott. He was giving me sex face. I think? My nipples definitely thought so....

**One Time Baskin-Robbins Employee of the Month:** Shit. Really? That’s gre--wait, hold on.

**One Time Baskin-Robbins Employee of the Month:** IS HE CHEATING ON HOPE?

**One Time Baskin-Robbins Employee of the Month:** THAT SMUG, TATTOOED ASSHOLE.

**World’s Okayest Assistant:** I don’t know that for sure. Maybe I’m just misreading the signals. Should I go to the movie?

**One Time Baskin-Robbins Employee of the Month:** Yes. We need a plan for this. I want to surveill your movie date and find out if he is treating the love of my life wrong in which case I WILL TOTALLY KICK HIS ASS. I might need to expand the circle of trust, though.
World’s Okayest Assistant: Expand the circle?

One Time Baskin-Robbins Employee of the Month: Purely for purposes of the stake-out. Also, in case I need back up for opening up my can of WHOOP ASS.

World’s Okayest Assistant: How could he cheat on Hope, though? He’s such a good guy.

One Time Baskin-Robbins Employee of the Month: He has that tattoo face, it can be very confusing. Sometimes, it means you’re a total badass with your own personal code of ethics, saving people in need. Sometimes, it means you’re just an ass.

***

“What do you mean, you can’t wrangle Lang tonight?” Rumlow said to Hope on his cell phone. He’d left the building to call her during a break in probie agent training. “I thought you were calling him?” he said.

“Things are a mess. I’m already at the airport. We’re having a crisis in Palo Alto. Hank yelled at an investor, I have to go smooth things over,” Hope said. “You’ll have to cancel.”

“No,” Rumlow said. “Why cancel? I want to gauge her interest in me. If I can get her to spend the night--”

“Very modest, Brock,” Hope said.

“Why not? You did,” he said. “Like I said, if I can, that makes Lang a free agent. Where’s the flaw?”

“Okay,” Hope said. “Where the hell is gate 34B in this airport?”

“The far side. Snag somebody with a golf cart. The place is a nightmare,” Rumlow advised.

“What time are you picking her up?” she asked.

“Eight,” he said, grinning to himself.

“Try to sound a little less smug,” Hope told him. “You don’t know for sure that you’re getting sex tonight.” Someone wheeling a suitcase stared at her.

“No, but I’m definitely going to flirt a little,” he said. “God, this is exciting. It’s like the first time I jumped out of a plane.”

***

“Can you believe this douchebag? Meeting Darcy for a movie?” Scott said, peering through his binoculars at Rumlow as he ascended the steps at Darcy’s apartment. “I appreciate your help, Cap.”

“You’re welcome,” Steve said pleasantly. He waved away the binoculars. “I can see fine,” he said.

“I just want to say, I feel privileged to have you in our circle of trust,” Scott said.
“Technically, I sorta knew.”

“You did?” Scott said.

“Darcy’s heart rate accelerates whenever Rumlow is in the same room. But I wish you’d told me we were doing surveillance, Scott. I would have insisted we take your car,” Steve said wryly, looking over his shoulder. Scott was perched behind him on Steve’s motorcycle, helmet visor up.

“I didn’t realize you drove a motorcycle. But this is still less conspicuous than the wienermobile,” Scott said, scanning with the binoculars. “And the gas mileage is better.”

“Uh-huh,” Steve said wryly.

“You’re very warm,” Scott said. “I feel very comforted in my distress--oh, look here he is now, the cheating creep.” They were leaving Darcy’s apartment and getting into Rumlow’s car. “Look at how he’s opening the car door for her. How does he sleep at night, Cap?” Scott said.

“No idea,” Steve said, grinning. He’d already suggested that maybe Hope Van Dyne and Rumlow weren’t all that serious, since all they seemed to do was to go to boring DC parties, but Scott had shot that down immediately, swearing that no one could not be in love with Hope. Steve thought it was kinda sweet.

“What a dirtbag,” Scott muttered, as Rumlow smiled at Darcy and gently shut the door.

“Ready?” Steve asked, hiding his grin. “Hold on, Scott,” he said with mock-seriousness. He gunned the bike.

“Okay, Cap!” Scott shifted his visor down, letting the binoculars hang by their chord, and held Steve’s waist.

“If I wasn’t really pissed right now, this would be the best surveillance experience of my life!” Scott said, as Steve rounded the corner.

***

“You like popcorn, right?” Brock said to Darcy, looking down at her as they walked into the theater. It turned out to be tickets to one of those small historic theaters in DC. All pretty on the inside.

“I love popcorn,” she said. “Really love it.”

“Yeah, popcorn is one of my things, too,” he said. “I know I’m not supposed to have it, but you know, I just smell it and, well, who can resist? You know what I mean?” Brock said. He grinned. How did he manage to make even that innocent question loaded with subtext?

“Who can resist,” Darcy echoed. Was her mouth making a lot of saliva? She had major boob sweat happening, she could tell. She had always imagined this scenario, but never with another woman involved, making it all stressful and unfunny and whatnot.

“Let me pay for this, sweetheart. Why don’t you go in?” he said.

“Okay,” Darcy said. Once she was alone, she texted Scott.
**World’s Okayest Assistant:** He just flirted with me about popcorn. I think? I’m totally wrecked.

**World’s Okayest Assistant:** Also, I didn’t realize this movie was about a passionate affair between Keira Knightley and a German dude after WWII? She’s married. Not to the German dude.

