Errare Humanum Est

by Anika_Ann

Summary

In which Steve is forced to solve an unsolvable dilemma and inevitably fails, Natasha is nosy in her attempts to be a good friend and it backfires and Sam Wilson is too old for that $#*!.

Also, Castiel is picking up strays from Heaven, leaving them for Sam and Dean to deal with.

Needless to say, it’s a mess, but when it looks like the God himself might be meddling, Team Free Will doesn’t have a choice. It’s not like they would just let the poor woman with amnesia wander off anyway.

Now all they have to do is to get her back to her soulmate(s?), whom she doesn't remember. Easy as pie, right?

EDIT: Bonus chapter added 'cause apparently I can't help myself...
You might wanna read the first two parts of the series before getting to this. Might not. It’s mostly a fluffy meet-cute and then more fluff with a drop of smut. I’d read it, ‘cause I clearly am I sucker for these, #sorrynotsorry #Imcutewhatsyoursuperpower, but do as you please ;)

This fic is more angsty, especially at the beginning, but then there’s Supernatural. There has to be some attempt at humour, right?
Prologue: You Said You'd Catch Me (if I Fall)

Steve Rogers woke up with his head pounding so hard he was sure he must have drunk a barrel of Thor’s Asgardian liquor. Not that he remembered doing it.

With his brain in a haze, his hand sluggishly rose his temple as if could soothe the pain.

He had never sobered up as fast as when he found out he couldn’t do it, something holding his wrist by his side. His eyes snapped open only to be assaulted with a painfully sharp light. A half second later, he revealed he was strapped to a table.

Steve had no freaking idea what happened, how had he got here or where ‘here’ was, but his instinct yelled at him to break the leather straps. He did so, easily, thanking god for the serum.

What the hell was happening? What the hell had happened?

He gritted his teeth with the effort to get his head straight. Think, Rogers, think.

To his relief, the pounding headache was fading away, but it offered him no clarity. He couldn’t… he couldn’t recall why he was here and how he had got here in the first place. He wasn’t injured, he thought. If he had been, the serum pulsing in his veins, carved into every cell of his body, had done its job already. Except for his brain cells, apparently.

The last thing he remembered was you. Your laughter echoed in his ears, much brighter than the street and traffic lights illuminating your way as he was walking you home – his haven of the past few days as Tony’s frustration caused by a glitch in his system that he couldn’t figure out was penetrating the Tower’s walls, making the air harder to breathe in when anywhere in the building.

The memory of the twinkle in your eyes, when your gaze met his, automatically brought the briefest smile on his lips if even for a second as he had allowed himself to get lost in the past.

But then the brutal punch had come. Something had stung the back of his neck, an instant dizziness causing him to stumble.

Your horrified cry of his name and the darkness that had followed was like a slap, bringing him back to present.

He jumped to his feet, his eyes quickly examining the room. There was no one in sight. His stomach was squeezed by a cold fist of fear and not for himself.

Your name fell from his lips, silent and wavering.

Someone had drugged him. And you had been there when it had happened. Which, not to point a finger at anyone, but the fact he hadn’t seen anyone coming was totally on you, because when he was with you, he let his guard down, he allowed himself to relax, to forget. To forget who he was to
the majority of the world, not to his friends and you.

With you, he was a plain old Steve Rogers, but people were always threatening Captain America’s life.

Fuck.

He prayed to God you were okay. He seemed more or less alright and he couldn’t decide whether that was a good sign. It could mean they had taken out their issues on you instead. His jaw clenched at the idea, the icy shiver that ran his spine in stark contrast to the burst of hot anger in his chest.

If anyone as much as laid their finger on you, he was going to rip their arm off.

Steve tried to shake off the dark thoughts and went to examine the room, this time with his heart hammering, feeling the pulse in his throat. There were two doors on opposite sides of the 40 x 40 ft. room, one to his right, the other to his left. Right in front of him him, there was an enormous screen, stretching along the whole wall. In the corner, there was a little camera. The red dot blinked at him, announcing it was on.

A fraction of second later, the lights in the room dimmed just a bit and the screen lighted up to life, showing a face of an unfamiliar man. He looked like he could use eating a sandwich or two, almost fragile body, deep-set tired grey eyes with wrinkles around them, greyish stubble covering his bony cheeks, contrast to the bald of his head.

“Captain! Good morning!” he greeted him cheerily. Steve squinted, trying to find a clue of what was happening. He could only see the man; not where he was or what was this about. “Good to see you awake. Some of us were getting worried you wouldn’t wake up. Isn’t that right?”

The camera shifted then and Steve’s heart positively stopped.

He lunged forward with his fists clenched on instinct only to realize it would help nothing.

It was you. You with a cloth tied over your mouth, strapped to a chair, a trickle of blood coming from your temple, a strap of messy hair sticking to it. Your cheeks were damp from tears, eyes bloodshot and full of horror. A bruise was forming around your right eye, your line of sight not meeting the lens of the camera aimed at you. Your dress and sweater were dirty and torn as if someone grabbed it too harshly and dragged you away; your nylons ripped, your knees bare and scraped bloody.

Steve didn’t even realize that the raging roar wasn’t only in his mind and actually escaped his mouth, his chest burning with hatred. You sobbed as if you could hear him and Steve understood he wasn’t the only one watching their soulmate.

“You’re a dead man,” Steve growled, causing your eyes falling shut.

While the image stayed focused on you, the man spoke up again.

“And yet I’m still walking…” the man hummed and to emphasize his words, he took several steps towards you – Steve’s feet twitched helplessly, wanting to stop him. But he couldn’t; he had no clue where he himself was, let alone you and that bastard.

He needed to think dammit. And he needed to think very fucking fast. His brain finally kicked in, immediately racing despite the trembles in his body – he couldn’t tell whether it was rage or fear. When the man circled your chair and aimed the camera lower, Steve was suddenly certain it was pure horror.
There were explosives. There were explosives stuck to your chair and a timer set to two minutes; luckily, frozen. Steve was sure as hell it wouldn’t stay that way as a suffocating lump grew in his throat. He couldn’t breathe in.

The camera moved again, showing the man as he glanced at what Steve assumed was a screen like the one he was seeing, the one you kept watching. Steve didn’t bother wasting his brain capacity on trying to control his expression. The man smiled a toothy grin and Steve wanted to puke, his mind frantically fighting with the heavy stone in his stomach, screaming at him that this was your, his soulmate, basically sitting at a bomb.

“If you’re pissed off now, just wait for what’s to come.”

Pissed off? Oh, Steve was so beyond pissed off. When he was about to get his hands on this man, he wasn’t just about to rip his arm off. He was going to do so with all of his limbs and finish with the carotid, using his bare teeth.

The camera must have been set on a stand, still showing you, as Steve could hear the man shuffle around. The next thing he knew, the screen in front of him split in two separate images; one of you and the other showing nine frames of traffic cameras, all of them aimed at trashcans. Steve didn’t understand.

Yet.

Until the frame of you split into two, the other image showing another timer, simply lying somewhere in an empty room. It read two minutes. Frozen. Just like the one on your back.

Something ugly crept Steve’s spine, a hunch he refused to acknowledge.

“You see, you have two options now, Captain,” the man explained and Steve’s teeth grinded with effort to deny what was set in front of him. It wasn’t what he was thinking, it couldn’t be. “There’s a door to your left – close to your heart, of course…”

Steve’s hands trembled as the man walked to you and almost gingerly loosened the cloth over your mouth, only to tear a strap of your dress after that, revealing your soulmark. It was illegible from the distance, but it still sent a fresh wave of nausea up Steve’s throat. A whimper escaped you.

“Pick the left door and save your soulmate. Or take the road to your right and be the righteous man everyone claims you are. There are nine bombs planted over the streets of New York. Busy morning, as you noticed, I’m sure. God, Mondays suck…”

Steve’s head was spinning.

The man was lying. He must have been lying.

“Oh and just so you know, your country is watching. Hacking is too easy these days. Ready to start the race?”

“Wait!” Steve blurted out instantly, catching the man’s attention. It was unfair how much Steve’s voice was shaking, but it was the least of his problems. “What… what do you want?”

The man frowned. “For you to choose. I’m sure you noticed the earbud I gave you-“ No, Steve hadn’t. Having a comm in his ear was a second nature now. “Don’t you worry. You’ll hear us the whole time.”

“No! Wait! There’s… there’s gotta be something-“
The man clicked his tongue disapprovingly. “The timer’s about to start, Captain. You better choose or you’ll lose both, her and tens of thousands of lives I imagine. Life is full of hard choices, isn’t it?” he mocked him and this time it was definitely rage that overtook Steve’s mind and body.

Until someone new spoke up, scratchy, weak and weary voice that shattered his heart turned his stomach around.

“Steve? It’s… it’s okay. Go,” you creaked, your eyes shining with fresh unshed tears. It wasn’t the haunted look in your gaze that unsettled something deep inside of him. No. It was the dark resignation that laced the breath-taking colour of your eyes. “Go save lives. I… I knew I’d have to share you with the world. Frankly, I didn’t imagine it would be like this, but— you go and be hero. My life is nothing compared to thousands and we both know that.”

The world swayed off its place, Steve’s knees buckling, actually forcing him to stumble backwards and lean onto the table he had been strapped to.

The fuck did you just say? With unshakable conviction no less?

“The clock is ticking now, Captain,” the man informed him swiftly, smile in his voice. It was like a punch to Steve’s solar plexus.

With his own shield.

“No,” Steve choked out, his glare darting from one door to another.

How could he even make such choice?! What kind of a twisted monster did this? Who was this man?

“Your soulmate is telling the truth, Captain, isn’t she? You are the hero. You always make choices to save people no matter how much it hurts you… if it hurts at all, of course. Maybe, maybe you don’t care—”

“Hey, I know you do!” you rushed to interrupt, a spark of life lightening up your face, but Steve’s hands only darted to his hair, fingers interlacing in desperation. Your voice softened then. “It’s alright, Steve. I… I love you. And I’m so sorry it will hurt when I’m gone… but I believe in you. You can make it…”

“Yes, I can,” he growled, jolting to his right to disarm the bomb.

He could make it. He could handle the global threat and then rush to your rescue even if it meant he would burn to ashes shielding you from the flames.

His conviction only grew when he heard a familiar voice in his ear.

“Cap? Cap, can you hear me?”

It shook him more than the collision with the door. “Natasha?!”

“And company,” Stark supplied helpfully and Steve could cry in relief.

He wasn’t alone. He could do this.

“Can you disarm the bombs?” he panted, nearly faltering in his steps in relief.

Could Steve leave the nine explosives with one trigger alone and save you?
“Ah, look at him, Americans. The original Avenger, rushing to everyone’s rescue. Looks like he has some assistance, but that isn’t going to help. The choice was made. What is one life compared to thousands? Maybe she doesn’t even matter to him, does she?” the man interjected again and Steve gritted his teeth, pushing to his very limit to speed up.

The hall was narrow. No other possibilities – just running straight ahead. He felt like his mind was anything but straight, buzzing frantic images and dark scenarios. Your voice, ironically enough, was not helping.

“Steve, don’t listen to him. It’s okay. It’s okay…”

“Tony? Can you get rid of the bombs?” Steve repeated, gulping when the billionaire didn’t answer right away.

“No.”

Steve’s world crashed that moment and he wanted to scream.

Alone it was then. He had been alone before. He could do this.

“Romanoff can help you disarm it, we have… ugh, great visual of the corridors and of you thanks to the guy. I’m on my way, but it will be a really fucking close call.”

Steve mentally nodded, swallowing his fear. No time for fear now. Later. He could fold like a house of cards later. He wasn’t alone after all. He had freaking Black Widow and Iron Man at his disposal.

And finally, he reached another door. He burst into the room, his shoulder crying in protest when he broke down the door and stumbled in.

The room was plain, identical to the one he woke up – except there was the timer on a table.

01:02

01:01

“Natasha?” he howled as he sprinted to it. “Talk to me.”

“Shouldn’t be too hard.” She sounded confident. That was good.

That’s good, Steve’s mind echoed as he bent over the timer, swallowing thickly. Jesus Christ.

“Alright. I need you to rip off the blue wire at the same time you pressing the button on the left side of the timer. Got it?”

Steve only nodded, not taking a second to breathe in and think it through.

He just did it.

The red numbers of the timer flickered on 0:54 and died. Blood ran cold in Steve’s veins. He couldn’t hear any explosions, but that didn’t mean anything; God only knew how far from New York they were.

“Romanoff?” he hissed, already spinning on his heels and springing towards the corridor that had led him here.

“We’re clear. Run, Steve. Get that son of a bitch,” the redhead shot back, her voice sharp, but with a
quiver of worry. Steve didn’t like that in the slightest; Natasha was rarely worried.

It was when the man who had assaulted you informed him he was still watching.

“Oh, silly, silly man,” he lamented, a patronizing note to his words. “Do you think you can make it in time? Don’t be stupid. You made your choice. Deal with the consequences.”

“Fuck. You,” Steve strained through his teeth, his feet barely touching the ground as he dashed through the hall, flashing the enormous monitor in his wake-up room a brief look as he headed to the second door.

It barely gave in as he ran into it, sickening crack echoing the empty space and vibrating his bones. Sharp pain jolted through his shoulder and arm; he was certain he just broke something.

It hurt. It would heal. He couldn’t fucking care less.

“You’re running out of time, Captain… you’re always out of time…” the man nearly sing-sang in mockery, making Steve push harder.

“Steve…” Tony’s heavy voice sounded emotionless through the comms and it felt like a slap to his face. “I won’t make it in time.”

Steve snarled, his lungs burning, his heartbeat pulsing his whole being, but he refused to throw himself off balance by even shaking his head in desperation. He ignored the icy fist that squeezed his insides.

He had to run.

Tony’s voice urged him then.

“Steve, there’s no way you can save her either. The lab’s gonna blow up in seconds. Get out of there."

“Shut up!” the captain growled and as if it wasn’t enough, your captor let himself known too, counting down.

“Five.”

Shit!

Steve really would have to shield you from the explosion. That was gonna hurt a lot.

Well, tough luck. He would burn before giving up on you.

He could see the door at the end of the hall now, his muscles crying with effort, his eyes burning with unshed tears or desperation.

He had to make in time to get you of the chair and cover you!

“Cap! Get the fuck out!” Natasha cried out in his ear, but Steve blatantly tuned it out.

He would have ripped the thing out of his ear, but that seemed like too much effort for now. He had more important goals.

“Four.”
He clenched his fists, bracing his body for the impact as he would throw himself against the door.

“Three.”

Pain erupted in Steve’s other shoulder as he collided with the metal, the door flying in the room with him.

“Two,” sounded on his right as he barely kept himself upright, quickly scanning the room. You were there, still on the chair, twenty feet from the door. The man stood by your side, hand on your shoulder, his head tilted to side with curious smile. “Hi there, Captain. One.”

Steve glimpsed the horror in your eyes, perfectly mirroring his own.

“Steve!” three voices yelled at the same time as he lunged after the man.

A fraction of second later, his body was thrown backwards with a shockwave, feeling as if on fire.

And there was nothing.

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He nuzzled his nose to your hair, perfectly blissed out.

He learned to love Sunday mornings. Before he had met you, the day of the week had made no difference to him; he would wake up at 5:45 and get ready for his morning run and the only indication of something being different had been the amount of people he had been meeting on his route. Saturdays had used to be rather crowded, but not Sundays. On Sundays, people had idled. And you had convinced him to do the same.

It hadn’t required much effort from your side; especially after the first time Steve had got to make love to you. Since then, most Sunday mornings were reserved for lazy rolling in the sheets, exchanging sloppy and sensual kisses, wandering hands and lips and finding paradise in your bodies entangled.

He reached his peak shortly after you – because you always came first, an unintended pun, one Steve had made when he had been being absolutely sincere about your pleasure being the priority and you had laughed at it until your belly hurt – and now he wished for nothing but for cradling you in his arms for little longer.

His palm was sprawled on your stomach and he used it to bring you even closer, half-heartedly trying to convince a certain part of his body to stop reacting to your intimate position.

Too late, judging by your chuckle.

“Steve,” you whispered, rubbing your bottom against the hardness, apparently deciding to torture him sweetly. God, he would take every second of that torture and begged for more if it meant hearing you moan his name like that. *Christ*, this got him going.

You shifted in your position, catching his mouth with yours, fingers of your hand interlacing with his on your hip as you rocked into him once more.

Steve could die a happy man right there as he felt your heat, your tongue shamelessly twisting against his. It seemed he wasn’t the only one who was insatiable today. He moaned to your mouth when your hands sneak between your bodies to guide him in and a shot of ecstasy made him arch his back at the contact.
Your smile was lost to the moan that left your lips.

“I love you,” you whimpered and Steve didn’t waste a second before returning the words, even though they paled under the actual force of what he was feeling with you. Love had never felt this intense before.

That was when the alarm blared, annoying and intrusive sound that had you both crying out in frustration.

Steve had forgotten about the brunch you had arranged with Ryan and his boyfriend.

“Turn it off,” he whined, locking his arm around you to keep you close.

“You know I can’t, Stevie,” you replied, not less annoyed than him. “Looks like we need to go back to reality.”

The intrusive beeping continued as Steve slowly blinked his eyes open. His eyelids felt unnaturally heavy. So did the rest of his body, which seemed to be hurting in too many places at once.

It took him few moments to assess the space he was in – lying in a bed, a beeping machine by his head, wires leading to his body, an i.v. in his arm. He knitted his brows together, reaching for the needle – it must have been why his body was so heavy and his mind so fuzzy.

Sharp pain erupted in his arm and torso, low hiss escaping his lips.

“Careful, Cap,” Tony’s voice brought Steve’s attention to the door where his friend was standing, slowly making his way to the bed. “You got yourself a lot of burns. If it wasn’t for the serum… you’d be a toast.”

“Burns?” Steve creaked, his throat scratchy.

When had he got-

Burns. The kidnapping. The choice he had been forced to make. The explosion.