**One Time Baskin-Robbins Employee of the Month:** That DIRTBAG, taking you to a sexy movie! On his cheater’s date!

**One Time Baskin-Robbins Employee of the Month:** And he’s total a Nazi! I’m asking Cap if Rumlow still might be HYDRA.

**One Time Baskin-Robbins Employee of the Month:** Cap says no.

**One Time Baskin-Robbins Employee of the Month:** Dagnabbit. He’s sure. I asked twice.

**World’s Okayest Assistant:** He keeps doing mouth things. I can’t breathe.

**One Time Baskin-Robbins Employee of the Month:** WHAT?

**World’s Okayest Assistant:** Like, pouting at me and licking his lips and stuff?

**One Time Baskin-Robbins Employee of the Month:** Oh.

**World’s Okayest Assistant:** I’m sweating like a whore in church.

**One Time Baskin-Robbins Employee of the Month:** I can’t believe he’s doing this to Hope. I really want to punch him. Ant punch, for the record. It hurts more when you’re tiny.

**One Time Baskin-Robbins Employee of the Month:** Cap says that church thing was funny. He’s still laughing.

**World’s Okayest Assistant:** If I die of dehydration, it was a good death, I swear. DNR. This is how I wanna go. Just overheating out of lust and fritzing out, okay?

**World’s Okayest Assistant:** He’s coming back!

“Hey, I got you wine, too, since I’m driving. You like white wine, right?” Brock said, smiling at Darcy as he handed her a little plastic cup.

“Oh, thank you,” Darcy said. She was wildly uncertain about what to do. Her body was definitely yelling *get in his lap*, but her mind was repeating *girlfriend girlfriend girlfriend*. It was just awful. She stuffed a little popcorn in her mouth and tried not to think about Brock naked. She had seen him in the gym enough to know the abs and arms were just as beautiful as the face situation. Darcy glanced at him. He grinned at her. She drank a little wine and wondered how she had ended up in this freaking dilemma. Pre-Hope, seeing a movie with him would have put her in a good mood for days. How could he freaking do this to her? Also, the very photogenic leads of this movie were having enthusiastic sex. The onscreen noises alone...Darcy was trying not to blush when Brock brushed his fingers against her hand when he reached for his drink. *Ugh, I would have totally boned you previously, you sneaky cheater*, she thought. *This was my perfect date before you started dating the love of my friend’s life. Damn you!*

Terrified of how the night would end—she was afraid she’d sleep with him and then she’d feel
horrible guilt at being a homewrecker—Darcy got up and went to the bathroom. Where she called Scott. “What do I do?” Darcy whispered. “I’m weak, okay? Panties 100% melted. I think they’re still in the seat!”

“Cap says you should leave, he’ll take you home,” Scott said. “C’mon out, I have a plan.”

She met them outside on the bike. Steve was laughing. “What do we do? Three people won’t fit there!” Darcy said.

“I’ve got my suit on under my disguise. I’ll go small and ride in your bag,” Scott said. He was dressed as a cable guy. His shirt said Earl over the pocket. “Once we’re far enough away, just text him that you feel sick and took an Uber?” Scott suggested.

“Sounds like a plan,” Steve said.

“Hurry,” Darcy said.

“Okay,” Scott said, hitting a button. Steve’s bike helmet clattered to the ground.

“Where—?” Darcy began, before she realized he was still under the helmet. Darcy picked it up and fished Tiny Scott off the pavement. “Cool. I feel like King Kong! Pretty Scott!” she said, patting him. Scott blushed and preened, blowing kisses.

“Put Fay Wray in your bag,” Steve said mirthfully, “before Rumlow catches us.” Darcy stashed Scott in her bag, put on the helmet, and gave Steve a squeeze. “You’re so warm!” she said.

“Right?!” Scott said in his tiny voice.

Back at the apartment, Darcy texted Brock that she’d gotten queasy from too much popcorn and didn’t want him to miss the end of the movie, so she had already gone home. A perfectly innocent friend text. Also, technically true: she felt nauseous. Scott fumed. “Cap, what’s the etiquette for punching a guy who is mistreating your ex?” he asked Steve.

“What would Emily Post say?” Darcy asked, looking up from the hot cocoa she was making Steve as a thank-you. She looked at Steve for input. He had good manners. She’d never heard him burp in public, anyway.

“You realize I’m just a guy from Brooklyn, right?” Steve said. “Not Park Avenue.”

“It’s just total malarkey!” Scott said. He was pacing Darcy’s living room. “Teach me more old-timey slang words, Cap, I want Cassie to have classy options for venting,” Scott said.

“Slang words?” Steve said, grinning slyly.

“Like horsefeathers?” Darcy said, getting marshmallows.

“Horsefeathers!” Scott repeated. “That’s what this is. Exactly.”

“I had no idea Rumlow was such a flimflam man,” Darcy said, sighing.

“Now folks,” Steve said soothingly, “don’t blow your wigs.” Scott looked at him hopefully.

“Man, that’s great, Cap. What does it mean?” Scott asked.
They were debating s’mores when Darcy got a text back from Brock.

**Commander Gorgeous:** I am so sorry, sweetheart. Why didn’t you come get me? I would have taken you home. Do you need anything?

**World’s Okayest Assistant:** No, I’m just going to lay down.

**Commander Gorgeous:** You sure? I could bring you something for nausea?

“I gave him that name before I knew he was a flimflam man,” Darcy clarified.

“Uh-huh,” Steve said, hiding a smile behind his mug.

“Oh, let me text him back! I want to tell him he’s a dirtbag with a stupid face,” Scott said, reaching for her phone.

“No,” Darcy said, hiding it behind her back. “We have to be cool!”

“We do?” Steve said.

“He sucks,” Scott grumbled. Just then, the phone rang. Rumlow’s face appeared on Darcy’s screen.

“It’s him!” she said. “Hello? What?! Um, uh--you’re outside with soup? Okay,” Darcy said slowly. She hung up and looked at Scott. “He’s here! You have to hide!”

“Hide?” Steve said.

“We’ll get in your walk-in,” Scott said. “C’mon, Cap. I’ve done this before. Bring your cocoa.”

“You have?” Steve said, carrying his mug.

“I’m a pro at hide and seek,” Scott said, as Steve followed him through Darcy’s bedroom. “If I didn’t want to kick his ass, I’d be thrilled we’re getting to spend this time together,” he told Steve. He dropped his voice as they wedged themselves between Darcy’s sweaters. “Will you be able to hear him? I want to intervene if he gets fresh.”

“Yeah,” Steve said.

“That dirtbag,” Scott muttered.
“Oh my God, oh my God,” Darcy muttered, trying to hide the evidence that it had been a three-person hot cocoa party. Thank goodness Cap never so much as dropped a crumb. “Thank you for your tidiness, Steve!” she hissed and was rewarded with a distinct chuckle from the direction of her bedroom.

“What did she say?” Scott said, peering around a purple sweater inside Darcy’s closet.

“She complimented me on my neatness,” Steve whispered, taking a swig of his hot cocoa.

“You are exceptionally clean. And you smell really good, too. What is that?” Scott asked.

“Old Spice,” Steve said.

“I never smell that good in Old Spice. Maggie used to call me grandpa—is that a knock? Is he here?” Scott said, urgently.

“Yep,” Steve said. He could practically hear Rumlow’s blood pressure as his heart hammered. It was like someone was playing the bongos in the hallway. It was weird to have that kind of access to people’s unconscious physiological signs, but useful. Steve had happened to attend the same DC ACLU fundraiser with Rumlow and Hope Van Dyne on one rare—Steve hated these events, but believed in the cause—occasion. They looked good together, but there had been a conspicuous lack of increased heart rate. He was 100% sure that it was a casual relationship for Rumlow. He’d also heard Hope’s fractional sigh as she pointed him out as her boyfriend. Her voice had been polite, not excited. That was why he hadn’t minded getting roped into this completely absurd plan. Also, it was amusing to watch Scott and Darcy panic and talk like Carole Lombard and, well, there was no 1930s equivalent to Scott. Robert Taylor, maybe? No, Lassie—Scott was a Lassie. Made Steve feel oddly at home.

Out in the living room, Darcy heard the knock and very distinctly said, “shit!”

“Uh-oh, language,” Scott said.

“We’ll let it slide this time,” Steve said.

“Good call, Cap. Good call,” Scott said.

***

Darcy opened her apartment door slowly. Rumlow was standing there, holding a restaurant takeout bag. “Hey, you don’t look too bad? I got you soup, sweetheart,” he said.

“You got me soup,” she repeated dully. He’d left his jacket in the car, so the arm holding her soup was very visible.
“Did you want to let me in?” Rumlow asked.

“‘Yes,’” Darcy said. “‘Yes.’” I want to let that man in so freaking badly, she thought. No, no. No homewrecker sex with Captain America and Scott in your closet! Cap will do Disappointed Face! It’s the shag of shame! You were on the Dean’s List at Culver!

“Good, ‘cause there’s something I want to talk to you about--why are you still dressed, honey? If you feel bad, you really should put some more comfortable clothes on, lay down,” he said.

“I was--I was just going to put some pajamas on and do that, so if you just want to leave the soup here,” Darcy babbled.

“Oh, let me warm it up for you,” he said. “You go change, take your time.” He went over to her little apartment kitchenette and started unpacking things, humming to himself.

“Okay. I’ll just--I’ll go,” she said, scurrying into her bedroom and shutting the door. She stood against it for a minute, just trying to breathe slowly. Then she crossed the room. “Oh my God,” Darcy whispered to the crack in her closet door. “What do I do?” she said in a tiny wail.

“Change in the bathroom?” Steve offered wryly.

“What’s going on?” Scott said.

“He told me I should put on my pjs if I felt bad,” Darcy explained in a low voice. “He’s heating up the soup!”

“He’s trying to get you into pajamas and doing things with soup? That’s disgusting,” Scott said. Steve cleared his throat slightly.

“What is it, Steve? Is he--he’s not getting naked out there, is he?” Darcy said, half-horrified, half-thrilled.

“Nope,” Steve said. “I think he’s just opened a pack of saltines.”

“Oh,” Darcy said.

“I still say it’s--it’s just wrong to bring another woman soup when you’re in a committed relationship,” Scott said.

“I think we have to consider alternative possibilities here, fellas,” Steve said.

“What?” Scott and Darcy said at once.

“He likes you,” Steve told her. “His heart’s beating like crazy--”

“Really?” Darcy said.

“Or--or he’s nervous because he’s cheating,” Scott cut-in.

“True--” Darcy began, before Rumlow called out.

“You okay in there, sweetheart?” he said.

“I gotta change!” Darcy hissed. “Nobody look at my boobs! My bathroom door lock is broken.”

“No, ma’am,” Steve said. Scott was still muttering irately about dirtbags and cheaters. Darcy
hurried to the bathroom with a pair of chocolate chip cookie pajamas. Emerging a few minutes later, she mouthed “ahhhh!” at the closet, then took a deep breath and stepped out of the bedroom.

“I can’t believe this is happening, Cap,” Scott whispered. “I am appalled.”

“Uh-huh,” Steve said.

“Also, remind me to ask Darce where she got those puppy slippers behind you. Me and Cassie would like those,” Scott said.