Everything came rushing back to him in a horrifying fastforward.

“Did-“

“You saved lots of lives, yesterday,” the billionaire informed him, serious and excessively soothing.

It didn’t calm Steve’s suddenly rapidly beating heart. This wasn’t the answer he wanted to hear. This wasn’t what he was asking; he knew that much. His thoughts were on you.

Did you survive?

“Did… did she-“

Tony’s grim expression and solemn shake of his head told him everything he needed but didn’t want to know. Everything he refused to acknowledge, because it simply couldn’t be.

“No,” Steve rasped, his throat burning as much as his eyes and the rest of his body when he tried to sit up, his stomach twisting.

No. This couldn’t be.
It couldn’t, but somehow he already knew it was the truth. You would have been here by his bedside, watching over him. Or you would have been the first thing Tony mentioned, updating Steve on your condition.

Steve remembered with painful clarity the terror in your eyes before everything had gone black. The explosion. You had been in the centre of the room, the bomb basically strapped to your back.

“I’m sorry-”

“No,” Steve repeated stubbornly, setting his jaw tight so it wouldn’t tremble. “She’s… she has to-“

“I’m sorry, Steve. I… I really am.”

The crushing weight on Steve’s chest made it hard to breathe in, his throat closing up in effort not to scream. He squeezed his eyes shut, tears threatening to spill.

No, no, no… someone please wake him up from this nightmare. Please. You had to be alive. You had to, because otherwise… otherwise-

Otherwise he had failed you. Otherwise he was alone in this world again. Otherwise his heart was shattered and he would rather if it stopped. Otherwise his life was thrown back to the shadows he knew after coming out of the ice and further, kicked down to a pit of complete darkness. Otherwise he lost his soulmate.

“Please, leave,” Steve strained through his teeth, not bothering to open his eyes.

You were gone. You were gone, your body burned to ashes in the explosion Steve hadn’t stopped in time. He felt like the bomb exploded right inside of his chest, ripping his heart to shreds, pulsing pain pumped through his veins.

He heard no protest, only a sigh from the other man and a click of a door.

Only then, the first sob shook his whole body and he let himself to break down.

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Chapter End Notes

Well… that’s a really long prologue, I know. The chapters should be shorter from here.

Title – inspired by Halsey’s Without Me

P.S. – I spoke of a ‘fun third part of the series’. Yeah, I lied. But only a little. It will change from here a bit, don’t worry ;) Note the tags if you don’t mind little spoilers.

P.P.S. - Thank you for reading ;))
1) What on Earth...?

Chapter Summary

Aka the first glimpse at Team Free Will.

Chapter Notes

*Everyone:* Your favourite character just died. Aren’t you upset?

*SPN fans:* Nah, they’ll be back.

Let’s get this show on the road.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Sam Winchester hated vampires. Mostly because there were messy to deal with. So much blood, everywhere. It had been a literal bloodbath.

He opened the door to their motel room, exhausted and wishing for nothing but a shower and cleanish bed.

His wishes weren’t fulfilled. When he flickered the light on, he was met with a sight that made his heart jump and stop dead in the doorway; Dean collided with his suddenly frozen body with a loud curse.

“What the hell, man?!”

Sam stared incredulously at the scene in front of him; there was a woman lying on his bed. A clearly unconscious woman. Covered in his sheets – well, motel sheets anyway, but who was splitting hairs.

Castiel was sitting by her bedside and his face lighted up when he saw the brothers coming.

“Sam! Dean! I’m glad you’re here!”

Dean pushed past Sam, who was still standing in the doorway, only to freeze too.

“What the hell, Cas? Who’s the chick?”

“Chick?” Castiel parroted, confused. Sam could already feel the headache building up. So much for shower and bed. They just couldn’t catch a break, could they? “I don’t understand.”

He slowly walked into the room, awaiting Castiel’s explanation. He couldn’t help but notice the woman’s dirty face. She looked like she had been rolling in ashes for the past hour. Also, she seemed incredibly still. In fact-

“He means the woman. Cas… is she even breathing?” Sam questioned, his heart never easing its pace. He hurried to her side, only to see the faintest rise of her chest under the covers.
“She is. I was merely waiting for your return so I could pulled her out of unconsciousness—“ The angel extended his hand to hover above her head, but Dean threw himself forward, catching his wrist—and quickly letting go when Castiel gave him a puzzled look.

“Hold it, Angelface. Who is she? How did she get here?” Dean demanded, blatantly staring at her. There didn’t seem to be anything special about her. Only that she was in Sam’s bed. And she was very dirty.

“I brought her here,” Cas stated as it if was fairly obvious. Sam wanted to plead heavens for strength, but that never worked anyway (except that one time), so he might as well stop trying.

“Why?” Dean asked, confused and dubious.

For once, Sam agreed. Yeah. Why? The younger hunter massaged the bridge of his nose when Castiel didn’t answer right away.

“And why did you bring her, Castiel? Who is she? Why does she… look like this?”

Castiel moved his blue innocent gaze to Sam then, opening his mouth only for no sound to come out. Sam raised a curious eyebrow at the silence. Castiel sighed.

“I don’t know.”

Sam could peripherally see Dean’ expression, disbelief written all over his face.

“You don’t know?!” Dean questioned, sarcasm dripping from his voice as he turned to Sam, mimicking the celestial being. “He doesn’t know.” Then he switched his attention back to the angel with a sigh. “What do you mean—“

“I just don’t know, Dean!” Castiel exploded, rising to his feet. “I only know I was meant to save her. I picked up her body once it was whole again—“

“Whoa, whoa, what do you mean her body?!” Sam blurted out, alarmed. He quickly casted a glance at her to make sure she was still breathing. She was.

“When it was whole again?”

Castiel actually had enough decency to put up a guilty face.

“I honestly can’t tell you why. I was… told to do that, by a voice in my head—“

“By a voice in your head? You’re hearing voices now? Like an angel radio or more like you need to murder everyone?” Dean queried, earning a what only could be described as an exasperation—mixed with I am so done with you.

“I… I would say it was God, but… I’m not sure about anything these days. I just knew to pick her up. Just like with you,” the angel explained soothingly.

“Like with me?”

Sam’s eyes widened with realization. “Like from Hell? You lifted her soul from—“

“NO! She’s… I actually escorted her soul… from Heaven.”

“So she was dead? And now she’s not? You’re joking. Why save her? What is she, a prophet of the Lord or something?” Dean spitted out, heavily sitting on the bed, only realizing that he had placed
his bottom on her legs. “Oh for God’s-“

Sam released an exhausted exhale when Dean jumped back to his feet.

“Huh, she sleeps like dead,” Dean hummed, grinning when Sam threw his hands in the air in exasperation at the stupid joke.

Only that Dean’s little stunt ruffled the covers, exposing the woman’s bare shoulder and knee. Sam’s heart hammered in his chest. Could this get any worse?

“Cas… is she wearing any clothes at all?” he asked slowly, only seeing the angel shrug, his bright blue eyes far too innocent.

“I didn’t look. All of her clothing was burnt-“

“She’s naked?!” Dean yelped and Sam mentally asked himself what was his life, reconsidering his past choices.

“Castiel… maybe she would appreciate not to wake up completely nude in a motel room with three men she had never seen before…?” he hinted the angel, realization immediately lightening up his face.

“Oh. Yours or Dean’s?”

“Mine,” Dean choked out, suddenly sounding pleased.

Sam ran his fingers through his hair, while Castiel snapped his fingers and the woman was finally covered. In clothes.

“Perhaps we should wake her up now,” the angel stated wisely, doing exactly that.

The woman jolted awake with a gasp for air, sitting up on the bed. Sam thanked God they had thought of dressing her—or rather not God. It might have been him that had got them into this mess in the first place.

Her frantic eyes scanned the room, her gaze immediately falling on Castiel, Dean and Sam. She pressed her back to the headboard at instant, her pupils wide in horror.

Sam’s brain finally caught up; they were still soaking in blood.

Not only she had woken up in a foreign room, in someone else’s clothes, after dying, apparently (did she know that?), with three unknown men, but two of them were drenched in blood and the third was wearing being trench coat and a curious expression.

“Cas, the blood,” Sam hissed as quietly as he managed and with another snap of the angel’s fingers, they were clean and neat.

The woman jumped and let out a silent yelp.

“Look, we can explain-“ Sam hurried, extending an attempted soothing hand toward her, making her curl onto herself and spot the choice of clothes.

She looked at it, then at them and right back at her own, baffled.

Tears appeared in her eyes, causing Sam’s stomach clench. Poor woman, this must have been so confusing…
“What on Earth happened?” she whispered in hoarse voice as if she had been breathing in the ashes as well. Which she probably had been. Or maybe she just hadn’t been using her vocal cords for too long—because she had been dead. “Who are you? Where… where am I?”

What a freaking mess.

“My name is Sam. This is my brother Dean and this is… our friend Castiel,” Sam explained slowly, hoping not to scare her even further. She frowned funnily at the last name. “We…uh… we found you on a side of a road—“

Dean flashed him a look of approval. This would have to do until they figured out what exactly happen and why was she pulled out from… Heaven.

“On a side of a road? What… I don’t-- what?’’

“Hey, it’s okay. Why don’t you just tell us your name and we go from there?” Castiel took the words right from Sam’s mouth and the hunter was actually quite impressed by his human skills.

Honestly though, Sam was shocked the angel didn’t even know her name. Hadn’t he brought her from Heaven or something? Shouldn’t he know that at least?

Except the woman’s eyes grew absent, unfocused, as if she was trying hard to remember something. It was like a punch to their gut. Oh no, she had no clue, did she?

Sam had just had to ask himself if it could get any worse…

“I… I don’t know.”

Chapter End Notes

So… this is gonna be fun.

Oh, and feedback of any kind is always appreciated ;)}
An ominous silence fell on the motel room for what felt like minutes. The woman was watching them with a mixture of emotion so complicated it was hard to identify them all; but there sure was fear, confusion and hope to be waking up from whatever insane dream this was.

To be fair, Sam wished for the same thing.

Neither of them had such luck.

He blinked several times, but the image remained the same. Wonderful.

“Oh. So we have a Jane Doe,” Dean stated with a sarcastic smile. “With amnesia. That’s… really great, Cas. Thanks for that.”

Both Sam and Castiel shot him a look of disapproval.

“Well,” Dean hummed proudly and Sam was just done with the company he kept.

“And why can’t I… why can’t I remember anything?” she sobbed, watching them with terrified and absolutely perplexed eyes.

Sam decided to speak up before any of his tactless companions could. “We don’t know. But I promise you, we’ll do everything to help you.”

“Are you… aliens?” she breathed out sheepishly, but lost the deadly grip on the covers that had been keeping her knuckles white.

Dean snorted, while Castiel simply answered her. “No. They’re humans. I’m an angel of the Lord.”

Sam hid his face in his palms and let out a silent whine.

“You have no ID, no wallet, no memory and your face looks like you ran away from a costume party for firemen. I don’t think you should be going anywhere, sweetcheeks,” Dean deadpanned, causing the woman to inhale sharply, but not to respond as she realized she had been delivered the harsh truth.
Well, if Dean decided to be the ass of the three of them it looked like Sam had to be the nice guy; just like most of the time after all.

“Are you hungry? We can order something. And you can take a shower—"

“I can just—” Castiel interrupted and Sam cut him off with a pointed look.

“You can take a shower. I’ll get you a clean towel, alright? And… clean clothes,” Sam hurried, reaching for something from his own—

“Dude. You have a sasquatch size. Just grab something mine… again.”

Alright, that was a good point; maybe they should have think it through in the first place, cleaning her up with Cas powers as well before dressing her up. Well. Too late.

Sam smiled at the woman apologetically and she unsurely tried to reciprocate the gesture – it came out looking more like a grimace really, but he appreciated the effort and trust.

“You’re… you’re not gonna hurt me, are you?” she asked in weak voice, cautiously climbing from the bed.

“Don’t worry, Fire Princess,” Dean grinned at her, adding a wink and she hesitantly smiled back.

“What…? Please, don’t call me that… or that,” she murmured and Dean rolled her eyes.

“What do we call you then? Until we figure it out?” Castiel inquired gently.

“I’ll… think about it. But… I think I’d like Natasha. I don’t think it’s my name, but… I like it,” she admitted sheepishly and Sam nodded, handing her a pile of clothes and a towel with a spare toothbrush.

“Natasha it is.”

The moment the door clicked behind her, Sam sat down on the bed heavily.

“What are we gonna do?”

“I’d say drop her on the nearest police station, but…” Dean started, only for Castiel to finish.

“…I brought her back from death. I was told to bring her here and take care of her for a reason.”

Dean just pointed a finger at him, smirking as if he wanted to say ‘exactly’.

“And what the reason might be?” Sam asked, not expecting an answer at all. They never got the answers they wanted.

“I don’t know. But…”

“But? Cas?”

Castiel frowned, staring in the direction of the bathroom as if he could see through, watching the woman and hoping to figure her out. The shower started running and Castiel’s gaze shifted back to Sam and Dean.

“But she has a soulmark.”
“A what now?” Dean asked, his forehead crinkled in confusion,

“She has a soulmate?” Sam blurted out, pleasantly surprised for multiple reasons.

That could be a great clue! And also a bummer, because there was someone out there, who had lost their soulmate to what could be a house fire. Sam always liked the idea of the soul bond, rather wounded he didn’t have a soulmate himself. Seeing what he did for living though, it was probably for the best.

“I thought soulmates were just a fairy tale,” Dean exclaimed, dubious. “You’re telling me it’s a thing? Because cupids aren’t enough?”

“Pretty common, actually,” Sam sassed him, remembering the one time they had encountered a cupid… and Dean punched him in his face. Good times.

“Can you use the mark to find her soulmate?” Sam queried, hopeful.

When Castiel sighed in response, the brothers got their answer.

“I can’t, unfortunately.”

“Of course it doesn’t work like that,” Dean muttered under his breath, falling backwards into his own bed. Right. Beds. There were only two. Shit. The couch in the room was tiny. Plus, she might not be comfortable sleeping in the same room as them – not that she would get a choice. God, Sam just wanted to sleep.

“We’ll figure it out,” Sam groaned, running his hand down his face. “In the morning.”

“You think she’s gonna sleep?” Dean questioned, making space between his feet to see Sam when he raised his head.

“Doubt it, actually. We should prepare for the ‘monsters are real’ talk.”

Dean whined.

“If don’t want to do it, I can-“

“No!” the brothers cried out in unison, causing Castiel to flinch.

“But... you should stay here for it. ‘Cause angels? Good impression. Ever when they can be dicks...” Dean added and Sam rolled his eyes, the corners of his lips twitching. “Hey, can’t you search her mind or something? That would be helpful!”

“I can try,” Castiel replied in mild voice. Sam didn’t believe it could be so easy, but hey, there was usually no harm in trying, right? “Even though I doubt it will work either.”

“Yeah, because that would be too easy.”

“We’ll see,” Sam breathed out, lost in thoughts. Soulmates. What a case. “We need to not to break her trust first.”

“Looking forward to it,” Dean remarked sarcastically as he went to the fridge for a beer and Sam couldn’t quite blame him.

Yeah, he did too.
She took her time with cleaning up – not that Sam could blame her. He was confident she was also trying to reconcile with what she had learned so far and mostly with what she hadn’t. They all had been there, having their brain scrambled in some way and they knew it wasn’t exactly walk in a park.

While Dean and Castiel went hunting for food, Sam busied himself with searching information on soulmates so he wouldn’t fall asleep. They had never encountered such thing before, which was about as convenient as surprising; after all, soulmates weren’t that rare. He even tried to look into some websites that claimed to be able to find one’s soulmate when being told their first words. Hell, Sam even started considering finding one of those dubious forums in which people posted ideas about their other half’s expected words based on the ones they had on their skin.

Of course, they didn’t know Natasha’s words yet.

She emerged from the bathroom, steam following her. Her hair were dripping wet, her figure swimming in Dean’s clothes. Sam attempted not to think about the lack of undergarment; they would have to go shopping. A lot.

The woman smiled at them reluctantly, the gesture not quite reaching her red-rimmed eyes. Sam’s heart clenched; she had been crying in the shower.

“I’m sorry if I took too long,” she murmured, her voice weak.

Sam just shook his head, returning the smile. “That’s fine. How do you feel?”

‘Natasha’ gave an uncertain shrug. “Better than before the shower. I… uhm, I found out I have tattoos. Do you think it might be helpful?”

Before Sam could process her words, Dean and Castiel returned with the groceries.

“Hey. How we’re doing? Magically remembered everything? Please tell me you did…” Dean hummed, clearly not serious. Sam shot him a withering look and he grinned in return. “No? Sorry, just had to make sure…”

Castiel put the plastic bags down, meeting Natasha’s gaze. “We weren’t sure about what you’d like… we have both, the good stuff as Dean calls it and ‘rabbit food’.”

Sam rolled his eyes, not at all surprised at the woman’s confused gaze.

“He means fruit and vegetables.”

“Oh. Thank you. I… I’m not sure either,” she admitted with a sigh, her eyes getting glassy.

Sam quickly cleared his throat, hoping to stop the waterfalls before they could start. “What were you saying before?”

“Uh, the tattoos, yes. I have them on my collarbones, one at each,” she explained, unbuttoning the upper part of the plaid shirt, enough to be able to show them and stay decent at the same time.

Sam’s mind raced as he exchanged looks with the other men. Two soulmarks then? What exactly that meant? Why couldn’t they simply have an easy case for once?

Oblivious to their inner musing, Natasha carefully pulled at the collar, revealing a set of crossed out
words. The line over them surprised Sam the most as he reluctantly came closer to read the words.

“But I really am 95.” Sam read out loud, perplexed. Well. He turned to Dean and Cas before looking at Natasha. “Idea? Anyone?”

“We might have a case of gerontophilia at our hands,” Castiel offered flatly and Sam grimaced. Please let him be wrong. “Or it could mean anything else. A hotel room number, a locker room number, order number in a fast food. Literally anything.”

Sam internally whined in frustration; he couldn’t tell which option he liked better. The one she had been with someone that old or that this was zero clue.

Natasha sighed and showed Sam the other mark. “I hate dreams like this. Huh.”

“Cause that’s really telling,” Dean stated sarcastically, opening another bottle of beer.

“Why would I have tattoos like this?”

Sam’s eyebrows shot up. She didn’t know about soulmates either.

“It’s not a tattoo, not really. You were born with these – or people who have them usually are,” Sam explained, distancing himself to left her some personal space. It gave him a perfect view of her confused frown.

“I don’t understand.”

“The lines you have written on your body – they are soulmarks. These are the first words your soulmate told you – or will tell you,” Castiel interjected softly and Natasha’s lips parted.

Sam gulped when her eyes went wide. Did she understand what it meant? Did she have any clue what was the meaning of the word ‘soulmate’ in the first place?

“Soulmates are real?!” she breathed out, astounded. “Like… someone perfect for each of us, but… actually real? These words will help me find them? That’s…” she chuckled incredulously, not noticing their stares. So she did have an idea of what a soulmate meant. “Why do I have two? Why is this one… crossed out?”

“Well, not to be a party pooper, but you died, so that might be it,” Dean suggested bluntly and Sam mentally rolled his eyes.

Sure, Dean, why beat around the bush…

“Oh,” her face visibly saddened, but then she revealed her uncrossed words. “So why do I have this one? Does that… does that mean that I have… another soulmate? Is that even possible?”

“Or you could meet your original one, supposedly for the first time, since you don’t remember… can I see both of those at once?” Sam scooted closer again, intrigued.

He squinted at the marks. It might have been only a wishful thinking, but… the handwriting looked similar.

“It looks like it’s written by one person,” the younger hunter stated, casting a questioning gaze towards Castiel. “What do you think?”

“Well, it is… unusual for a person to have two soulmates. It is not unheard of, but I only saw it few times in thousands of years of my existence, so it might be just another of their first meetings. Just
like Sam said, if you don’t remember them…”

Natasha’s brows furrowed. “Firstly – is that my soulmate’s handwriting? That’s so freaking cool. Secondly… you’re that old? I mean… thousands years?”

“Well, I am an angel,” Castiel reminded her with a gentle smile and she just shook her head, incredulous.

“Says the girl who has ‘But I’m really 95’ on her,” Dean teased her, wiggling his eyebrows.

“I don’t think I’d be with someone who is-“

The thought struck Sam with a force of a train.

“Maybe they’re not human? I mean, that would explain why you were told to bring her back, right? This might be important.”

“What do you mean that they’re not human? Like an angel then? And bring me back? Bring me back from where?” Natasha took a step back, watching them with sudden wariness.

“Oh, there are many different unhuman things alright.”

 “…the death,” said Castiel at the same time and Sam seriously considered having them signed up for some course in communication. How about breaking things to her slowly?! She had seemed to tune it out the first time, but twice?!

“I beg your pardon?”

“You’ve been dead, Natasha. I’ve been tasked to bring your soul back from Heaven,” Castiel continued, oblivious to Sam’s exasperation, but at least his voice sounded more… patient. “And we don’t know why.”

“Until now. This might be a thing,” Sam added with a sigh, watching her squirm uncomfortably as she buttoned up the shirt again, looking as if she wished for the fabric to hide all of her.

“I… I was… dead? In… in Heaven?”

“Yeah,” Sam confirmed, closely inspecting her reaction just in case she was about to a) run away or b) pass out. “We think you died in a house fire or something of that sort.”

Her face lacked colour so laboriously earned in the hot shower. Her voice was dull, emotionless. “That’s why I was… dirty.”

“And naked.”

“Dean…” Sam scolded him tiredly and his brother shrugged innocently.

“What? She was!”

Luckily – or unfortunately – Natasha chose to ignore the additional information. “I was dead?”

“Hey, that’s okay. It happens. I was dead too,” Dean informed her swiftly, causing her eyes to bulge, not caring he made her way to her and patted her shoulder. She didn’t even flinch when he touched her.

Apparently, openness worked as much as Sam’s lets-break-it-to-her-slowly approach. Huh. Who
would have thought…. perhaps it was the combination. There was a reason they always played the
good cop-bad cop combo.

“What?! Really?”

“Actually… so was Sam,” Dean pointed at the younger brother, unfazed. “But I made a deal with a
demon, which caused me to die and go to Hell, literally, but Cas brought my soul back, much like he
did with yours-“

“I was dead too at some point,” Castiel supplied helpfully.

That had the woman finally freeze, blank stare her only reaction. Sam threw his hands in the air.
“Really, guys?”

“I’m afraid we broke her.”

“No kidding. “ Sam shot both Castiel and Dean a murderous glare before shifting his attention back
to the woman. “Hey, Natasha, you okay? I know this is a lot to take in-“

“Everyone in this room was dead at some point?!” she yelped, her voice unnaturally high-pitched,
making everyone flinch. Sam worried his bottom lip with his teeth, dreading her reaction.

“…yeah. The world is a much stranger place then you were led to believe.”

“Not that I remember much from that…” she huffed, sitting down to a couch heavily.

“Yeah, about that. We thought Cas could try a thing,” Sam remembered, smiling reassuringly when
Natasha eyed the angel warily.

“A… a thing?”

“I’d like to try and look inside your mind,” Castiel explained, slowly approaching her, the coat
dancing around his feet. “To see if I can do anything about the amnesia or at least find a clue that
would lead us to someone who knew you.”

Natasha opened her mouth, no sound coming out for a while. Then she shook her head as if she was
trying to get rid of some annoying thought.

“O-okay. I guess… it’s not gonna kill me again, is it?” she joked, her voice too anxious for anyone to
actually laugh.

“No. Believe me, if I meet an obstacle and the only way of overcoming it would mean hurting you,
I’ll stop. You can trust me, Natasha. I have no reason to cause you any harm.”

Sam was impressed; that was a good speech. Wow. Dean had been right. Angels = good
impressions.

“Okay. I trust you, Castiel. Do your… thing.”

Cas nodded and smiled at her briefly before placing his hands to hover next to her temples. She
automatically closed her eyes with a deep inhale.

“Alright. Tell me if anything hurts…”

The familiar glow of angel grace wrapped her scalp. The brothers held their breath, eyes flickering
between the angel and the woman.
Natasha’s features hardened, but she didn’t let out a sound. If she was in pain, it was either bearable or paralysing. Sam really hoped for the first option.

It didn’t even take a minute. Castiel’s hands fell to his sides and he stepped back, his lips in a frustrated line.

“Nothing?” Dean wanted to know, but they all both had a hunch that the question was rhetorical. The answer was written all over Castiel’s face.

The angel only shook his head. “No. Nothing.”

Chapter End Notes

Sorry to leave you without a chapter for so long... to be fair, it's considerably longer than the previous one ;)
3) What's in a name?

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Awesome. Is it like… a black nothing? White nothing? Or…?”

Castiel grimaced at Dean’s wry questions.

“It’s… it’s like a really tight knot, to be honest. The memories, I can feel them there, but… there’s nothing I can do about it. I’m sorry. I couldn’t even get a glimpse. I’m sorry, Natasha. I wish I could be more help.”

Tears gathered in Natasha’s eyes, but she cautiously rose to her feet as if she didn’t trust her strength and took Castiel’s hands in hers.

“It’s alright, Castiel. Thank you for trying,” she whispered weakly, her smile forced. She turned to the brothers then, tugging at the shirt she was wearing. “I… can I keep those, please?”

“Yeaaaah?” Sam answered unsurely, not following where she was going with that. “Why would you ask that?”

“I… I think I should go. Thank you-“

That had them all lunging forward, Sam speaking up first.

“Whoa! We’ve been over this. You… we can’t exactly keep you here by force, but you have nowhere to go. No money to live on. Your memory… is not okay. Castiel couldn’t find anything at the moment, but we’ll figure out a way to help you.”

“I don’t want to-to impose. I’ve- I have already-“ she stuttered, but was interrupted by Dean’s sigh.

“Look. I’m not gonna lie, I ain’t happy about babysitting you,” he announced honestly, rising from his seat, gesturing towards her with his beer as he spoke. Sam really hoped he was going somewhere with that talk. “But we had much bigger problems at our hands and much more annoying too. Helping people is kinda what we do. It’s in the family.”

Her eyes were wide as she was watching the hunters and their angel, attentive and observant. She was clearly considering her options, wondered if Dean was being honest.

She gulped before speaking up, her gaze falling on the floor. “…okay. Thank you. I’ll… I promise to repay you when I can.”

“I’m sure you will,” Sam hurried before Dean could tell something that would creep her out – like ‘having a few ideas about that’. Though Sam was most impressed by Dean’s earlier words.

“Can I just ask you something, Dean?” she quirked up then, the corners of her lips inconspicuously rising.

“Yeah?”

“…do angels count as your family?”

“You-“ the older brother started, only to shut up and realize he didn’t know how to finish. So he only
pointed a finger at her in pretended warning.

Sam snorted a laugh. “I think we’ll get along just fine.”

“If you must know, for us, family don’t end with blood,” Dean finally managed and Sam couldn’t help but smile sadly at the memory of Bobby, a man who was an uncle to them, if not father. “It’s about the family you choose.”

An honest smile lighted up her face, her eyes soft. “That’s nice…. So, where do we start?”

“Well, I should go,” Castiel announced swiftly, casting a glance at Dean, ever dutiful to the righteous man. “I’ll… see if I can find anything on the subject of soulmates I don’t already know.”

“Okay. See ya, Cas.”

“Bye,” Sam hummed absently, his mind already racing, wondering about their next steps.

With a sound of a flutter of wings, the angel was gone. Natasha was staring blankly where he had been standing just a second ago.

“…oh,” she huffed, clearly caught off guard. “I didn’t see that coming. I didn’t even say goodbye.”

Sam only laughed at that – she seemed confused, sure, taken aback, definitely, but she was processing everything remarkably well considering what a mess she had woken up into.

“You’ll get used to it. We’re really tired, so we would catch few hours. I was thinking I could lend you my tablet?” the younger hunter offered, pulling it out of his bag and holding it out to her. She eyed it curiously and Sam realized where the problem might be. “I’ll show you how to operate it-“

“I… think I might know, actually,” Natasha admitted sheepishly, biting her lip as if ashamed. Sam couldn’t help the rise of his eyebrows.

“That you remember? You don’t know your name, but you know how to work with this thing?” Dean questioned, his eyebrows high as well. She only shrugged helplessly. Dean spun to Sam then, his face saying just how done he was with this situation. “Brains are weird, man.”

“More so when angels are involved,” Sam added, grimacing wryly. Oh, he would know, wouldn’t he? They all would.

“Not wrong there.”

Sam turned his attention back to the woman then, seeing she already turned it on, the screen lit up. Huh. Okay then.

“I just thought you might wanna… look up things. Anything that comes to your mind.”

“Like unhuman things?” she asked half-bitter, half-curious.

“Oh, you don’t wanna look for those. You might find Twilight and Teen Wolf and stuff like that. Not to be trusted.”

Natasha tilted her head, not understanding what Dean was referring to, naturally, and Sam rolled his eyes. She reminded him of Castiel for a moment and a new idea struck his mind.

“Natasha, can I take a picture? I’ll run facial recognition… just to see if anyone reported you missing, okay?”
She hesitated, shifting her weight from one leg to the other, but nodded. “…Okay. Thank you, Sam.”

Sam led her to a wall, switching on more light for better illumination of her face. He snapped a quick photo of her face and started the trace. Dean had managed to tuck himself in already.

“That was… fast. I promise to be quiet.”

“Thanks. Goodnight, Natasha. If you’re tired, just wake up one of us and we’ll leave you a bed, okay?” Sam offered, internally cringing at the idea of trying to fit onto the tiny-ass sofa.

Natasha glanced at the piece of furniture, then back at Sam and at Dean, her eyebrow slowly rising, probably thinking the same thing.

“Sure. Goodnight, Sam. Goodnight, Dean.”

The only reply she got was Dean’s snort. She giggled and Sam rolled his eyes, lying down to his bed, finding a comfortable position. He was out in no time.

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Trying to research resurrections would have probably been a good idea. Or ‘how to cure amnesia’ or something like that. But no. Not for you.

The very first thing you wrote down – and really, could anyone blame you? Sam had specifically told you to look up whatever came to your mind – was the word ‘soulmate’.

It led you straight to a world of wonder. There was everything; it started with a definition, mostly matching what Sam, Dean and Castiel had told you.

Then the photos of soulmarks appeared. Some were funny and specific, like ‘Excuse me, but I believe that the dog that just ate my snack was yours,’ or ‘I’m afraid I’m in the wrong class, ‘cause I sure didn’t sign up for Greek mythology’. Others were annoying and general, something between the lines of ‘Can I borrow your pen?’ or ‘Is this seat taken?’. There were few that broke your heart: ‘Please, don’t leave,’ ‘I just got you, you can’t do this to me.’

You weren’t sure in which category your words would fall into; probably very specific and weird for both the crossed ones and the plain ones.

People were looking for their soulmates too. Either via forums, attempting to guess what comeback they would throw when hearing the words on their skin; another option was a few agencies that claimed to be able to find the match; that felt a bit like cheating and you doubted it worked anyway.

What took your breath away and made your heart ache were links to counselling for those who lost their soulmate. It made your chest tight for a very obvious reason, yet so irrational. You might have lost your soulmate, but you didn’t remember it; on the other hand, your other half could be suffering indescribable pain for their loved one, the one they had been destined to spend their life with. For that only, you felt tears gather in your eyes.

Then again, you could have been wrong. As far as you were concerned, you had never had to meet in the first place, and they only had their words crossed out just like yours, left with a dull ache and strange sense of longing.

There were brighter sides to soulmates too – many and many people shared their meet-cute with their destined partner, photos radiating love and adoration, with the subtlest shade of hate in the comments from people who no doubt didn’t have a soulmate to begin with. Because apparently, that was a
thing as well; not everyone was bound to have a soulmate, not in the real sense of the word. The world was a truly strange place.

You didn’t even realize you had started to rub your collarbone, your mind escaping elsewhere. What was your soulmate like? You believed with your whole heart he was one and the same person, saying both of the lines written on you.

Was he sweet? Polite? Or a bad boy? Tall or shorter than you, scrawny or built like a mountain? What colour were his eyes, his hair? Did he have a nice smile, warm and welcoming, or was a grumpy man? An extrovert, an introvert? Was he willing to show affection publicly or was he shy and private? What did he enjoy doing?

What was he doing now? And more importantly… where was he?

You sighed, sinking deeper into the couch. You could wonder, but it would be no help. You needed to pull yourself together, look up things that might be actually useful to you as a human being with amnesia and deal with daydreaming later.

You wanted to remember. You wanted to know your soulmate, but you needed to know your own persona first.

Hell, you didn’t even know your name.

For some reason you had chosen Natasha, but the motivation behind your actions slipped through your fingers, the truth burning on your tongue, leaving a bitter aftertaste as you couldn’t grasp it.

Alright. For now, you would be Natasha. You trusted your instinct on that one, choosing the name despite feeling it wasn’t your own, but still with a purpose.

Figuring out your last name was the next logical step. You couldn’t recall it either, so you just wrote down ‘American last names’ to the browser, waiting for results to pop up. You surfed through them for a minute, your fingers freezing on one particular name.

The name struck something in you, a spark lighting up like a flare in your chest and you knew this was the one you should pick.

You had been brought back from death. And until your true self and your mind would be resurrected, a new person had to be born.

That person happened to be Natasha Rogers.

“Natasha Rogers…” you whispered, barely audible and a smile spread on your lips involuntarily. You liked the sound of that. “That will do.”

Chapter End Notes

Thank you for letting me know your thoughts in the comments and leaving kudos. Both means very much to me ♥
You grew tired of staring at the screen after a while. There was so much information to look up, but you didn’t even know what you should be looking for. You had to mentally confirm Dean’s earlier words – brains were weird, like really freaking weird. You couldn’t remember your favourite drink or food or the reality of soulmates. On the other hand, you knew how to operate a tablet and what the Internet was. The names Natasha and Ryan popped up in your mind with no obvious reason, Rogers striking something in you.

You wondered if any of those had to do something with your soulmate; your mind always ended up with him (and you were ninety percent sure they were a ‘he’), still fascinating you.

You shut the tablet down and eyed the couch. You knew you weren’t tired enough to fall asleep, your brain was too frantic for that, not to mention you had been sleeping (read dead, apparently), so you had your fill, but you didn’t have too many options. Your feet itched to take a walk, but you resisted – Sam had been right, you couldn’t just walk, less in the middle of a night. The alarm on a nightstand read 4 a.m. You had no clue when Sam and Dean were usually getting up.

You didn’t know the men and their behaviour was puzzling you. They seemed to have never met you before, yet they were inclined to help you – with no outlook for a reward. God only knew why they were doing what they were and maybe quite literally the God. Castiel claimed to an angel after all. They had spoken of monsters. Who the hell were these guys?

It was hard to doubt their words – with little knowledge and unreliable sources on the internet, there was neither confirming nor denying their words. Then again, seeing Castiel just vanish into a thin air was pretty convincing.

You felt a headache starting to build up and decided to lie down on the couch at least, not even daring to hope for getting a shut-eye.

You were out in no time.

Gentle voice of a man you couldn’t remember guided you into the dreamland while whispering senseless words; there was one though that struck something deep inside you, making you jolt awake with a gasp and a faint pleasant taste on your lips.

“Doll…” the soft sigh followed you to full consciousness, echoing in your ears, tingling your spine.

“Morning, Natasha,” male voice greeted you and you yelped, spinning its direction, memories of yesterday events flooding your brain.

The tall long-haired man standing in the bathroom door was Sam and the man sitting on the bed, looking like he just woke up, short hair sticking in every direction and expression utterly confused, was Dean.