***

Darcy was fairly sure her heart was hammering now. “Hey,” Rumlow said, grinning at her. “You okay?” he asked. She stared at him. He was positively smirking. Why did he look so delighted?

“Are you lighting candles?” she said. He’d actually set her little two-person table.

“I found your grill lighter when I was getting you a spoon,” he said. “Did you want ginger ale? I brought a six pack?”

“You’re very thorough,” Darcy said, hovering in the middle of the room. She felt flushed. She was boob-sweating like it was a monetizable natural resource.

“Come sit,” he said coaxingly. He was very good at whatever that voice was. Soothing? Purring?

“Do you use that voice during hostage negotiations?” she asked.

“SHIELD doesn’t negotiate,” he said. “You know that.” Then he actually winked at her. Walking over, he took her hand and towed her to the table. He felt her forehead. “You’re a little clammy,” he said.

“It’s--I’m sure it’s nothing,” Darcy said. “But this does look like good soup.”

“I know how you like those egg noodles,” he said, brushing a little of her hair back over her shoulders. Was it her imagination or did he manage to make the word noodles sexy? His finger grazed her neck.


“I listen when you talk,” he said, moving to sit down.

“Really? Because it doesn’t seem like you’re listening,” she muttered under her breath, thinking of all those times he’d chosen not to read her signals.

“What was that?” he said.

“You have somebody in your life--a girlfriend,” Darcy said, sexual frustration turning to bluntness. “Why are you here flirting with me? Where’s Hope? I’m not sick, okay? I’m just upset with you right now and it’s making me all sweaty and discombobulated.”

“Dis--what? Sweetheart, I don’t have a girlfriend--” he began, before there was a clatter behind her.

“You lie!” Scott said, waving something at Rumlow. He’d run into the room holding a clothes
hanger. "You’re a lying liar! Who lies!" He gestured again, as if holding a sword. Steve followed him, at a more leisurely pace.

"And you’re going to kick my ass with that plastic hanger? Cap?" Rumlow said, eyebrows raised.

"Rumlow," Steve said, nodding politely and sipping his cocoa.

"With my good bra on it?" Darcy said. Her purple bra was hanging from the hanger, bouncing as Scott pointed. "It was seventy dollars!"

"It’s a very nice bra. Why are Scott and Cap here?" Rumlow asked calmly.

"Like we would tell you!" Scott said. "We heard it all. All your lies and seductions, you--you dirtbag wannabe Casanova."

"Casanova?" Rumlow said.

"We were in the closet, listening to you try to put your moves on. Together," Scott added, looking back at Steve and slightly lowering his weapon of choice, "but in a non-sexual fashion. Not that I wouldn’t be flattered, Cap. I would be totally flattered to share a closet with you anytime. Platonically or romantically."

"Thank you, Scott," Steve said. Scott turned back to Rumlow and pointed the hanger again.

"But you--coming here and trying to woo Darcy with pajamas and soup! Hope is out there somewhere, thinking you’re a good boyfriend, but you--you’re just terrible," Scott said. He stressed the last words.

"No, she isn’t," Rumlow said. "We ended things. She’s still in love with you. And I’m crazy about you," he said to Darcy. "Have been since I met you."

"You are?" Darcy said. "But you wouldn’t even look at my mini bundts!"

"I love your damn bundts, sweetheart," he said. "I just thought I was too old for you."

"Your what?" Scott said. "What did he say?" Scott looked at Darcy, then Steve.

"My bundts--it’s baking, okay? Not dirty," she said.

"Oh," Scott said. Steve started to laugh. He laughed so hard that he actually slapped his own chest.

"You thought you were too old? You’re not old!" Darcy told Brock, ignoring Steve’s giggling.

"I’m a hundred," he said, rubbing his jaw.

"Is he really a hundred, like you?" Scott whispered to Steve, who was actually leaning down, hands on his thighs, laughing. Steve got really red then.

"No," Rumlow grumbled. "I’m just fifty. Hope is in Palo Alto, by the way. She was supposed to take you out tonight as part of our plan to be dirtbag Casanovas, but Hank is being Hank, so she flew home," he said dryly.

"Hank does that." Scott shook his head, then his expression grew, well, hopeful. "She needs me?" Scott said.

"Yes," Rumlow said. "She actually does need you, if you want to get back together?"
“Yes!” Scott said, fist pumping. “Yes! I knew she loved me. Didn’t I tell you?”

“Scott and I pretended to be dating to see if he could make Hope jealous,” Darcy explained to Brock. “We’re just friends, not a real couple.” His face lit up.

“Well, that is the best goddamn news I’ve heard in weeks,” Rumlow said. “Sorry, Cap.” Steve gestured, waving it away. He was wiping tears off his face. Scott was beaming.

“Are you going to go?” Rumlow said. “Both of you?”


“Well, this has been an enjoyable evening, Darcy, but I should go, too--” The door opened suddenly and Scott came back in.

“Cap, I need you to drive me to the wienermobile!” he said. “I have to catch a plane!”

“Okay,” Steve said.

“Why don’t you just have Steve take you to the airport?” Darcy suggested.

“Good plan, good plan,” Scott said, seizing Steve’s elbow and trying to tow him towards the door. Steve didn’t budge.

“Good night,” Steve said, grinning slyly. He stopped, put his cocoa mug in the sink, and followed an agitated Scott out.

“Cap, thank you so much,” Scott was saying. “If you want to go with me to California--”

“Goodnight!” Darcy called. She looked back at Brock. He was giving her that sexy expression again. She blushed.

“So,” Rumlow said, smirking, “can I have a piece of bundt tonight or do I need to wait ‘til the third date?”
“You want a piece?” Darcy said, staring at him.