“S-sam,” you stuttered, your mind elsewhere.

Doll.

It definitely sounded like an endearment. A pet-name. The man’s voice was laced with emotions, gentle and warm, powerful and tender. You knew him. You must have known him, his name was on the tip of your tongue, begging to roll off and yet no sound came out when your lips parted. You blinked several times, chasing your dream, unable to add neither a name nor a face to the voice.
Your chest tightened, making it hard for you to breathe in, inexplicable fear squeezing your lungs, sudden tears gathering in your eyes.

“Natasha?” Sam’s voice sounded from distance, strangely muffled. “Natasha? What’s wrong? Can you hear me?”

Your eyes automatically snapped up when a gentle hand appeared on your shoulder; Sam’s face was blurry, making you blink the salt droplets away.

Then, as if someone snapped their fingers, the suffocating feeling vanished and you welcomed the change with a fierce inhale.

“Natasha?”

“Yeah, yeah,” you panted. “I’m fine. I’m okay. Sorry to scare you first thing in the morning,” you tried to smile at him, probably failing.

He gave your shoulder a hesitant squeeze, his green-brown eyes mirroring concern. He exchanged a glance with Dean, who seemed way more awake than a minute ago.

“You good, kid?” he threw at you, his eyebrows furrowed.


Funnily enough, the addressing brought you back to reality better than anything else, your mind set straight; well, as much as it could be when you still didn’t know your own name.

Dean behaviour towards you was different than Sam’s and you couldn’t tell whether you liked better or not – it was just… different. And it ignited a spark inside you.

“I’m good, dad,” you hummed back, raising one corner of your lips, this time succeeding.

“Looks like she’s alright,” Dean smirked at Sam and the taller man rolled his eyes.

“It was just… a strange dream. It was probably nothing,” you explained, which caused Sam to finally release you. You found yourself missing the soothing weight of his hand and wondered what it said about you.

“Okay. We should have something to eat and get on the road. Dean?”

“Eat. Coffee. Then think,” the man explained, making you chuckle. You stomach growled in agreement, blood rushing to your cheeks at that.

“Sounds good.”

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Running the facial recognition brought no results, much to Sam and Dean’s annoyance. It was ‘all quiet at Castiel’s front’, which was a statement you didn’t quite understand, but you assumed the expression was a private joke.

In other words, you had no clue who you were besides your soulmarks, the made-up name and a pleasant male voice following you from your dreams – not that you shared that with either of the brothers.

The name on the other hand…. 
“Uhm…” you started intelligently, as Dean and Sam were finishing their coffee (and yours, because you found out that coffee was not quite your thing), catching their attention. “I looked up some names in common in US and… uhm, Rogers-“

“Okay. That’s cool. Common enough, not too obvious like Smith. Good choice, Nat.” Dean glanced at you briefly. “You don’t mind being called Nat, right? ‘Cause I will call you that, it’s shorter.”

You blinked, confused. Huh? “Good choice…?”

“Well, yeah. We need to make you an ID. We should be heading to the bunker…” Dean mumbled absently, staring into the cup as if he wished there was more of that disgusting liquid.

“ID? Like… a fake one? You can do that?!?”

They could make a fake ID? Seriously, who were they? Was Dean and Sam even their real names? You tried not to panic, because they had been nothing but kind to you, seemingly genuine and honest, but… but.

“You need to have one. We could just drop you at a police station and call it a day, but we think it’s better if you stay with us. For that, you need an ID,” Sam hurried to explain and you honestly didn’t know how to react.

You didn’t like the idea of lying about your identity to anyone, then again, you couldn’t remember your actual identity and apparently had been brought back from the death, so you were out of options so to speak.

“Okay,” you sighed, ignoring the unpleasant knot in your stomach. “You talked about… a bunker?”

Which didn’t sound ominous at all. Or creepy. Nope.

What did they do for living again?

“Yeah. It’s our base of operations.”

“For?” you urged Sam, your shoulders tense. Here it came; the fearsome reveal of the truth. Sam sighed and eyed you warily, as if agreeing with your unspoken thoughts.

“This is gonna sound crazy… but the unhuman things we talked about? We hunt them. We are finding strange crimes all over the country and go there to investigate them, finding the ‘cause’, which usually is some kind of a… monster….”

“And you kill the monster,” you finished breathlessly, feeling your heart jump to your throat.

Wow. Wow. You had no idea what to say to that announcement. There was no doubt Sam wasn’t lying. Why would he even make up such thing? They were killing monsters… things that were hurting people. It was unimaginable, incredible and impossible to wrap your head around, but strangely, it kinda… made sense.

It only meant one thing.

“So… you’re heroes,” you exclaimed breathlessly, astounded.

The brothers stared at you blankly, frozen at your words.

What? What did you say wrong? They couldn’t be offended at that, right?
Dean chuckled and patted your shoulder. “Thanks, kid. I wish more people saw it this way…”

“Oh,” you paused, your mind racing. Right. They were able to make fake IDs. They probably didn’t have the jurisdiction to do what they did. And they were probably impersonating police officers of something like that to ‘investigate’, which meant they were technically outlaws. The revelation should give you creeps… but somehow, it didn’t. Knowing the truth actually calmed your nerves. It probably had everything to do with the fact that knowing anything at all was better that knowing nothing – which seemed to be the standard for you now. “Right. Your lives must be peachy. Thanks for having me nevertheless.”

Now you most definitely broke them, didn’t you? They looked like you broke them.

Dean’s expression was wary as he stared at you blankly and you shifted uncomfortably under his gaze.

“That’s it?” he asked, his green eyes looking like seeing the bottom of your soul. Ha! Was that a thing? Could he see your soulmate there?

Never mind…

“Uhm… yeah?”

Dean turned to Sam who was watching you with equally weirded out expression on his face and met Dean’s gaze as the shorter brother spoke up again.

“I love her.”

Your eyebrows shot up at that, but you recognized he wasn’t exactly confessing his undying love to you. Yet, you couldn’t deny that both brothers seemed happy about your reaction. It was strange, but all of what they were apparently doing, the way they lived… it didn’t feel that unreal.

For all you didn’t remember about your life and the world in general, you couldn’t help a distant feeling that there was a certain level of insane you should be used to.

Momentarily, you were grateful for that, because otherwise accepting all of this madness might actually cause you to fold like a house of cards. Instead, you just shrugged when Sam at you, relieved.

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Breakfast absolutely was the most important meal of the day for Sam and Dean. You spent almost an hour with it, but you couldn’t complain – they fed you, they clothed you (though the way they did was beginning to be a problem, people stared and you didn’t really feel comfortable wearing that), they were patient with you not knowing shit… You didn’t want to be too much of a burden to them; there wasn’t much you could pay them back with. At least not yet.

You were in the town of Clayton in Ohio. You somehow understood that it was in United States, you knew there was such thing, but you were glad to have it shown in a map – not that it told you much. The names of towns and cities didn’t remind you of anything. Nothing seemed familiar.

It sucked.

Apparently, the famous bunker Dean had mentioned was in Lebanon, Kansas, which was about a 13 hour drive. You were horrified, but once again kept your mouth shut, knowing very well that you had no right to say a word besides ‘thanks’.

You obediently climbed on a backseat of a fancy black car, not forgetting to compliment it instinctively. Dean flashed you a pleased grin, patting his ‘Baby’ on the roof before taking the wheel.

Funnily enough, he pulled over after what could be five minutes, earning himself your puzzled gaze. Huh? Sam seemed equally confused until he looked outside, nodding and catching your eye in the rear-view mirror.

“So, Natasha… ready to do some shopping?”

You weren’t; apparently, Dean wasn’t either, because he excused himself, taking a beeline with the car to get gas and left you alone with slightly uncomfortable Sam.

“I… I promise that if you manage to… help me get on my feet anyhow, I’ll pay you back,” you said quietly, worrying your teeth over your lower lip.

Sam quickly fixed his expression, his face inviting once more. It made you feel worse. He was suffering just like his finances… wait, how did they get finances? People didn’t pay them for what they were doing, were they?

“Don’t worry about that. I’m just wondering if I’m the right person to help you with shopping.”

You chuckled at that, imagining Sam carrying tens of shopping bags.

“I won’t need much, Sam. In fact, I wouldn’t need anything really-“

“Absolutely not,” he shook his head, his long hair swaying around his head. It was cute. “You need your own clothes. Dean’s too big and… his wardrobe is not exactly for women.”

“Well, I probably should merge with the crowd, right? And you’re the only crowd I know, so…” You looked around the shop, a slow smile spreading on your face when you found what you were looking for. You held up a female plaid shirt, clearly surprising Sam if his confused expression was anything to go by. “What do you think?”

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Shopping wasn’t terrible; you only picked necessities, blushing like a tomato (did you like tomatoes?) when you headed to certain department Sam didn’t dare to follow you to. You didn’t bother with cosmetics – you could use theirs and as far as you were concerned, you didn’t need the particular set of supplies for women just yet.

It took you only half an hour, Dean already waiting in front of the shop in his Chevrolet, lightly drumming his fingers on the steering wheel in a catchy tune. He grinned a boyish smile when he saw you, not at all bothered by your presence and continued enjoying the music from the radio. He was downright adorable.

Two men built like rocks who hunted monsters for living and you both found them cute within an hour. They were incredible goofballs. You loved it.

“Look at you, all in plaid and yet looking like a woman,” he hummed and your cheeks coloured in intense red.

“Dean, shut up,” Sam scolded him, eyebrows furrowing as he circled the car and took the shotgun seat.

“What?” Dean complained, turning his palms up. “That was a compliment.”
“It was accepted,” you assured him and smiled at both him and Sam, which caused the driver gesture towards you as if he was saying ‘see?’ to Sam – he only rolled his eyes in response.

“You don’t mind music, do you?”

“Not at all,” you replied to Dean, not even considering a different answer. Even if had been annoyed at it, you sure as hell wouldn’t say.

“I might actually love you, Nat,” Dean threw over his shoulder, staring the engine. “Oh and we’re not heading to the bunker. I found us a case-“

A case? As in… a monster case?!

“We already have a case!”

“It’s witches, Sammy. I couldn’t ignore that.”

You caught Sam’s expression in the rear-view mirror, his nose scrunched in disgust, which spiked your interest despite the worries twisting your gut.

“Oh God, I hate those.”

“As do I, Sammy, as do I,” Dean agreed grimly. “It’s in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Oh and Garth agreed to make Nat an ID and deliver it to Bedford, which is on a way.”

Your lips parted in silent shock. What? That fast? Who was Garth? Also… just how much Dean managed to do while Sam was playing your walking wallet?

“Good. Thanks for taking care of that.”

“Thanks,” you echoed Sam’s words, too taken aback to speak out loud. “Thank you, Dean.”

“Sure thing, Nat. Sure thing. Now let’s get this show on the road.”
5) When life gives you lemons...

Chapter Summary

We’re gonna take a step back and see how Steve was doing. Hint: not good. And spy! Natasha is onto something.

Chapter Notes

I was ridiculously excited about this chapter. I guess I just enjoy torturing Steve as much as keeping him in a fluffy blanket of love. What can I say.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

It had been two days since he had woken up. The first day was brutal, but he had been in and out due to pain-meds and anaesthetics specifically modified for his metabolism, forcing him to sleep through the process of healing his burns and nearly broken bones. The second day, he had woken up with his body perfectly healthy and had been released.

He came to his room, his gaze falling onto his bed and his eyes immediately filled with tears. His insides twisted painfully at the memory of you, a ghost of sensation on his skin as he had always enveloped you in his arms and nuzzled his nose in your hair.

He gaged on nothing, his empty stomach rolling over and he barely made it to the bathroom to spit the gastric juices.

His knees trembled when he finally got up from the bathroom floor, stripping the t-shirt someone had brought him to the medical. He froze at the picture of his torso.

Soundless ‘no’ escaped his lips, his trembling fingers touching the most precious thing he had left. His brain must have been playing tricks on him, right? There was no way it was… his fingertips brushed the angry line over the words on his skin. It was like God realized he had made a mistake and scratched the words, deciding to write something different and never sharing his next thought.

The words were… crossed out.

Steve closed his eyes burning with fresh tears and leaned onto the sink, his hands gripping the ceramics hard enough to make it creak. A bitter scoff echoed in the bathroom, coming right back at him, mocking him.

Of course the last piece of you tying you to him must have been ruined. It was how it was supposed to be, right? No memory of you would stay intact. Steve knew that.

If he would have buried his face in the pillows, he would be able to smell your shampoo – but with time, it would fade away. He would be finding your clothes, or the clothes he lent you, but with one wash, your mark would dissolve. Your words to him should have been the only thing for him to keep, his brain had rationalized, just barely beginning to adjust to the thought that you were gone;
and it turned out he wouldn’t get that either.

Steve stumbled into the shower, hoping to wash away the past few days. As if it was possible. As if he could drown the gnawing guilt settled in his very core. As if it would bring you back, make you re-appear in his bed, waiting for him to tuck in beside you.

He knew it couldn’t.

When he emerged from the stall, water actually turning cold, which was something Tony claimed was impossible, his first steps went back to the mirror, wishing to see a change – someone taking an eraser and getting rid of the evil line denigrating your precious words.

He had no such luck. It was still there. An eternal reminder or how empty his life became – how empty he had made it.

You were gone. You were gone and never coming back. That fact alone hurt so fucking much. Every memory of your time together felt like acid poured into his chest. Recalling how exactly that happened though, how you had been taken away, it was like a punch to his solar plexus with his own shield. And wasn’t that ironic. It was because of him. Because of what he had done. He had made that choice. He had killed you. He had your blood on his hands. He hated it with every ounce of his being, hated himself for it with every shed of his torn soul, now missing its other half.

He had lost you because he was the hero, always putting the lives of other people before his own. But this time he only destroyed his own and actually taken someone else’s. This time there was no numbing coldness of the ocean to welcome him, no, there was only a throbbing pain in his chest, a harsh line over the words you had told him when you had first met.

Oh no, there must be a mistake.

Yeah, it was a fucking mistake. You should have never crossed paths with him. If you hadn’t, you would have still been alive, smiling at people behind the glass at your counter. Lightening up their day with a simple curl of your lips; lips that were dead now, not cold and lifeless, but torn apart and burned to ashes in the explosion he could have stopped. But he hadn’t. He had chosen to kill you.

He choked on an angry sob, his fist hitting the mirror, where the words mocked him. The glass shattered loudly, broken pieces falling in the sink and on the floor by his feet with a heart-breaking clutter.

Steve’s head fell in his palm, not caring for the blood that started dripping from the cut from where his strike collided with the glass. He felt like bleeding these past days anyway. He felt like his heart was bleeding and always would.

He was such a fucking idiot. He knew he wouldn’t have been able to live with himself if he let all the people die, the math should be so easy, but you. He had lost you. He had thrown away his soulmate. The soulmate he could never hope to find after crushing the plane into the ice and waking up after seventy years.

He chuckled bitterly as he remembered his first words to you, regarding his age. How silly they had been. How much he would wish to tell you the words one more time, brush his lips over the scribble on your skin, the action always giving both you and him a special thrill. He just wanted to hold you and never let go of his perfect soulmate.

‘They’re right, you know?’ his own voice echoed in his ears, your playful response following.

‘Are we talking shedding clothes or us being perfect for each other?’
Sharp pain attacked his left collarbone, his hand automatically covering the incriminated place. It felt like having his flesh torn open and yet, it could barely compete with the pain he felt whenever he thought of you being gone – which was constantly.

Few seconds of agony, sensation not foreign to him, and then it ended as suddenly as it started. Steve frowned, raising one of the larger pieces of the glass to look at the spot. His heart nearly stopped when he found a new set of words on his skin, causing him to throw the shard away harshly, breaking in into smaller pieces.

That was just insulting. A new soulmate? Was that what it was supposed to mean?

Steve wanted to puke, sudden dizziness swaying his world off its place.

He didn’t even get to bury you yet – not that there was a body to bury – and there was another promise of love of his life scribbled on him?

Well, fuck this.

He wasn’t gonna meet her. Ever. He loved you. You might be gone, but he would never forget you just to be happy in someone else’s arms. He didn’t want anyone else and he didn’t deserve another chance in the first place.

And if he ever was to meet this woman, he was gonna make sure to have her escorted to the other end of the world where he couldn’t hurt her, where he couldn’t be tempted by hope of something in his personal life actually working out, only to have it ripped apart.

No, Steve was done. He had shown the world that he was always gonna put his own life last and that was his new mission. Save as many as he could and never stop, not for a second. Because if he stopped going, the world might as well stand still. If he stopped going, he might have to think of you or worse, of her, the one whose mark he carried now, dishonouring a memory of the woman he had fell in love with as easily as if it was meant to be.

Funny thing about fate – it sucked.

Steve was about to kick fate in its balls this time. There was no chance on happiness for him, not again. And some stupid words, telling him I’m sorry? would change nothing about it.

He crumbled into his bed in the clothes you had borrowed for sleeping the last time you spent the night and he face-planted into the fluffy pillow still smelling of you. If it wasn’t for the lack of heat coming from your body, he might even believe you were there.

He was lying there for what could be a minute or hours. He couldn’t tell and he didn’t care. Jarvis had tried to communicate and to get him to the kitchen to eat something; it had been a day the A.I. said.

Steve wouldn’t have known. It didn’t make a difference to him.

His soulmate, his better half, was gone. And all he felt was that you had taken the other half, the one that had used to belong to him, with you too. Steve hugged the pillow and fell asleep with a feeling of emptiness in both his gut and heart.

He just wished the emptiness swallowed his brain as well, hell, swallowed him whole so he didn’t have to feel anything.
Samuel Wilson entered his apartment exhausted. Throwing his keychain onto the shoe cabinet next to his door, he cursed as he missed the bowl and the keys slid from the wooden surface. Today was a very long day; while the streets were still busy when he walked them, it was freaking late. New York indeed was a city that never slept; he would know. He had talked to insomniacs, among others, every day at the therapy centre.

He sighed as he reached for the light-switch, already half-bent to raise the keys from the floor; only for the light not turning on and his eyes catching a glimpse of a figure near the window.

Sam froze.

Well, shit.

It looked like the very long day just stretched to an enormous measurement. His mind immediately jumped to the gun shoved in the shoe rack and he made the tiniest move towards it.

Samuel Wilson might have been a retired soldier, but he still was one. There were three guns hidden in his apartment, mainly because he was a paranoid bastard; there had been an alien invasion, so sue him.

“I wouldn’t do that if I were you,” female voice warned him icily, a hint of a mockery scratching it. Sam’s blood turned into ice. It wasn’t just because of the threat or the fact there was a stranger in his apartment, clearly knowing about his weapon, probably removing it so he couldn’t use it, no. It was because of the exact words the woman said. They were familiar. Too familiar in a way he didn’t want to think about, especially considering they came from a woman who had broken into his home.

“And why is that?” he asked in a voice that sounded way more strangled that he wanted to.

There was a beat of silence and Sam realized that this truly must have been it. Well, fuck this. The universe must hate him for sure.

“Something tells me you know why,” she accented her words with an unmistakable click of a gun and the magazine hit the floor a second later. Two more followed.

Yep, she had got them all. Sam shoved the intrusive thought of this woman maybe not being his soulmate since she hadn’t actually commented on their first exchange to the back of his mind. Really not the time. Then again, was it ever?

“You can come out, you know,” she sighed and Sam figured he didn’t really have a choice.

He peeked from behind the wall dividing the hall and the kitchen, seeing the woman standing by the window with her arms crossed on her chest. The street lights weren’t enough to show her face; Sam could only tell her height and built and watch the light reflect on her dark red curls.

Her stance seemed almost relaxed. Sam forced himself to ease the tension in his shoulders a bit, but was still ready to jump behind the couch in case she was about to draw a weapon and shoot at him. Those things happened, he knew. People shot at him – or hey used to. Perk of his past job. Not nowadays, though and he didn’t feel like returning to the old days.

“Who are you?” he asked the logical question despite not expecting an answer. People didn’t break into houses to introduce themselves. “Why are you here?”
“I need your help,” she replied softly, causing Sam’s eyebrow to fly to his hairline.

“Really? Ever heard of a phone, lady?”

“I needed to meet in person.”

“Yeah, this feels really personal,” Sam bit back sarcastically, his mind racing. His help? “Are we talking counselling? Because there’s a therapy centre for that, once again with a phone. I have hours there. No need to break into my house… and murder my lamps.”

Perhaps he only imagined the corner of her lips rising for the shortest of moments, trusting a game of shadows hiding her face.

“Yeah, I need a therapist.”

Sam swallowed the ‘clearly’ that was on the tip of his tongue.

“The sessions are listed on the internet or in the centre. Have a good night,” he grumbled and made the mistake of turning his back to her, trying out another light switch. He groaned in annoyance when it only clicked and the room was still drowning in the dark. “Oh, for fuck’s sake!”

“It’s for a friend,” she continued as if she hadn’t heard him. Her voice was low now, intimate, revealing a secret she wasn’t comfortable with sharing. Yet, she did. “He’s… he needs help.”

There was a tinniest crack to that voice and Sam’s heart jumped, his brain switching into his job mode.

*Oh dammit, shut up, brain! We’re not helping the lady who can pick up a lock and lurks in the dark, even if she cares for her friend. No. Nope.*

“And he’s welcomed to join the group sessions,” he said levelly, half-blindly moving to the kitchen counter to help himself with a glass of water.

“You are the top therapist in the state specializing in PTSD and helping to find a way after losing one’s soulmate.”

Sam tried not be proud of her knowing that he was ranked as one of the best – that was a bit creepy. Plus, everyone liked different approach; for someone he could be the top; for another, he could be the worst person to talk to, ever. Still, he had an unpleasant feeling in his chest at the way she said it; there was an edge to it he had trouble identifying. Not to mention the faint longing that washed over him, knowing too well what it must have felt like for this friend of hers.

“Then he’s welcomed to visit my sessions if he wants to.”

The woman sighed. “That’s the thing. I don’t think he wants to – and he definitely can’t visit your support group.”

Sam downed half the glass before responding. She sure was insistent. *No shit, Sherlock, she picked a lock and went to talk to you in the middle of the night.*

“So pick another therapist who has private sessions. There are plenty in the centre, all of them great,” he offered, turning to face her – well, kinda face her.

“He lost his soulmate in a rather traumatising way. The guilt is haunting him on top of everything else. And you kn— you’re the best,” she said slowly and Sam could tell she hesitated. She held
something back. He put the glass down, squinting to catch a glimpse of her expression.

He didn’t want to think of the worst, but she was making it really hard. She knew, he realized. She knew, didn’t she?

“I’m sorry,” he consoled. “But he’s not the only one. We deal with people who lost their soulmate to a car accident and were driving. People who lost their partner to a house fire, because they left a candle burning. We understand the guilt and we worked with it. He can join.”

The woman wavered again, but when she spoke again, her voice was determined. “The circumstances were a bit unusual, I’d say. There’s a reason why I came to you specifically. I know you know guilt. Riley was his name?”

Sam sneered, lunging after the woman, but she was like a hummingbird – one moment she was by the window, the other at the other side of the room. Sam didn’t give a fuck if she was dangerous or if her friend needed a help – if there even was one. How dared she to-

How dared she?! No one spoke of Riley. No one. No one but him, never mentioning him name when he shared with people of his support group the grief of his own, the guilt of seeing his wingman and original soulmate fall to the ground, shot down by RPG.

“Don’t you say his name!” he growled as he followed her around and she released a frustrated huff.

“Sorry! Okay, sorry! I didn’t mean to hit a sore spot, goddammit!” she whisper-yelled in earnest. Sam didn’t let her deceive him this time though. Fucking bitch! “I’m sorry!”

Sam stopped in his tracks then, grinding his teeth, but giving her the last chance to explain herself. She had her hands raised in a harmless gesture, the streetlights now playing games of shadows on her face, tracing her delicate features. In any other situation, Sam would have found her beautiful, even without truly seeing her. Now she was simply pissing him off.

“I want nothing but to help my friend. I promise. I’m sorry about your partner, I truly am. But I came to you, because I think my friend could use a talk with someone who understands.”

“The offer to join the group still stands. Just don’t let him tell me he’s with you, ’cause then I might hate him just because and that’s not exactly professional,” Sam spitted out and the woman lowered her hands and released a shaky breath.

“He can’t just walk into your support group,” she repeated, but explained nothing.

“Why?” Sam insisted, annoyed, but with his anger levelling as fast as it burst out. “What is so goddamn special about his case that he should get an exception?”

The woman slowly reached to her pocket, pressing a button on a device not bigger than a phone. Sam was ready to jump behind the nearest vertical surface to take cover, but it wasn’t necessary. The device only assaulted his eyes as the light he had previously tried to turn on flickered to life and finally revealed the woman standing in his living room.

Sam was pretty sure he was hallucinating now. Because the woman… she looked familiar. He had seen her on TV. But that couldn’t be. Right?

“You’re—are you…?”
“Yeah,” she confirmed simply and Sam only managed to stare, his mind blank. She simply couldn’t be. Then again, it would explain a lot of things.

“Your friend…?”

“Doesn’t know I’m here. I would merely appreciate at least an advice, to be honest. But if he ever agrees to meet a therapist, I think he would appreciate a little privacy. I think it was enough that his last moments with his soulmate were broadcasted all over the US."

Sam gulped, remembering seeing the live-feed as well. “Yeah, no kidding.”

Black Widow sure was an annoying woman with no boundaries and she pissed the hell out Sam when she mentioned his deceased fiancé, but Sam found himself unable to say no. He rarely did, but when she asked for an advice to deal with Captain America – losing his soulmate in order to save thousands of others’ lives –, it was beyond impossible to ignore the cry for help.

His shoulders slumped with a heavy exhale and he fell to the couch, sloppily gesturing towards the rest of the seats.

“Alright. I’m listening. What can you tell me and what do you hope I can help you with?”

Chapter End Notes

That awkward moment you realize that you’re 50k words in with a series that was supposed to be a one-shot about a bit ridiculous soulmate AU meeting. Oops.

A little surprise coming up next. Hopefully, you’ll like it.

P.S. – always happy to read your thoughts in the comments :-*
Surprise arrives. Three characters joined this story, though some only for a short cameo. Hopefully, you’ll like the addition :))

Two men in a suit faced each other in a shadowy room with unpleasantly sterile lights; an attentive eye would recognize they found themselves in a vault due to the heavy door with a golden wheel opening and the drawers lining the walls. A small army of heavily armed men along said cases created an air of being secure as much as in danger. Just standing in such room put a weight on one’s chest – especially with the terrifying chair with straps and heavy panels ready to ruin human mind, a tranquilized man trapped in it.

Of course, one of the men facing each other, the older looking one, had no reason to feel threatened. He was simply doing business here and the army was at his side. His wrinkled face was scrunched in a grimace though, deeply discontent as he stared at the other man in no less expensive suit, but with an almost friendly glint in his eyes, a bit goofy face with a beard, framed by curly dark hair.

One would feel pressured in such space to begin with, but now, the two ‘businessmen’ built up an atmosphere nearly suffocating, a tension cuttable with a knife. The suspicious calmness of the goofy man was extremely irritating to the other.

Because clearly, they had made a mistake. A really fucking big one. The blond old man clenched his fists as he continued the rather loud conversation with the man who had showed up out of nowhere, claiming to share his interests and offering a lot of money.

Dammit, he should have known better than take an advice from him!

The mess they were in now!

“You said that killing her will bring a stop to the Avengers, because he was sickeningly in love with her,” the blond strained through his teeth, tone dangerous to cover up his growing fear for their mission. “That he will be grieving so much that he won’t be able to fight! He’s fighting like a madman!”

The dark-haired man only smiled, shrugging as if it wasn’t a big deal. “Perhaps he reacted differently than we expected him to.”

“PERHAPS!!” echoed in the vault madly, making several people flinch. Not the one who was being parroted mockingly and with rage. “He’s taking out our facilities. One. By. One!”

“Seems like fate wanted it that way. Or, you know, God’s will.”

“I don’t give a damn about God’s will!” the blond sputtered back.

His business partner made a face, his grimace as if saying ‘ouch’. His tone when he spoke up told the same tale. “Well, I…. I wouldn’t say that if I were you.”
“Why? Because the holy wrath will be set upon me? Please. There’s no God. And if there was, he sure would like me doing what-”

The blond’s bright blue eyes seemed to bulge sickeningly as his fingers reached for his throat, struggling to take a breath all of sudden, unable to finish his sentence. He stumbled back with an accusing and yet bewildered gaze, causing all of the men draw their weapons and aim them at the supposed enemy.

An enemy who only tilted his head, otherwise not doing a thing. Was he even the cause of the older man choking? He couldn’t, right? How would he?

“Wh-ah-I..?”

With a flick of a hand, all of the soldiers fell to the ground, unconscious.

The men who were sitting at the monitoring would have seen it happened all over the facility, hidden in one of the biggest bank in Washington, but they didn’t – they lost consciousness as well.

The goofy man gave his partner a tight-lipped smile, almost patronizing. “Ah. I don’t know. ‘He who lies in His name shall choke on his own false tongue’ feels pretty real now, doesn’t it?” he exclaimed and repeated the motion that had sent all of the armed men to the floor. He pointed at his hand then, grinning like a kid, genuinely excited. “I love to do that for effect. I don’t have to, a thought would be enough, but the dramatics is exceptional.”

He snapped his fingers then, suddenly standing in front the choking man in more comfortable clothes of jeans and lose plaid shirt. He allowed the other man to breathe in so he wouldn’t pass out; yet, he wouldn’t be able to speak just yet.

“If I had let you continue your… master plan without my good advice, you just might have succeeded,” he hummed, strolling through the sea of sleeping men, careful not to step on any. He shook his head, a parent’s disproval, a disappointed dad regretting not raising his sons better. “But humans, like every other creations, no matter how beautiful, are flawed. Money, oh money… why are you, my children so greedy, so trustful to anyone who offers you a coin….”

“Grzhmchr-“ was the only sound leaving the other man’s throat as he fell to his knees, fear flashing in his eyes along with more and more confusion.

“What can I say. Nobody’s perfect. And strings of fate are a funny thing when played right… they can orchestrate a lovely sound,” the dark-haired man mused, turning to face his former partner fully. “Have a good day, Director Pierce. The Avengers should find you here at their next mission.”

With the last words spoken, Director Pierce’s grip on his own throat eased and his body fell limp to the ground. The other man smiled when he saw his chest rise and fall periodically, assured none of these men were actually dead. That wasn’t the plan, after all. They needed to face a different kind of justice.

He glanced at the electric chair then and the man lying there, breathing shallow, heart-rate alarmingly low – for anyone but him and one more person whose cells had been modified to endure almost anything; even an explosion despite running straight into it.

“Ah, such troubled soul…” the powerful man sighed longingly, his face twisting with sympathy no one had provided to the prisoner not only of war, but also his own body. He walked to him slowly, a healing hand hovering over the man’s forehead. “You lived through more than you should have, my friend. You shall start your healing.”
The soft light shone above the pale skin, gently sweeping in, illuminating the veins running over the surface, disappearing in the messy hairline. The lying man blinked his eyes open and quickly backed into the backrest before his training kicked in.

It was just such a confusing wake-up. He felt too lightheaded, his chest less constricted than usual, missing a crushing weight. His thoughts… flowed in an unfamiliar way – a way he forgot that existed. His instincts screamed to reach for the other man’s throat to grab him and interrogate him, because he wasn’t his master, but… at the same time, he didn’t quite want to do that. No one told him to do so. He felt uneasy and bewildered, yet not in danger.

Still, he listened to his training and his hand shot up, only to grasp thin air. The man had already moved away, causing the freshly woken up man blink in surprise, breaking his bonds instinctively to follow.

But the man, who had forced him to wake up after they had sedated him, smiled at him kindly. It scared the shit out of him, not that he would admit it. Kindness scared him – he wasn’t used to it, not really, not anymore. Whenever someone showed some, it came with a price of a human life. Now, his mind flooded with images of empty eyes, accusing him of doing the wrong thing instead of a right one as he had been promised.

And this man was to blame for this overwhelming sensations, perhaps was responsible of the men on the floor too.

Were those… masters of his unconscious? Dead? No, no dead, their chest was rising and falling. Only not conscious then. Who the hell was this man?

“How-what-?” he choked out, glaring at the stranger. Why hadn’t he attacked him yet? Didn’t give him an order, said the words that… would they still do that to him? That… that thing when his body wasn’t quite his? Flip the switch?

The switch… it seemed to be missing now. Where the hell had it gone?

“Sergeant Barnes, welcome back.”

“How-what did you- who are you?” Barnes finally sat up straight, his head swimming unpleasantly. He overcame it and forced himself to stand.

Holy shit, the world was spinning. Also, it wasn’t any making sense, sending one confusing signal after another. Barnes’ mind was a mess. He remembered this was his name, even though lately he had been called that name rather mockingly, more used to being a soldat.

The only other conscious man held out his hand as if in a comforting gesture.

“Easy. I’m not here to hurt you. But unless you want to be found by the Avengers, by heroes who include your best friend, you better go find your peace and meet them when you ready.”

Forget about the world not making sense. Now it went entirely crazy.

Best friend. Steve. Could this man talk about Steve? Avengers? Who the hell were the Avengers? So many images flickered through his head, but it didn’t include any… Avengers. Images of the past, tens of years ago, clear and sharp as they shouldn’t be, an angry tiny blond swaying his fists and wishing to take on the world and then suddenly growing several inches, and all of that mingled with fragments of memories not quite his and yet his only. What year was it anyway?

He grasped on the only thing that seemed to comfort him, ground him, the only thing he was sure of.
“My best friend? It’s… is Steve still alive? It’s been about seventy years— Right? —on and off— how do I know that? Shit, what did I do?”

The empty eyes staring at him. Oh god, the empty eyes… life vanishing under his hands – a flesh one and a metal one – hands crimson with blood…

His breathing picked up, his head pounding with an ache unknown and the other man grimaced again at the agony he saw. He didn’t think he should interfere more though – Barnes needed to deal with this on his own terms.

“Calm down, James. None of that was your fault and until you accept that, you’d better off without them. The Avengers,” he explained, but the soldier would have none of it, the horrifying images, feeling so disgustingly wrong as his little soul had been locked in a mind of a dull servant, crying when taking a life.

“I… the things I did, oh my god—”

“You are not to blame for what they forced you to do. I could make you forget, but that would only complicate things,” the bearded man thought out loud, only bringing more chaos with his words. He tried his best to sound soothing. “Try to forgive yourself and when the time is right… you’ll see your friend again.”

“He might be dead by then!” Barnes blurted out, suddenly overtaken by panic. Steve was alive. If this man was right and Steve was alive – how did he know that, who was he, how- Steve. That little punk letting the army experiment on him only to- where was he, how was he, what- “He’s like… what year it is exactly?”

“2013,” came the resigned reply.

“He’s ninety-five. Ninety-five! If he’s still I alive, I have to see him!”

The calmer man held out his hand again when the soldier unmistakably headed to the exit. “He’s been met with nearly same fate, James. Do not worry about his vessel. He is well. I mean… kinda. He’s been on edge, lately.”

Barnes wavered. This man had been gentle with him, as if he wanted to help. He knew way too many things, probably not lying so far. It was all kinds of fishy.

“Alright, I’m gonna ask again. Who are you?” the soldier demanded, eyes narrowed.