"I do," he said.

“Does this mean you’re willing to be my taste tester?” she teased, putting her hands on her hips.

“Yeah,” he said, grinning at her. He crossed the room and pulled her into his arms. “I’m going to make up for that lapse in judgment, starting tonight,” he said, lowering his mouth to hers. He kissed her gently, then playfully dipped his tongue against her top lip. She made a soft, sighing sound. Encouraged, he slid his hands under her pajama top. She was slightly damp with sweat. “You’re a little warm,” Brock said teasingly. “I think we need to get these pajamas off.”

“You are a secret flirt,” Darcy whispered. “I didn’t know.” He looked at her.

“I’ve thought a lot about your mouth,” he said, smirking. He started on the buttons of her pajama top. He eased it over her shoulders and let it fall to the floor. His heart was racing again.

“I’m the luckiest girl in the world,” Darcy said. “I want you to carry me to the bedroom now.”

“Like this?” he said, scooping her up. She shrieked joyfully and kissed his jawline.

“Uh-huh. I have lots of ideas for things we can do together,” she said. “I may have given it thought.”

“Good,” he said. “I’m putting you in charge of sex planning.”

“Oooh, I get to be the boss?”

“Uh-huh,” he said. “Sex boss.”

“Excuse me, chief executive of naughty is my preferred title. I just have one question,” Darcy said as he carried her to the bed.

“Yeah?” Brock said.

“Do you have the glasses with you?” she asked.

“You like my glasses?” he said, incredulous. “The old man reading glasses?”

“They’re so hot, oh em gee,” she said, laughing and leaned forward to kiss him lightly. They had a moment of eye contact that made him feel giddy, like he was leaning into a drop.

“You thought about that?” he asked, depositing her on the bed. He reached down and slowly stripped off her pajama bottoms. His breath caught in his lungs. God, she was gorgeous. He was stunned for a second, just staring at her as she lay in front of him.

“Yeah?”

“You’re wearing too many clothes for phase one of any of my existing sex plans,” Darcy said. “Lemme help you with that.” She crawled to her knees and started pulling up his shirt. They were both grinning like idiots. “If I’m the boss, does that mean I get to be on top?” she asked, raising her eyebrows.

“Oh, yes,” he said, reaching down to pry off one of his shoes with such eagerness that their heads almost collided. “Shit,” he said.

“You’re surprisingly uncoordinated when you’re excited,” Darcy told him. She was sliding down in his pants. It was obvious he was excited.

“You’re just so…naked,” he said dazedly. How did she look better than he’d imagined?

“Okay, yes, I’m definitely on top. C’mere, hot stuff,” she said, seizing his forearms and pulling him down onto the bed.

“My socks are still on,” he said. “Wait, why did I say that?”

“Where is your brain?” she said, pausing to retrieve the box of condoms she kept in her nightstand, then putting her knees on either side of him. Darcy saw his eyes go a little wide when he looked at her. She leaned down to kiss him. “Phase one of the preliminary sex plan is you making up for all those weeks and weeks of deep personal neglect,” she said, stressing the last three words.

“Do I need to sign an employee agreement?” he said, reaching for one of the condoms.

***

Hope was home working on some paperwork when her doorbell rang. She reached for the remote that controlled the exterior camera feeds. It never hurt to be too careful, she thought. Then Hope sat up a fraction. “Scott?” she said. He was waving at her. Standing on her doorstep with flowers. And—it couldn’t be, could it? She got up and hurried to the door.

“Hey!” Scott said brightly. “These are for you.” He handed her the bouquet.

“What are you doing here?” Hope said. “Thank you,” she added. “These are gorgeous.”

“I came to win you back,” Scott said.

“So, you brought Captain America?” Hope asked. Steve was standing behind Scott.

“Hi,” Steve said. “I’m just here for emotional support and floral advice,” he explained. “I can leave, if you want?”

“Steve went to art school. He helped me with the flower colors,” Scott said. “Isn’t that incredible?”

“Um, yes,” Hope said, momentarily unsure about etiquette. “You picked great colors. No, that’s okay,” she said. “You don’t have to leave.” There was a glint in Captain America’s eye. None of Hank’s SHIELD stories seemed to imply Steve Rogers was a guy who liked mischief, but…..

“He’s my emotional support superhero,” Scott joked. “The flight attendants thought that was a
great joke, by the way. Also, Steve does a really good Single Ladies dance.”

“I’m learning the new dances,” Steve said, still all wickedly innocent looking. Hope shook off the suspicion he was enjoying this, somehow.

“I thought you had a girlfriend?” Hope said to Scott.

“No, we, um, faked that. I was trying to make you jealous, because you’d moved on with Brock. And Darcy is totally in love with him and his abs of steel or whatever,” Scott said.

“Oh,” Hope said, trying to process. “So, they like each other? Darcy and Brock?”

“Yup, heartrates’ through the roof, right, Cap?” Scott said.

“Whenever they’re around each other,” Steve said.

“That’s good,” Hope said. She was looking at Scott, trying to figure out how to say the words I love you when Scott spoke first.

“I love you. Like really really love you,” he said. “The way I love ice cream sandwich cookies?”

“Ice cream cookies?” Hope said.

“Yeah, you’re the cookie because you’re a little crispy and emotionally-guarded and I’m the soft ice cream in the middle, but together, we make something awesome? And it’s only because we’re two kinds of desserts that it works?” Scott said. “So, I know we have our differences, but--”

“Why don’t you come in? Both of you?” she asked.

“Great--great,” Scott said nervously, stepping inside and wandering anxiously towards the kitchen. When he was nervous, he talked louder. “Oh, wow, you got a new coffee pot?”

“You can see why he needs a little emotional support,” Steve said wryly. He winked at Hope. She really needed to ask her parents more SHIELD questions, she thought.

“Art school?” she said.

“It’s completely true. In all the history books,” Steve said.

“I really think he should do floral design!” Scott yelled.

“Scott, volume,” Steve and Hope said in unison. They looked at each other and started to laugh.

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He woke up tangled in her sheets. “Hey,” Brock said, smiling at her.

”Hello, you,” Darcy said, nuzzling him. She rubbed his shoulders gently and he relaxed under her touch.

“I was such an idiot,” Brock repeated, kissing her neck in light, fleeting kisses until she giggled. “Have I mentioned I’m an idiot?” he said.

“You are not,” she said.
“Yes I am,” he insisted.

“You are refreshingly modest for an incredibly attractive man,” Darcy said, sighing happily and twirling his hair around her finger.

“What are you doing?” he asked.

“Gonna give you that little Superman hair curl, because you are super,” Darcy said. She felt ridiculously silly. “You thought you were too old! It’s very sweet,” she said to him. “Especially given your cardio regimen. Are you late for the gym?”

“Probably,” he said, scrunching his nose. “We can go tonight together if you want?”

“Can I just drink Gatorade and heckle?” she said. He nodded. “I can’t believe you were hiding a crush on me from me!” Darcy repeated.

“I thought you liked guys like Cameron Klein,” he said. She burst out laughing. “What?” Brock said.

“He was my man on the inside. I traded him lemon squares for your whereabouts,” she said. "Technically, he assisted in the sexual harassment of you, my innocent coworker."

"I need to send him a present," Brock said.
Hope woke up next to a snoring Scott and went downstairs. Captain America was probably still asleep in the guest room, she thought. But then she heard a sound from the kitchen. Steve was standing at her stove. “Hey, Hope,” he said, turning and smiling. “I hope you don’t mind? I have to eat more, you know. Coffee and scrambled eggs?” he offered.

“Sure,” she said, deciding there was no time like the present for this conversation. She pulled out a barstool and sat a few feet away from a whistling Steve. He poured her a cup.

“I drink it black,” she said.

“Cheddar in the eggs?” he asked, going to the fridge.

“Yes, ma’am?” he said, looking over his shoulder.

“Why are you really here?” she said. She tapped the sides of her mug. “Are--are you in love with Scott?” she asked. Steve started to laugh. He rubbed his head sheepishly.

“Scott’s real nice,” he said. “But no. I do have an ulterior motive.”

“I thought you might,” she said, thinking of the Pym Particles. SHIELD had sent Captain America to woo them for their tech, obviously.

“I want to meet your dad,” Steve said.

“Of course,” Hope said coolly.

“He knew my--my, uh, girlfriend Peggy when she was older,” Steve said. “She and I met during the war.” He looked off towards the middle distance for a second. “So, I was hoping he could tell me some stories, you know? Peggy passed away a few years ago and that’s what I do now, ask people for Peggy stories.”

“Oh,” Hope said, feeling terribly cynical. Scott would be ashamed of her. “I’ll call Mom and Dad now,” she said. “My mom knew Peggy, too.”

“Really?” Steve said, looking delighted. “Two people who knew Peggy, huh?”
“La-la-la-” Darcy sang at her desk. Jane grimaced and put down her spectrometer.

“Are you singing the Rosemary’s Baby theme?” she asked Darcy.

“No. Do I sound that creepy? I thought I was better at singing?” Darcy asked, pulling a face and then grinning. She was in a really good mood. She and Brock were going on a date tonight. A real date! Where she wouldn’t feel like a Cheatie McTrampson, but could bask in the glow of him being her actual boyfriend. Who let her touch him whenever she wanted! It was dazzling. She had been terrible at work all day, just thinking about him. Jane had been teasing her for signing an important email as “Dacrys” and she wasn’t even fast enough to say that was her Game of Thrones name or something. Whoops.

“How long will you be like this?” Jane said.

“Do we need to talk about you and the Thor Bear’s first three years of boinking?” Darcy said, pointing. Jane looked chagrined. “Ah ha! Got you, missy!”

“I will not admit guilt,” Jane said stubbornly.

“Oh, look, there’s Jack!” Darcy said, waving. Rollins was walking past the glass wall of the lab. He stuck his head into the room, smiling.

“Hello, darls,” he said.

“Hello, what?” Jane said.

“It means darlings, we’ve decided it’s very cute,” Darcy said. Jane rolled her eyes at Jack. He grinned. “Jack, where is my incredibly handsome boyfriend right this second?” Darcy asked. Jack started to laugh.

“I believe he’s returning your pal’s Wienermobile, love,” he said.

“Oh my God, he is so whipped,” Jane said.

“Excuse me? Excuse me? I believe there are some photos of Thor going as Han Solo for Halloween that are specifically for your enjoyment, Doctor,” Darcy said.

“I can’t help it if Princess Leia is my favorite character,” Jane said. “We’re both intelligent, accomplished brunettes who take no shit. We could practically be sisters or something.”

“True that,” Darcy said. “Jack, what can I bake you?”

“What have I done, love?” he asked. He looked carefully at Jane to see if Darcy had been told about the elevator trick. Jane shook her head slightly.

“Nothing, honey, I’m just feeling extra generous,” Darcy said. “You get a baked good! And you get a baked good!”

“She gets like this when she’s getting some,” Jane said, rolling her eyes at Jack. “When she first met Ian, she made us a cake in the shape of a Pop Tart.”