He didn’t feel the need to actually attack the man and he didn’t know why and he was afraid and confused and everything hurt, his arm felt heavy despite the muscles adapting ages ago and he had to see Steve if he was still freaking alive and- but after everything he had done--

“You’re not asking the right questions. Go, James. Find your place in the world again and learn about what happened to your friend,” the man advised again patiently. He beckoned to the men on the floor; instinctively, Bucky knew they were bad. Rotten even, and not just because he could suddenly see through all their lies. How, by the way? “Leave these men for the Avengers to find. They are not your problem, I’ll take care of them. You’re free now.”

Bucky Barnes looked around, not assured. His heart was racing, almost as fast as his mind. He had messed up the world, hadn’t he? The least he could so was to deliver these men to… what, police? Justice?

“But-“ he started up defensively, but out of blue, he found himself in a dark alley – and the man was
still facing him.

What the *f*uck got him here and was this man some sort of a... was magic a thing? This couldn’t be result of some serum, right?

“**You-**”

“Go,” the man asked of him kindly, adding a smile that looked even goofy, in a stark contrast to his serious eyes. “What you saw, that’s how the justice will find them.”

Was this guy a friggin’ mind-reader too?!

“What the hell?!” Bucky just choked out, frantically scanning his surroundings.

Where was he anyway? The noise of today’s voice was hurting his ears What was he supposed to do? He only knew mission for the past decades, his will not even his own, how was he supposed to proceed?

Finding peace as the man had told him wasn’t exactly a precise order – and yet it was, the most difficult order he could remember receiving.

“**Goodbye,**” said the man for a good measure, walking away and leaving the poor soldier dumbstruck in a foreign city, in a foreign life.

Barnes stared after him, unable to say a word, unable to move a single muscle. Then, before disappearing among the people roaming the streets in what could be a very late hour, the mysterious powerful man glanced over his shoulder with a last smile and whispered barely audible – not for supersoldier’s ears though.

“**Oh, and Bucky? Name’s Chuck.**”

**Chapter End Notes**

_Alt. chapter title – Let’s Make Things a Bit Messier ;) _

One more character in the next chapter and then I guess things might actually be put in motion ;)
“Hold onto me tight. Can’t have you falling off, doll…”

“You’re such a troublemaker-“

“I want to see you come undone first. Can I, doll?”

“Do I look unwilling, doll? I’m actually pretty eager to find out how long do you need to recover…”

“Eyes on me, darling.”

You jolted awake with a gasp for air, your eyes snapping open into sharp midday sun. It took you a second to realize where you were, what the low purr under your body meant, music on low volume and a male voice softly humming along.

You blinked, meeting Sam’s gaze as he turned his head to face you.

“Hey. You alright?” he asked, concern furrowing his features.

You took a deep breath, trying to ignore the blood rushing to your cheeks at the memory of the dream. They were bits and pieces, sweet and hot, yet leaving dull ache in your chest in their wake. You were absolutely sure this was your consciousness recalling moments with your soulmate, but you were unable to make anything useful of them. It was like chasing ghosts – eh, actually, did ghosts exist? What was it like, chasing them? Never mind-

You were supposed to be a ghost, because apparently you had died.

Alright. Shake it. Snap out of those messy thoughts.

The more awake your body got, the more you realized your chest wasn’t the only thing that was tense and it wasn’t only your neck that nearly cramped.

“Yeah,” you muttered finally, while Sam’s eyes managed to get really worried, still on you. “Just… call of nature.”

In more than one ways. Your bladder might actually burst soon, but you couldn’t deny your arousal either. Gee. Why did it have to be that kind of dream you had? Why couldn’t you see your soulmate’s face clearly instead? Nope scratch that, his ID would be better, complete with his freaking address.

“Hold on for about half an hour, Nat. I’d like to stretch my legs anyway and Garth should be waiting for us.”

You smiled at Dean despite him being unable to see it, his eyes focused on the road. It was sweet of
him. You might as well be sweet back.

“Thanks, Dean. And you can turn the volume up, it was low just because of me,” you hummed, holding back a chuckle when his hand immediately moved to the radio.

“Thanks, Nat. Wanna tell us what that dream of yours was about? You seem a bit shaky,” he nudged, surprisingly gentle. You would expect such approach from Sam, but he only glanced at you, apparently wanting to know as well.

You sighed, wondering how to put it without sounding like a horny teenager.

“It’s… I think they’re like memories? But they don’t make any sense,” you said in the end, casting your glance down, fiddling with the hem of your shirt, fingers interlacing and disjointing again. “It’s my soulmate, I know as much. Or, you know, I’m pretty sure. It’s nothing useful though.”

“I’m sorry,” Sam soothed, his voice genuinely regretful. You just shook your head, sending a sad smile his way.

“The only pattern is a… a pet-name, I guess.” Well, until now, it was just one. ‘Darling’ was new. “He keeps calling me ‘doll’.”

You didn’t know why you told them, you weren’t planning on it. Except they were so genuinely nice to you it hurt and you felt like honesty was the least you could give in return. Now, you could practically touch their surprise.

It was Dean who commented on it, but not in a malicious way, which you were eternally grateful for.

“Doll, huh? Maybe he’s a mafioso. Sounds like something from an old movie. Heh, maybe you time-travelled too,” he speculated out loud and you only gulped, not as amused as you should be. Was that a thing? Time-travel?

“God, I hope not,” Sam whined, effectively startling you. So it was possible?

“Nah, I bet he’s just him being a gentleman, ya know, the old-fashioned kind of guy. After all, how could he not, having such a… swell dame for a soulmate?”

Both you and Sam eyed Dean wary and with confusion.

“Since when you’re an expert on war era slang?” Sam demanded, amused surprise lacing his voice.

“Simpler times, Sam. Simpler times. You’ll understand when you’re older.”

Sam just chuckled, shaking his head. You laughed as well despite not quite understanding what it meant. You simply enjoyed the banter and teasing that was strengthening their brotherly love; you already caught that much, that they loved each other greatly. How could they not? They were both absolutely amazing despite their differences.

People might find it strange for them to be so close at their age – not that you knew theirs precisely, or yours for that matter – but you thought it was endearing. If they killed monsters for living, their lives couldn’t be normal and conventional, could they? It spiked your interest once more.

“Alright. What can you tell me about what you do and how you get your money?”

“Not sure you wanna hear that, d-- now I have the nickname stuck in my head, dammit. It’s not a
pretty chat, Nat. You sure?”

You nodded, but agreed out loud for the god measure. After all, Dean was still driving.

“Your choice. We hunt monsters. But let me tell you, humans are actually the worst… well, humans and witches…”

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Dean and Sam hadn’t even told half about the monsters that lurked in the shadows and you already felt overwhelmed, grateful when you reached Bedford and the older brother called his ID maker.

Garth was a nice guy, if a little overexcited and goofy.

He called you a madam, gave Sam a newest book by George R. R. Martin (who?), which seemed to excite the hunter greatly and Dean received a piece of apple pie. You couldn’t remember your life, but if you had, you were sure it still would have been Dean’s smile that was the brightest you had ever seen. Note to yourself; when repaying Sam and Dean, a pie and a book were necessities.

Your trio didn’t stop to chat with the man for long though – you needed to be on your way. Garth was apparently in the business of hunting, because he made a face way too similar to Sam’s at a mention of witches. You weren’t sure if you looked forward hearing about those; you guessed they weren’t wearing pointy hats and were befriending cats.

The remaining hours to your destination flied; the brothers continued to educate you in monster food chain (people were usually the food, which you did not enjoy learning), briefing you on existence of things you could barely imagine. Also, they weren’t only friends with an angel, apparently – they were also on rather good terms with king of Hell.

“King of Hell?” you parroted, bewildered. What the h— heaven?!

“Yeah. Dean used to be bestie with him, too,” Sam quipped, half delighted at his brother’s annoyed face when sharing this fact, half bitter for pretty obvious reasons.

“Dude.”

“You keep the weirdest company,” you stated, your head buzzing with all the info you got. You grimaced when you realized that the company included you.

“We know,” Sam sighed, turning his tablet on. “But it’s not all bad. I mean, Garth, the guy you just met… he’s a werewolf and—”

“He’s a WEREWOLF?!” you yelped, causing the brothers jump in their seats and Dean jerk the steering wheel aside, throwing you all of balance.

“Christ, woman! Keep the volume low!” the driver spitted out as he returned to the correct lane, ignoring the honks of other cars. “I know, I know, shut up, I’m not drunk…”

“Sorry,” you blurted out on autopilot, your mind pre-occupied with the fact that the sweet dorky guy you had just met was a fucking werewolf.

It was Sam’s turn to apologize or he thought so. “My bad. I shouldn’t have just dropped that on you.”

“But he was so nice!”
“If you say so,” Dean assented reluctantly, voice dripping with doubt. You weren’t trying to figure out why he questioned such an obvious thing. It wasn’t your place. Not to mention you were still too astonished by the announcement.

Sam cleared his throat. “Anyway. We have two victims so far. Both are young women, Alicia Peters, 16 years old and Helen Sanders, 16 as well. They were apparently classmates, rather good students, but not friends. One of them was found three days ago, the other yesterday. They both sneaked away in secret, some other classmates claimed to them being… eh, giggly. They thought they had new boyfriends,” Sam summed up, while Dean nodded every now and then. “Why do you think witches? Could be dragons… which would be probably even worse.”

“…dragons? You’re joking.”

_Dragons_ were real now?!

Dean ignored your incredulous remark. “Virgins, right? That’s what I thought. But check this out – according to the coroner, they had a puncture wound over their heart like from some very thin needle – or, more likely, a very thin _straw_, because their hearts were completely drained of blood.”

Your head was definitely spinning now, your stomach flipping over. You had been getting hungry before, but not so much anymore. You wanted to tune the conversation out, but it was inevitable to hear it. Your ears wouldn’t listen; it was like watching a train-wreck happen and being unable to draw your gaze away. Morbid curiosity played a part too.

God, you really _were_ weird company.

“That’s disgusting,” Sam stated, his fingers moving swiftly over the screen.

You only hummed in agreement, trying to get the visual from your brain. _Soulmate. Think of your soulmate and his sultry voice calling you doll._ You took a deep breath, exhaling slowly, shocked that it actually worked. His voice washed over you, cocooning you in a soft blanket.

“Tell me about it,” Dean agreed darkly, but Sam held out his hand all of sudden, causing both you and Dean freeze.

“What?”

“They found two young men this morning. John Doe One and Two for now. They were…” Sam wavered, eyeing you in the rear-view mirror. _Now _he was checking with you? You guessed your face was pale as a sheet of paper, but hey, it wasn’t like you couldn’t just try and cover your ears. You nodded at him encouragingly and he shifted in his seat uncomfortably. “…found in one bed, stabbed in the heart and… ugh, with their… tools ripped off.”

Dean winced, while you just blinked. Did he mean like… wow. Oh, _wow_. You weren’t sure how to react to _that_.

“There was a note. _We apologize for ruining such pure lives of the sweetest kind and as a prove of our remorse, we present their families with._ “ Sam faltered in his speech, gagging. “Yeah, alright. Apparently, the missing part of their bodies was found with the… note. No need to go into details.”

“Yeah, Sammy, I’d be pretty grateful if we stopped talking about that. What now, though? Do we believe this crap?”

“You could have an ally,” you quipped shyly, receiving Sam’s sigh in reply.
“Brutal one, but yes. We need to at least check it out.”

“Yeah, but we get a lunch before that. I need something to comfort me. You traumatized my love muscle, Sam. Do you have any-“

“Yeah, alright, just… stop right here,” Sam stopped his brother, as if shielding himself from TMI by holding out his palm against Dean. “Got it. We need to stop for a bite.”

You giggled, the sound interrupted by your stomach growling. When had you got your appetite back?

“I guess lady in the back agrees,” Dean hummed, grinning in Sam’s direction. You laughed when you came to conclusion that he enjoyed making his younger brother uncomfortable, Sam making a face back at him as he realized the same.

They seemed like a greater pair of siblings the longer you spent with them.

It only took several minutes to get to the town and find a place to eat; Dean seemed to have a talent for finding food, which you appreciated immensely. You hadn’t been eating much, ashamed of using the brothers like that, so you were hungrier than you would be willing to admit. You had a sneaking suspicion that Sam was beginning to notice, because his eyes were narrowed as you picked the cheapest thing on the menu that appeared edible.

“You’re not eating,” he pointed out bluntly the moment the waitress left.

You just gaped at being caught and so shamelessly called out. Dean’s gaze shifted to you and now you had two men glaring at you keeping you company in the boot.

“I’m… not hungry.”

“Your stomach said differently,” Dean reminded you with his eyebrow arched in challenge. You opened your mouth uselessly, the protest dying in your throat at the intensity of his bright green eyes. “If this is about money, get your head out of your ass, Nat. You need to eat.”

“But-“

“But nothing. We’re having a desert,” he shut you up effectively, not permitting any objections.

You sighed, guiltily merging with your seat. A menu was placed in front of you, Dean’s fingers pointing at it.

“Actually, you’re picking one right now.”

You wordlessly obeyed, defeated. “I don’t mean to be difficult,” you whispered apologetically and Sam just shook his head with a smile.

“We know. And I get it, you don’t want to impose and use us, but… we chose to help you. Try to accept it, alright?”

You only nodded, determined to at least find the best dessert. The corners of your lips quirked when you found it.

“Looks like we’re in for an apple pie,” you decided, smirking in Dean’s direction. His eyes lit up and you couldn’t but feel the warmth around your heart at that. You actually did that, made him smile. Maybe you weren’t the worst company in the world after all. “Unless you’re sick of it after-“
Dean’s hand snatched the menu away, shutting it close. “Shut you piehole, Nat.”

Sam laughed as they brought your food.

---

You were just finishing your infamous dessert, when the brothers stiffened at the voice coming from behind their back, the other side of the boot.

You frowned, not finding anything strange about the female voice with British accent.

“Thank you, darling. It will be all,” the woman said politely.

The moment the waitress left, Sam and Dean stumbled from their seats and towards the other boot. The tension in their shoulders only grew and they let out a ridiculously synched irritated sigh, multiple emotions playing on their face; you caught annoyance and a bit of anger for sure.

“Rowena,” Sam greeted her in pretended politeness and you couldn’t but check the situation out. They didn’t seem to be happy about running into their acquaintance.

You got a glimpse of a redhead sipping at her tea delicately, her pinkie raised as she held her cup.

“Hello, boys.”

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Chapter End Notes

I adore that woman, I swear. She’s so classy and sassy.
“What are you doing here?” Dean asked, 100% done with the woman.

She was… a classy lady. She could be over fifty, but she apparently was taking a very good care of herself, clearly having money to do so too. Her curly hair was copper red, face covered in makeup to hide some of her age. She was very slim, but in no fragile matter – you had a hunch that her delicate outside hid a very strong inside.

“Drinking my tea,” she replied innocently and despite only just meeting her, you could tell she was full of it.

“Cut the crap, Rowena,” Sam spitted out, crossing his arms on his chest.

You blinked, surprised by Sam’s hostile demeanour. If even Sam, the epitome of a gentle person, was acting this way…

The woman put the cup down, sighing.

“Samuel, Samuel… What does it look like I’m doing? I’m cleaning up the mess before you did. You could show a little gratitude. There were witches who were gathering strength against me by sucking a life out of poor virginal girls and I stopped them.”

Witches. So the two men found dead had been witches indeed. Who was this woman then? What was she?!

“You ripped their little soldiers off!” Dean hissed exasperatedly, adjusting to the low volume of the conversation. Despite yourself, you giggled.

The woman glanced at you, seemingly not bothered by your presence at all.

“Ah. Hello, darling. And you would be-“ she started sweetly, only for her breath to get caught in her throat, her eyes widening. “Ahh. Such potential! Where did you get her? Soulmates are of great value on the market! The power in the soul bond magic is enormous, especially with a woman like her!”

“You can tell that? Damn!” Dean exclaimed, impressed. Sam shot him a murder glare.

The woman glanced at you, seemingly not bothered by your presence at all.

“Ah. Hello, darling. And you would be-“ she started sweetly, only for her breath to get caught in her throat, her eyes widening. “Ahh. Such potential! Where did you get her? Soulmates are of great value on the market! The power in the soul bond magic is enormous, especially with a woman like her!”

“Can I have her? Just for a sip?” Rowena turned back to the brothers, voice filled with hope.

“No!” Sam snapped instantly, subtly looking around if anyone noticed them. You wouldn’t be surprised, but you frankly didn’t care much.

What the hell was she talking about? Sip? Like… from the heart like with those poor girls? And what the hell did she mean ‘woman like her’?!

“You can tell that? Damn!” Dean exclaimed, impressed. Sam shot him a murder glare.

“Can I have her? Just for a sip?” Rowena turned back to the brothers, voice filled with hope.

“No!” Sam snapped instantly, subtly looking around if anyone noticed them. You wouldn’t be surprised, but you frankly didn’t care much.

What the hell was she talking about? Sip? Like… from the heart like with those poor girls? And what the hell did she mean ‘woman like her’?!

“Eh, Samuel. Don’t be so uptight. Besides, I was talking to the lady – sadly, she needs to give her consent. Can I, darling?”

You gulped, not comforted by her gentle smile at all. She looked terrifying and the idea was even more terrifying and— you might be panicking a little.
“I… I don’t think so? How do you know— who are you? Who is she?” you demanded shakily.

“Hm… then I guess I’ll have to be the nice witch again.”

Oh. So she was a witch too. And other witches apparently hated her, gathering strength to fight her. Wonderful. And clearly, she had crossed paths with the brothers before. Simply perfect.

“What do you mean?” Sam squinted at her suspiciously, while Dean absently gave the waitress money for your food and sent her away rather rudely so he could continue glaring at the witch.

“Well, she’s been resurrected, yes?” the redhead beckoned to you, making your blood run cold. Ah, that was what she meant. How the fuck did she know that?! “I suppose you’re looking for her other half and have no idea where to start. I can help. You’ll owe me then, of course, but… I’m nothing but generous.”

Your heart positively stopped. You were horrified. You were scared. You were stunned.