“And you don’t make sure she bloody is all the time?” he said. Jane shrugged. Darcy was thinking about cake.
“Ian really didn’t deserve my Pop Tart cake,” Darcy said. She looked at the Australian. “What can I make Brock?” Jack sighed.

“Paleo brownies?” he suggested gently.

“I can do something with that,” Darcy said. “Almond flour, maybe? Shoop--shoopeee--tra-la-la,” she sang to herself, as she turned back to her laptop. Jack cringed a fraction.

“Oh God, it’s the musical lovechild of the Rosemary’s Baby theme and du wop,” Jane said, horrified.

“You hush, I am so happy you cannot bug me,” Darcy said.

“Please help,” Jane begged Jack. “Do you have those gun range earplugs?”

“As a matter of fact…..” he said, digging in a pocket. “There you go.”

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“Peggy Carter was a total pain in my ass,” Hank announced, as soon as they walked into the Pyms’ house.

“Dad!” Hope said, horrified. Panicking, she looked at Steve. Steve was...smiling?

“That so?” Steve said.

“Yes,” Hank said. “She was an absolute terror. That woman drove me crazy.”

“He deserved every bit of it, too,” Janet said. “Hank never followed the right security protocols, never kept his team informed. Peggy was totally within her rights to read you the riot act every single day. Scott, come help me with this coconut cake?”

“Yes,” Scott said, mouthing what at Hope.

“You’re not offended?” Hank said to Steve. He’d lit up. Steve shook his head.

“That’s nothing,” he said, laughing. “Peggy shot me once.” There was the sound of something being dropped in the kitchen. An alarmed-looking Scott appeared, cake knife in hand, and gaped at Steve.

“She shot you? Isn’t that treason?” Scott said.

“She was British!” Janet called from inside the kitchen.

“It’s not treason if you’re British, no,” Steve said mildly, grinning. “Or any other nationality, Scott,” he added. Hope started to laugh. She laughed so much, Steve got her a chair. She was literally crying when Scott brought her a piece of coconut cake.
Darcy practically bolted out of the lab at five-thirty. “Byeeeeee,” she yelled at Jane. Jane was wearing the ear plugs. Darcy bounced a little in excitement and waved her arms. “I’m outta here!”

“Goodbye, goober,” Jane said cheerfully. “Enjoy your date!”

“I will!” she said. It was difficult not to grin at everybody as she passed them. People were staring at her with expressions of slight alarm, she realized, but she couldn’t stop smiling. Why did the agents always do those serious faces, anyway? She went down to the parking garage. Brock was meeting her there after he returned the vehicle to the hot dog people. “Hot dog,” she murmured to herself. She had a date! Brock had refused to tell her where they were going, too. That made it more exciting. She was practically thrumming with joy when she spotted the car. “Oh my God,” Darcy said out loud. The car stopped in front of her and Brock looked up at her, grinning.

“Did you want to go solve a crime?” he said.

“It’s--it’s the classic Batmobile. How did you rent the Batmobile?” Darcy asked, awestruck.

“What you think they only rent hot dog vehicles? Besides this is a way cooler means of transport, baby. Get in, I wanna see if idiots try to street race me,” he said. He chuckled.

“Can we go fast?” Darcy asked. “Wait, I wanna kiss you first, ’cause you’re so cute.”

“Hill,” Fury said suddenly. “What am I looking at?” Maria Hill looked up from her paperwork. They were leaving SHIELD’s parking garage in an SUV. She hadn’t noticed when Fury stopped the vehicle, too busy concentrating on the Peru incident reports in her hands. Hill frowned and tilted her head slightly.

“I believe that’s Commander Rumlow making out with...Darcy Lewis, sir? And that’s an interesting car?” she said. Fury sighed.

“That, Hill, is the original goddamn Batmobile. The Adam West one. I loved that thing when I was a kid. I was hoping my one eye was lying to me,” Fury said. He honked the horn. The car ahead of them didn’t move. The couple was still enthusiastically kissing. “This,” Fury said, “calls for more excessive force.” He flung open the car door.

“Sir?” Hill huffed in frustration. Fury ignored her, marching over to the car and tapping on the windshield.

“Excuse me,” he said. Brock looked up and immediately looked apologetic. Darcy’s lipstick was smeared all over his face.

“Sir?” he said to Fury.

“Correct me if I’m wrong here, Rumlow, but aren’t you a STRIKE Commander?” Fury said.

“Yes, sir,” Rumlow said.

“Can someone explain to me why one of my STRIKE Commanders is blocking traffic to suck face in my parking garage, impeding my progress towards a steak dinner and a quiet evening with my wife?” Fury said.
“You’re married--nevermind, forget I said that,” Rumlow said.

“Uh-huh,” Fury said. “You better hope I do.”

“It was my fault,” Darcy piped up. “I led him astray and away from his professional obligations, director. I apologize.” Her expression blended naughtiness and sincerity. Brock grinned at her.

“You did,” he said, tapping her nose with his finger. “It’s her fault,” he told Fury. “She’s too cute. I might have to arrest her for excessive cuteness.”

“I already knew you were a damn fruit loop, Lewis, but corrupting my--” Fury began, before Rumlow sighed.

“I really wanted some of those Fruit Loop cupcakes you made with Scott,” he whispered.

“Excuse me, no talking while I am talking,” Fury snapped.

“Sorry,” they said in unison.

“What was I saying?” Fury asked. Darcy noticed him peering at the car.

“Would you like to drive the Batmobile, director?” she asked innocently.

“Yes, yes I would,” Fury said. “Hill! We’re swapping cars,” he yelled over his shoulder. “You get out. And don’t dent my SUV making goo-goo eyes at Lewis.”

“Yes, sir,” Brock said. As they were walking towards the SUV, Fury called Darcy’s name.

“Lewis!”

“Yes, sir?” she said, turning to face him.

“I like pineapple upside down cake. I might be able to forgive your boyfriend’s skipping a staff meeting to return a Wienermobile for that,” he said.

“Yes, sir!” Darcy said, saluting him. Fury shook his head. Brock laughed. They climbed into the SUV and Fury and Hill sped away in the Batmobile. Brock sighed.

“I really wanted to fight crime,” he told Darcy.

“We could do something else?” she said, sliding her eyes towards the backseat.

“Oh, you’re naughty. You’re going to get me fired,” Brock said.

“Is that a no?” Darcy asked wickedly. She raised her eyebrows and waggled them. He licked his lips.

“I could find another job,” he said. “FBI would take me. I think. I know a guy.”

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A few minutes later, two passing SHIELD agents heard sounds coming from the nearest SUV. “Isn’t that…?” the first agent asked.

“Him and Hill? No fucking way,” the second agent said. “I thought he was married.”
“He’s married?”

“Yeah.”

“Has anybody ever seen his wife?”

Chapter End Notes

The original TV Batmobile:
They threw a big party the next time that Scott and Hope were in DC and even rented the Batmobile to celebrate. That was Brock’s idea. Thankfully, there was no weird double date awkwardness, mostly because Scott and Hope also brought Cassie--and Hank and Janet and those funny Wombat guys. It was a fun scene: Cassie was asking Jane science questions, while Dave and Kurt had cornered Thor to ask him to bicep curl them. He was obliging and Darcy was certain that Thor would be doing push-ups with various people on his back soon. Natasha and Hank Pym were demonstrating a very good tango for Hope and Scott. “Scott,” Hank was saying, “this is less difficult than the suit. Watch again!”

“Sorry,” Hope mouthed, while Scott grinned at her. Darcy thought he looked stupidly happy.

Darcy was manning a hot cocoa station with Steve while a guy named Luis talked their ears off about properly grated chocolate and his grandmother, who apparently was from Brooklyn, just like Steve. “Well, my Abuela Becky,” he was saying, smiling gently, and Steve smiled back, “she learned to make Mexican style hot chocolate for my Abuelito because that was his favorite, you know? She only knew Irish food. They met when he was in New York on leave for whatchacallit, V-E Day, but that was after your time, right? She was an actual Rosie the Riveter, man. She worked on the assembly line making them Vengeance bombers. I always thought that sounded so cool, Cap. Becky Barnes, she was from your neighborhood and she always had the best stories…”

“Can you repeat that?” Steve said, looking faintly stunned.

“Abuela Becky!” he yelled over the party noise. “Her maiden name was Barnes, you know? My Abuelito, he said she could fill out her dungarees…” Darcy realized Steve was staring at Luis with a dazed, but delighted expression.

“Your grandmother’s name was Becky Barnes from Brooklyn?” Steve said. “A real spitfire of a girl? About yay high?” He held his hand up to a spot chest-high with the Bicep of Freedom. “Blue grey eyes, curly hair?” he asked Luis.

“Yep,” Luis said, nodding. “That’s my Abuelita!”

“What’s going on?” Darcy said. “Steve?”

“Come with me, I gotta find a secure phone line,” Steve said, winking at Darcy. “There’s a man in Wakanda who is going to be so happy to meet you--”


“You got a passport, Luis?” Steve asked.

“A passport? Well, man, I dunno. I had a passport, but I lost it when my cousin Carlos tried to learn to do magic tricks? He made it disappear and it never came back again, so my mama refused to let
him play with our cat, just for it’s safety, the cat, not my cousin. Man, he was so unsafe, Cap--” Steve walked Luis into her bedroom. Darcy saw an alarmed-looking Scott spot them from across the room.

“Luis,” he yelled, “don’t bogart Captain America! That’s our closet in there!” Darcy dissolved into giggles.

“What’s going on?” Jane asked.

“I think Luis is actually Bucky Barnes’s great-nephew or something?” Darcy said.

“Holy shit, I see it,” Jane said. “Wow.”

“Where’s Brock?” Darcy asked, scanning the party crowd and waving at Jack.

“Umm, Darce?” Jane said.

“Yeah?” Darcy said.

“I think Janet Van Dyne talked him into letting her drive the Batmobile,” Jane said. “Thor and I saw them speeding around the block…”

“Well as long as she brings him back,” Darcy said. “She probably looked really cool behind the wheel…”

“Yeah. Totally,” Jane admitted.

“Is it just me or does she have a Catwoman vibe?” Darcy said. “Like you could see her in little ears, like Julie Newmar or Eartha Kitt, sort of purring at men and singing, "I Want To Be Evil" or something?”

“I could see it,” Jane said, tilting her head thoughtfully. They both thought for a minute.

“Should I be worried Janet will steal my boyfriend?” Darcy said.

“What a purrrfectly diabolical idea,” Jane joked.

“Uh-huh,” Darcy said, grinning. Then she frowned.

“He really likes you, though,” Jane said.

“Let’s go check the parking lot, okay? That woman is entirely too good-looking…” Darcy said. “I don’t want her to decide he’s just lying around, like, an unattended diamond necklace or something.”

-The End-

Chapter End Notes

Of course, this had to end on a loopy note. Thanks to tumblr for the ’Luis & Bucky are
relatives' inspiration. I've had a great time with this one! So glad I participated in the Darcyland Crackfic Challenge for 2019 and thanks to Dresupi for these great prompts!

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!