She could do that?! She could find your soulmate?! Despite feeling… uncomfortable for the lack of better word, with her helping you, everything in you screamed YES, your chest already tightening with anticipation and hope.

She could find him. The man calling you doll. The man whom you dreamed about, warm hands and sweet voice. She could-

You were snapped out of your musing by a loud grind of teeth, stereo-delivered by both Sam and Dean.

“Fine.”

“It’s a lovely to meet you, darling. I’m Rowena,” she stood up and offered her hand for you to shake. You casted an unsure glance at Sam. Was it safe to accept it?

He gave an unwilling little nod.

You smiled tightly at the witch. “Nice to meet you. I’m… Natasha… I guess.”

She patted the back of your hand with her left palm. “It’s alright, sweetie. I can spot an induced amnesiac a mile away.”

“Induced?” Sam fretted.

“Caused by bringing her back from… Heaven?” she questioned, looking you up from head to toe as she finally released your hand. You found it incredibly creepy that she knew that much about you. Could she read minds or what?! “I swear, boys, you are always pulling out the strangest stunts. Let’s go now. We have an important task to complete.”

The reluctance of every one of you apart from the witch was nearly palpable, but it seemed you wordlessly agreed she was your best option right now.

You gulped as Rowena left a twenty on the table and lead you out of the restaurant, unmistakeably finding the car you arrived in. She slid to the backseat elegantly, giving Dean instructions to drive to her suite.

“No need to worry, darling. I’ll point you towards the love of your life in no time”

At that note, you weren’t sure whether it was the process or the goal that scared you more... You
remained silent.

“...what exactly are you going to do?” Dean asked the million dollar question.

The drive was silent, only Rowena’s voice sometimes disturbing the quiet when telling Dean to take a turn.

Her suite was in a large luxurious hotel with freaking valets who didn’t have a single problem with three extra people coming in, basically showering you with questions about what they could do for you; you imagined it was Rowena’s doing and you weren’t thinking money. It was more than disturbing.

Entering the suite itself, the four of you were left alone, which led to Dean finally asking what was about to happen. Rowena pointedly ignored him and looked at you when answering.

“Well, I’ll just sneak a peek at your soul bond. You are still bound, even though probably not as strongly. I can look at the bond, follow it and let it lead me to your soulmate like the Ariadne’s thread leading Theseus from the Minotaur’s labyrinth.”

You understood the basic thing, her following some kind of a thread that connected you to your soulmate. Except you had no idea what she was talking about.

“...is that... like a pop culture reference or...? ‘Cause I don’t understand those.”

“Something like that,” Sam assured you with a bit of a patronizing smile. Unsure, you felt blood rush to your cheeks. You had a feeling you just made a fool of yourself. Then again... amnesiac here, alright?

“Of course you wouldn’t know, darling, my bad.”

Sam stepped in again. “Rowena, what ingredients do you need?”

“That’s the most brilliant thing, Samuel. Nothing. I simply... go online so to speak. Connect to their long-distance wi-fi. The only thing I need is her giving me the password. Or give up her firewall so I can hack their connection so to speak,” she explained with a blinding smile and earned three strange glances. One was confused – yours – and the other two were just... dubious and astounded. “No? I thought you were the local IT guy, Samuel.”

“What the hell, Rowena? Do witches use goggle now?” Dean nagged.

“Don’t be silly, Dean. I happened to spent beautiful months with a director of a software company. Of course, then his money ran out and I had to leave... but until that moment, ah, paradise, for his age-”

“Alright! TMI...” Dean threw his hand in the air, not unlike when Sam had tried to stop Dean from talking earlier. Rowena only winked, while you managed to do nothing but stare.

You were perfectly at lost. Was she their friend? Was she an enemy? Their aunt or something? She surely enjoyed making fun of them and clearly could be pain in their asses. Also... was she truly enchanting people so she could have whatever she wanted? ‘Cause it definitely looked like it now...

“I thought so. Can we get started so I can point you the right direction and we can all we be on our way?”
“Wait, you can just *point us the right direction*?” Dean demanded, frowning at her from his height, but she didn’t seem intimidated. More like slightly irritated with his questions, that she apparently found dumb.

“It’s magic, Dean, not GPS!”

“Could have fooled me…” Sam hummed, squinting at her as well.

Yeah, you didn’t like it either. Still, she was your best shot at finding your soulmate. Tough luck. You exchanged a look with Sam, who eyed his brother wryly. Guess you were all in agreement at that.

“Just… just do it,” Dean sighed, rubbing the bridge of his nose as if tired.

The witch, on the other hand, seemed to be radiating excitement, which you didn’t like. You hated to admit it, but you were afraid of her; of her apparent immense power, to be precise. It didn’t help that she pulled out an ancient-looking bowl from her cabinet and a blade from the drawer of her nightstand.

Was she gonna cut you?!

“Oh, I will. May I, darling?”

You didn’t react to her question, eyeing the brothers once more. Their expressions dimmed even more at the sight of the tools Rowena was about to use, but Sam gave a sharp nod and attempted a reassuring smile.

Well. Shit. Still your only option if you ever wanted to find your soulmate, apparently. Your life *sucked*. Then again, at least you were alive.

You sighed and slowly laid your shaking hand to Rowena’s outstretched palm and she circled her slender fingers around your wrist, leading your joined hands above the bowl.

“You do recall anything about your soulmate at all?” she asked, voice almost gentle.

You licked your lips nervously, a lump growing in your throat.

“I heard a voice in my dream. I’m pretty sure that’s it,” you admitted and hoped the shiver running through your, both from fear and anticipation, escaped everyone else’s notice.

Wishful thinking, probably.

“Mm. Good. Close your eyes and focus all you can on the voice. I think we established that I’m going to cut you, so try not to be too surprised and avoid breaking your concentration as much as possible. Are we clear, sweetie?”

People really needed to stop calling you things. It was getting incredibly annoying – you might only have a fake name, but it was still a *name*.

You kept your mouth shut though, not wanting to irk the witch, and simply nodded, your eyes falling shut.

Your soulmate’s voice was crystal clear in your ears, tender and sultry ‘doll’ caressing and tempting your heart. An involuntary smile slowly spread on your lips. You wanted to find the owner of that voice. And for that, sacrifices had to be made.
You barely gasped when the blade scraped over your skin, barely breaking the surface. Your hand was manipulated then, turned over and squeezed until you felt droplets of blood trickle down and fall off your hand.

That was when the witch started enchanting, the strange words sending a shiver down your spine. The colour of her voice was richer now, thicker, crimson as the blood on your hand.

‘Doll,’ you forced yourself to hear instead, one simple word growing so familiar it made your heart ache and swell. Warm light flickered behind your eyelids, flashing through your whole being, an electric discharge running through your nerve endings and igniting every cell of your body, tender heat gathering in your chest.

Soft inhale escaped your lips at the blissful feeling, the light only growing.

And then it was over, the tingling sensation snapping like a rubber band, recoiling into a tiny ball of warmth around your heart. You hand automatically reached that direction, but the world swayed off its place.

A pair of strong hands gripped your shoulders from behind, a panicked cry of ‘Natasha!’ echoing in your ears, barely audible, muffled by an indefinable buzzing.

You blinked your eyes open, finding a redhead woman staring at you funnily.

“Nat, you good?” sounded behind you and you realized that, surprisingly enough, Dean was the one to catch you, his grip on you not even faltering when you turned your head to him. A worried wrinkle, rather uncharacteristic for him, sat on his forehead. You tried to stand up straighter, whispering a thank you.

“Did you see something?” Sam asked and you opened your mouth to try and describe the incredible feeling that had run through you, only to realize he spoke to Rowena.

“Y-yes.”

If you didn’t know better, you’d think she was… shaken.

“What is it? You’re looking at me funny,” you pried, not able to think of a better word than that.

She tilted her head and went to explain herself, observing you with almost fascinated expression. “The bond… it’s still very strong. But differently.”

“…that says nothing to us,” Dean deadpanned. Rowena looked at him sharply.

“I’m trying to explain, you dummy. The bond is always there, whether the soulmates met or not – it grows stronger when they are together, working on their relationship. But the power of this one… it feels unusual. It’s not as if they are strengthening it right now, it’s like they are yet about to meet, which I do find understandable. But… this power… it tasted almost electric. I’ve never encountered it before.”

You blinked in shock, the haze surrounding you ever since she started doing her magic thing dispersing. Now you were just dumbfounded.

“What does it mean?” you whispered, reluctant. Neither Dean nor Sam seemed to find the courage to ask.

“I don’t know, darling. Might be the fact you had died. Or you’re simply special.”
Dean cleared his throat loudly. “Right. So, where is her soulmate?”

“New York City,” the witch replied, small smile tugging on her lips while her eyes never left you, too invested in your… anomaly.

Anomaly. No kidding. You had been dead. That was probably it, right? Nothing more. Nothing to worry about. You couldn’t afford to get any weirder.

“That’s it? There are eight million people there!” Sam cried out, throwing his hands in the air.

Rowena’s smile grew.

“Are you attracted to women, darling?”

“Uhm… no, I don’t think so…?” you stuttered, your cheeks reddening at that implication. You were pretty sure you weren’t.

“See, Samuel, then it’s only four million. I don’t suppose she’s destined to fall in love with a baby either, or a senior citizen—“

Dean coughed tactlessly, which earned you a curious look from the witch and Dean a sharp glare from his brother.

You had no doubt Dean thought of your crossed out soulmark. Maybe you couldn’t dismiss that idea yet, but… that was strange, right? You couldn’t find yourself to fall in love with someone who was 95 years old for god’s sake.

“…so that narrows it down, doesn’t it?” the witch continued. “But just because I like you, Samuel, I can tell you he should be on the island of Manhattan.”

“That’s better. Thank you.”

Rowena’s smile turned into a predatory smirk. “Aww, Samuel, you don’t have to thank me. You’ll repay me.”

“Of course we will...” Dean remarked sarcastically, unwillingness mixing with disgust on his face.

There was no hesitation. Thanks to this woman, your soulmate got much realer than ever. Not just a soulmark. Not just a voice. A person living in New York City, in Manhattan.

Sam and Dean had been the ones to lead you to her; it was only fair if they didn’t have to suffer the consequences more than they already had.

You stepped towards Rowena, taking a deep breath, hoping to look courageous. You couldn’t deny your fear, but you could show your determination.

“Hey, if you… if you, uhm… take a sip of that soul bond magic you were talking about… will it hurt me much?”

“Why would you ask that, darling?” she asked with sweet innocence despite you being sure she knew the answer.

“No, don’t-I!” Sam called out at the same time, springing forward. You stopped him subtly with your hand.

“And if you take it, their debt towards you won’t exist?” you continued, seeing you had intrigued her
greatly.

“I suppose not. That would be only fair.”

You bit your lip. One question remained, not less important than the previous ones. “And it wouldn’t affect my soulmate?”

He was a real man, now. A man with a voice and a vague address. This was no joke.

“I promise it will neither hurt you too much, nor will it even scratch your soulmate, darling,” Rowena declared, delighted as she sensed victory.

Your heart didn’t miss a beat; the decision was made. “Take it, then.”

“Natasha!” the brothers cried out simultaneously, not taking what you were offering. You turned to them with an honest smile.

“It’s a small price for what you’ve been doing for me. And it’s not even over yet. It’s alright. Let me start repaying my debt towards you instead of making it grow.”

The sincerity you spoke with must have shown on your face too, because their defensiveness eased a fraction. They grimaced, but didn’t protest further.

Dean’s eyes move to glare at Rowena, hard.

“If it hurts her—”

“Then what, Dean? I would have you on my arse and that’s too annoying, believe me,” she spat out, her British accent growing even thicker when she got agitated. “Don’t worry about her.”

“It’s our job to worry,” Dean muttered under his breath and everyone decided to ignore it.

Sam’s gaze remained fixed on you, full of concern.

“Are you sure? You don’t have to do this, Natasha. That’s not how it works. You don’t owe us.”

You were touched by the sentiment, the honesty of his words. If for nothing else, than for the good they carried you had to do this.

“I believe you, Sam. You wouldn’t want anything in return. Which is why I have to give it,” you explained softly, glancing at the witch. “What do you want me to do?”

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Sam did not like this. It wasn’t that he didn’t appreciated the thought, Natasha not wanting to get them into the position of having the duty to repay Rowena somehow, but… something about how happy Rowena was at the turn of events was unsettling.

“Not much,” Rowena assured the younger woman and took her hand again. “Think about your soulmate again and when you feel a nudge – you’ll recognize when that happens – you just let me in. Simple like that.”

Sam could feel the disapproval radiating from Dean as well and they exchanged a grim look. He knew his brother took a witch killing bullets with him, just in case. They probably wouldn’t truly hurt Rowena, with extraordinaire, but it would slow her down if the need arose. Dean wouldn’t take Rowena’s shit.
Despite the easy-going exterior and attitude, Sam knew better. Dean cared for the people they helped. And he grew fond of Natasha very quickly; he hadn’t been kidding when threatening Rowena. Naturally, Sam was with him on that one; he just wasn’t as vocal about it as Dean.

The witch reopened the cut on Natasha’s palm and the woman closed her eyes again. Drops of her blood fell to the bowl as Rowena whispered words in language nearly as old as time. Natasha gasped when red smoke started ascending despite not seeing it. Sam guessed the nudge Rowena had mentioned arrived and was stronger than the poor woman had expected.

Dean’s hand twitched to his side towards the gun and Sam gulped.

Light coloured in warm gold, not unlike the one they had seen during the first spell, started escaping the cut, curling playfully as it hovered above the skin of Natasha’s palm. Rowena cut her own hand and placed it over the glow which danced wildly before being sucked into the witch’s wound.

Breathless whimper escaped Natasha’s lips, while Rowena’s eyes glowed violet in a familiar display of her magic. This time even Sam stepped forward, ready to break whatever process was in motion. Rowena cried out another words, her fingers extending over Natasha’s palm and Sam recognized that nope, this was not supposed to happen.

Before he could as much as lunge after the witch or before Dean could draw his gun, Natasha’s back arched and her injured hand curled into fist with a swift snap, causing the smoke and glow vanish. Rowena gasped and Sam had a fraction of second to notice their new friend’s legs were about to give out again. He jumped behind her, catching her before she crumbled towards the ground, her dead weight all on him.

Dean was already aiming his gun at the witch, expression hard.

“What did you do to her, Rowena?” he demanded sharply, unlocking the safety lock.

Sam readjusted his grip on Natasha as gently as he could, taking her pulse, watching her torso in hope to see her inhale. Luckily, she was still breathing, her heart beating. He shot the witch a murderous glare.

“Probably just passed out,” he informed his brother, but the older hunter didn’t appear mollified. To be fair, neither was Sam. He gritted his teeth. “You wanted to take it all, didn’t you?”

Rowena rolled her eyes.

“Not all of it. Just a little bit more than one sip, maybe.”

Seriously? She wasn’t even denying it?!

“Don’t get your pants in the twist, Winchester. She’ll sleep it off. She’s a sneaky one though – or her soulmate is, I can’t tell. They wouldn’t let me take more…”

Sam didn’t bother fighting the pride that filled him on Natasha’s behalf. Good for her. She was strong. She was a fighter. She wouldn’t have let Rowena to take her soulmate from her. She believed in the bond with the man she didn’t even know too much for that. He smirked; no wonder Dean liked her so much so soon.

“Put the gun down, Dean. I mean no harm. I should warn you, though. Her soulmate… I believe the power I feel is coming from him. I’ve never encountered it before indeed. You might want to look out,” she noted, healing the cut on her hand with a simple wiggle on her uninjured hand.
“Don’t pretend you care,” Dean spitted out, but lowered the gun, more annoyed at Rowena’s attempts to drain the soul bond than anything else. Things sure would be different if she had truly hurt Natasha.

One corner of Rowena’s lips quirked as she gave them a tiny wave, dismissing them.

“Off you go. The door’s that way. The valets will leave you out. She’ll probably be pretty thirsty and hungry when she finally wakes up. Until next time, boys,” she said cheerily and Sam sighed, gathering Natasha in his arms, bridal style.

It wasn’t like she was about to wake up now and walked out on her own, apparently.

Dean glared at Rowena as they left the room, mumbling curses under his breath. “Fucking witches. Every time…”

They stepped into an elevator, the older brother still snarling. “At least she could have healed her too…”

Sam silently agreed as Dean pressed the button to the ground floor and took Natasha’s hand gently to examine the damage then.

Both brothers blinked when they only saw the blood and no wound; Rowena must have healed Nat’s cut. Dean glanced up, meeting Sam’s equally surprised gaze.

“Like I said. Fucking witches.”

Chapter End Notes

I immensely enjoyed writing this chapter. I hope you enjoyed reading it!

Kudos to you ♥ Especially if you’re one of people letting me know your thoughts on the story ;)

Chapter Summary

Steve’s dealing, so everyone else has to deal with him; Natasha is the one to take action. Again.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Steve couldn’t fight the smile creeping to his lips when he blinked his eyes open, still hazy with sleep, and found you beside him in the cushions. You were facing him, still deeply in the dreamland. In the mornings like these, he struggled to find words that would express how he felt about you – they never seemed like enough.

In your sleep, you were softer than ever, missing the radiant smile and laughter that lighted up his days, and he loved this version of you, finding it equally enchanting. You were beautiful, like a mirage, eyelashes casting shadows on your cheeks, plush lips parted slightly, begging to be kissed.

Today, he resisted the temptation and only kissed your forehead. Still, you stirred instantly, releasing a content hum only few moments later, smiling as he retreated.

“Morning, doll,” he whispered, his smile growing when your sleepy gaze found his and the corners of your lips automatically curled up as well.

“Morning, Steve. Slept well?”

You gingerly ran your fingers through his hair, brushing his cheeks with your fingertips and he placed his palm over the back of your hand, keeping it on his face as his eyelids fluttered close at the tender display of affection.

“Always do with you,” he admitted. He wasn’t ashamed of that. He suffered from nightmares sometimes, but they got very rare when sleeping in bed with you – the feeling of warmth of your body against his chased memories of both Bucky’s death and crushing the Valkyrie away, at least most of the time. “You?”

Your hand slipped from his hold and he pouted in discontent, giving you a concerned look.

Steve would swear you seemed paler than just a moment ago. A worried crinkle formed on his forehead when he saw pain flash in your eyes, a bead of cold sweat running down your temple.

“It hurts,” you breathed out heavily and Steve’s heartbeat picked up, fear squeezing his chest.

“What does?” he hurried, sitting up hastily, looking around the room for anything that could relieve your pain, no matter where it had come from.

A choking noise had his eyes return to you swiftly, only to cause him freeze in horror at the sight of blood flooding from your mouth. His heart positively stopped as you grunted, repeating the two words driving him out of his mind.
“It hurts.”

His fingers tangled in his hair in desperation. He needed to call someone to help, you were bleeding for no apparent rea-

Steve’s gaze fell to your abdomen, bile rising to his mouth, his body jerking away on autopilot. Your pale shaking fingers were clutching at the object sticking out of your torso, right above your pelvis.

Accusing eyes full of agony stared at him as his legs gave out and he sunk down the wall, your irises losing all life, face white as a sheet of paper, your lips only red because of the blood otherwise deadly blue.

And weren’t the colours ironic. They matched precisely to the weapon that nearly cut you in half, still buried in you.

It was Captain’s own shield.

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Steve jolted awake with a gasp, tears already streaming down his cheeks, and found himself in a sitting position, strapped to a chair.

For a second, his mind returned to the god-awful room he had woken up just before he sentenced you to death; almost instantly, the low hum of engines and the sight of control panel of the quinjet brought him back to reality. He struggled to remember where he was going and why was he sitting where he was.

“I’m putting a stop to this,” Natasha announced and Steve’s head snapped to his left to face her, her skinny figure dressed in her Black Widow gear.

She seemed unimpressed with him, her arms crossed on her chest, but there was a flicker of compassion, the emotion Steve learned to hate these past days, because he saw it everywhere he went – even though ‘everywhere’ only included the Tower, the quinjet, the other places he had gone because of missions, locations unimportant.

They were flying to Ukraine now, he remembered, hunting down another remains of Hydra. Well, shit. He needed to pull himself together.

“We’re on a mission, Rogers,” she continued before he could ask what exactly it was she was putting a stop to. “Actually, I am. You’re out this very second. You fell asleep, while piloting. You’re out.”

Numbing horror overtook him.

Absolutely not. Not an option. Steve had to go there. First of all, it was Hydra. He despised Hydra, hated it with all his heart, especially since they— since-- and second of all, he needed to work. It was his purpose. The only purpose he had.

He straightened in his seat – piloting seat indeed – and stuck his chin out, voice determined, ignoring the quickly drying salty pathways on his face. “I’m sorry, Natasha, it won’t happen-“

“No, it won’t,” she agreed swiftly. “Because you’re taking another nap. Tony’s flying in-“

“No! I’m sorry, okay? But now I… I took a nap. I’m back in full alert. I can do this.”
“No, you can’t!” Natasha hissed, spinning his seat and taking the one opposite to him. “You’re staying on the jet and when we’re back, you’re having a vacation.“

“NO!” he snapped, his hands curling in fists. He had to do this. She didn’t understand-

“YES! Yes, you are! This is how you get killed! And frankly, that’s the worst way of paying back for her sacrifice!” she raised her voice as well, gesturing wildly, something so uncharacteristic of her.

The blatant mention of you had Steve grind his teeth as he unbuckled, leaning towards Natasha in desperate hope to shut her up. His stomach made several flips, red spots dancing in front of his eyes.

No one spoke of you. No one. You were his. His to miss, his to mourn, his to-- to-

“Don’t you dare-!”

“She told you!” Natasha thundered, jumping to her feet to tower over him, her hand flying up as if she wanted to knock some sense into him and then it curled into fist in apparent frustration with him. “She knew! She told you to go save the others!”

That was it. That was when the levee broke, the words he craved to scream into the sky finally coming out as he levelled himself with her – overgrown her, because he was taller, his shoulders wider.

“She shouldn’t have! She should have lived! But she never got a say, because I killed her!”

Natasha’s face softened, her shoulders slumping as his voice broke at the one particular word. Steve hated it, closing his eyes just to escape the compassion he didn’t deserve; what more, compassion that wouldn’t bring her back.

Nothing could. He had fucked up so, so bad….

He forced the tears not to spill, his jaw set tight so it wouldn’t tremble. He didn’t want the pity. He didn’t want anything these days and he didn’t fucking care what Natasha thought or wanted.

“That’s not true, Steve. There was no right choice-”

“And I did choose wrong-” he said lowly, only to be interrupted too.

“I can’t be a judge of that. But her death, it wasn’t your fault. I can’t imagine how much it hurts to lose your soulmate, but it happened. And I might not have a PhD. in healthy coping mechanisms, but I know for sure that this will cost you your life,” she warned him, stern and yet kind as she placed her smaller hand on his shoulder. “You need a time off.”

Steve gulped at the idea. He couldn’t afford that. He simply couldn’t.

“I can’t.”

“Why? Because then you’ll have the time to visit her grave at least, since you missed the funeral? Because then you’ll actually get to mourn her?”

“I do that every fucking day!” he spitted out, his fist hitting the control panel, leaving a visible dent in the metal.

“No, Steve,” Natasha opposed slowly, her voice oh, oh so soft in a way Steve had never heard before. It was making him sick and weak in his knees with the need to give in and let himself break again. He had been keeping it at bay since the day he had crushed the mirror, finding out about his
supposed other soulmate. He couldn’t afford to lose it, especially not now. He had a job to do.

And Natasha was not getting it. It wasn’t a surprise. She wouldn’t. She never would.

“You spent one day unable to get up from your bed and then you threw yourself into work. I get it, you want to drain yourself to just pass out the moment you fall into bed and sleep a dreamless sleep, but you can’t do this. You need to mourn. You didn’t get a chance to come to terms with her death. And you need to do that to move on.”

“I don’t want to.”

He sunk back to the seat at his admission, running his hand down his face. This was an awful place to have this conversation. Disastrous timing. It was terrible to have this conversation in the first place.

Natasha moved behind him, placing both of her palms on his shoulders this time. It was as if she was reading his mind; not having to deal with her uncharacteristically open expression was easier for him.

“I know. And that’s okay. But you need to.”

Maybe. But it wasn’t what he truly needed. He had a task. An order to follow. That was what mattered. That was what he could do. What he could control.

“She died because of Captain America. Captain America is a man on a mission to save lives,” Steve exclaimed, fighting to keep his voice even, trying to close off again. They would be in their destination soon. He had to focus. He had to push the dull ache in his gut deeper before it burst out again and crippled him like the first day. “That’s the only thing I need to do, Natasha.”

“That’s a load of bullshit and we both know that!” she hissed like a cat, fingers digging into his uniform before relaxing again and letting her hands fall, her face closing off a fraction. “Not that it matters, because this isn’t a discussion.”

“Natasha-” he sighed.

“I can see how much you’re hurting. I can, Steve. You have every right to. Believe it or not we saw how… how complete she made you. I get it that you’re pissed at yourself. But the only person actually murdered by you is Steve Rogers. He deserves to live and eventually, I believe you can be… not perfectly happy maybe, but at least alive.”

Steve couldn’t. No matter what fate had prepared for him – he couldn’t see himself alive like that again. It hurt that someone did. It felt like dishonouring your memory, everything you two had had. You had been his perfect match. His perfect, beautiful, witty, loving and utterly unique soulmate. No one could ever replace you.

Steve closed his eyes, feeling as a ghost of soft touch brushed over his new soulmark, mocking him and more importantly, mocking you.

“I… I got new words,” he choked out, leaning his elbows onto the dash, taking his face to his hands so Natasha couldn’t see him.

“What?”

He looked up, hoping to catch a glimpse of her shock. To see how he had knocked the air out of her lungs, her arguments stuck in her throat. It would be satisfactory. Maybe if he pressed further, she would forget about this non-sense of pulling him from the mission.
His next words were as pained as sharp and cold.

“There’s probably someone else who is supposed to be my soulmate. Just like that, Natasha. Someone new. As if she was some… something I use and throw away, only to replace it.”

“Oh Steve, I’m so sorry,” she whispered, her voice shaky. “I know it feels like too much now, but you do deserve that. A chance-“

“I don’t want her,” Steve said simply, voice so full of hatred it would have taken him aback if he cared enough to muse over it.

“I know.” She really didn’t. She could never. “But that’s now and it might change.”

Steve huffed in frustration. Since when was Romanoff stupid?

“Don’t you get it? Even if I wanted her, which I don’t, I have nothing to offer. I’m poison, Natasha. I reached out, I tried to have a relationship once, and she’s dead now. Dead. I’m not doing that to another person.”

Or to myself was left unspoken, but clear as day.

“Sorry to break it to you, Steve, but that might not be your choice to make. If you have the words, you will meet your new soulmate either way,” she exclaimed dryly, apparently losing patience with him as well.

Good. They needed to stop with this oversharing crap and get back to professionalism. There was no space for friends in this business. No space for building any kind of bonds. People died on missions. Steve couldn’t say he wasn’t tempted once or twice. Just a little mistake, moving a fraction slower when dodging a bullet, running just a bit slower, stumble maybe, when running away from an explosion…

But then he always saw your imploring expression, deep sad eyes and he felt guilty at instant. Life was precious. He had already thrown away yours – it wasn’t any more his right to do that same with his, no matter how easy it would be, how relieving maybe.

And just like with his or your life, it wasn’t his place to take over another poor woman’s existence. He had to stay alone. Screw fate.

“Then if we do meet, we say hello and right after, we say goodbye. Before someone does it for us.”

Natasha scoffed, irritation lacing her voice. Steve glared at her through the reflection, barely seeing her. He hoped she could make out his expression.

“Really? You just… send her away?”

“Yes. That’s exactly what I’m gonna do.”

“That’s not you being generous, Steve. That’s you being a self-sacrificing and self-righteous asshole.”

Steve grinded his teeth. “Natasha-“

“This conversation is over,” she announced, patting his shoulder. Well, finally. He breathed a sigh of relief. “You get some sleep now.”

Too soon. “No, I don’t,” he opposed calmly as he blindly fastened the seatbelt again.
“Tony’s on our radar already.”

Steve’s eyes fell on the display on the control panel, checking if she was right. The very same moment, he felt a sting at the side of his neck, his hand snapping its direction at instant, catching Natasha’s hand first, feeling for the object she held and tearing it away.

But it was too late – the syringe he managed to rip off was already half-empty. He tossed it away sloppily as his limbs started feeling heavy, his head lulling despite his will.

He gritted his teeth to fight the dizziness, grabbing Natasha’s wrist and using it as a leverage to spin his seat. The whole world swayed with the motion, making him reach for the armrests to maintain his balance; he missed, the straps being the only thing keeping him upright.

He swallowed the bitter taste that gathered in his mouth, forcing the nausea and vertigo down so he could look at Natasha; she seemed a bit guilty? It was hard to tell with his vision blurring, dark edge closing it off.

His ears were ringing and hurting in the way very similar to when he had aimed the Valkyrie to crush straight down, allowing him to barely make out the words leaving Natasha’s lips.

“And I wasn’t asking.”

“’sha?” he mumbled her name accusingly – or he tried, his tongue heavy as the rest of his body.

He must fight it. He had a mission. He had a task. He must-

The smooth material of her sleeve slipped through his fingers, darkness enveloping him like an old frenemy.

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“’sha?” he breathed out weakly and the spy pressed her lips together, the heart she sometimes doubted she still possessed shattering.

The look on his face screamed utter betrayal, messing with his handsome and worn features, glassy eyes full of unspoken pain. She could only describe him like ‘so fucking tired’ and the tranquilizer wasn’t to blame. This was an exhaustion gnawing his very soul; his body now finally followed as the simple word, the name of his supposed friend, slurred into one barely comprehensible syllable.

Natasha gulped, questioning her decision, the hurt and broken trust in his eyes shaking her to her core. She sighed in relief when he passed out and blinked away her tears that welled unexpectedly. She didn’t count on how much the action seen as treason in Steve’s eyes would affect her.

She had to do this though, there was not another option. This was the only way, even if it meant she would lose his friendship, even if it meant he would never be able trust her again. It’d better be their relationship at stake than his life.

She had seen it on the few past missions – he had been getting sloppy. His movements slowed down, his reaction time prolonging. He grew weaker despite his constant workout. The all-nighters he had been pulling out to avoid sleep and dreams of you were taking their toll on him. There were things not even the serum could fix and this was one of them.

A bullet to his brain or heart was another and it was an inevitable outcome of his faltering skills.

This job was only for the bests of the bests. No mistakes, maximum alert. Anything less meant death.
and that was simply not something she could allow when it came to him. She wasn’t happy about admitting it, but she grew too fond of Steve to let that happen. She liked him. He was an excellent soldier and great agent, a good *person* and a dear friend, when he wasn’t kicked so low he couldn’t seem to get up.

He mattered to her and that was why it was her duty to save his life this way despite possibly losing his friendship in the process. Sam had said she needed to confront him; the therapist probably hadn’t thought she would do it like this, but hey, she tried her best.

She watched his crouched form in the pilot seat, the ever-present tension leaving his body. He was going to have a killer headache and a terrible neck cramp with his head bend down nearly to his chest.

Natasha looked around, the cabinet with clean clothes caching her eye. She walked to it, pulling out two of his hoodies; one she unzipped to cover his torso. The other one she folded once more and arranged it to the seat before gently manipulating his head into a less neck-breaking position.

She smiled at her handiwork tightly, ignoring the cold sensation in her gut, fear of this being the last time she could get within ten feet distance to Steve Rogers, her possibly former friend. She delicately pushed away the strand that had fallen into his eyes, her voice barely audible.

“Have sweet dreams, Steve. You’ll be okay.”

As she sat to the other pilot seat to land with the jet, she hoped that he would.

Chapter End Notes

Me, writing angst… ouch?
10) …and drink it with gusto

Chapter Summary

Steve’s a bit difficult (poor baby), not that anyone blames him. Sam Wilson makes a confession – sort of.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The mission hadn’t been a shitshow, surprisingly enough, but the reports to Fury had been. Natasha had spent the rest of the day, whole night and a better portion of the next day at the SHIELD HQ, having to deal with everything, because Stark had quite literally fled. To be fair, he had at least taken care of Steve’s still unconscious and very much muscular (read ‘really fucking heavy’) form.

Tired and annoyed, Natasha finally landed with small jet at the Tower, making her way to her room, wishing nothing more but to shower and get some fucking sleep.

Of course, walking through the common room, she should have known she wouldn’t be that lucky.

She heard his icy yet somewhat cheery voice before she even saw him and it made her stop in her tracks, dreading facing him. She was too tired for his reproaches now.

“AH! There she is!”

Natasha took a deep breath, closing her eyes and mentally counting to three.

“Here’s ‘ur soulmate ex-pert!” Steve howled again, making her heart clench.

Black Widow was not a coward, but neither her nor Natasha liked dealing with feelings too directly – the jet was enough to get her fill for several years prior. She scanned the room before she would settle on him – and sure enough, she and Steve weren’t alone.

Bruce was standing indecisively by the door, torn and helpless expression on his face, his eyes one big question mark, asking Natasha how the hell he was supposed to deal with that.

Good question, Bruce, good question.

The smell of booze and Steve’s demeanour were unmistakable, but she silently asked anyway.

“Is he…?”

“Yeah. He… uhm… he found Thor’s stash,” the scientist answered her in equally hushed voice, inconspicuously pointing towards the counter where three flasks lay, emptied. Jesus.

Steve apparently heard and saw them anyway, because his voice bellowed again in reaction to their conversation. His words were slurred.

“Gooooood friend Thor. Thou’ he t’ied to take my g’l. Nooot a g’d friend. Baaaad, bad friend.”

“Oh bozhe moy…” Natasha whispered under her breath and Steve turned to her, looking almost
excited to see her.

Which didn’t mean he didn’t look like absolute shit. He had a t-shirt stained with the alcohol, his eyes red-rimmed, bruise-like dark circles under them as if he hadn’t slept for a year.

She hadn’t thought he could get worse than in the quinjet. Clearly, she was wrong.

“‘tasha! Greeeat ‘dvice you gave me,” he exclaimed, trying to rise from his spot on the couch where he had been half-lying like a dead fish casted ashore.

Natasha resisted the urge to massage her temples as the headache started to build. She tried to ignore the sinking feeling in her stomach at the audible edge to his voice, the accusation glaring at her from his eyes.

“Steve…”

He finally stumbled to his feet and she noticed another flask secured in his right hand. He held it out as if he was pointing at her.

“Tried wat’ you s-said. Hurts,” he hiccupped, the sound blending with a sob. He cleaned his nose with the back of his hand hastily. “S-saw her grave. Fuck it hurts… ‘dis thing’s good ‘ough.”

Natasha bit the inside of her cheek, her mind racing. She didn’t need to call anyone for advice now. Her friend was shitfaced. The only thing she could do was to get him to bed and try not to antagonize him or trigger something worse than… whatever this was. She wasn’t sure if moving on from being snowed under work – voluntarily – was more or less healthy than drinking himself into oblivion. But she counted any change that wasn’t a step towards a suicide (possibly assisted by the last of Hydra goons) like a progress.

“Is he drunk?” Tony’s incredulous voice ringed from the doorway and Natasha didn’t even bother spinning on her heels to him, hearing him enter and close the distance between them as he stopped at her side. “Cap?”

Blood froze in Natasha’s veins and she was swift to call out, but it was too late. “No- don’t call-!”

So much for not triggering him and making it worse. She could see how he suddenly stood straighter as if he swallowed a wooden ruler, and an indefinable expression appeared on his face.

She gulped in anticipation of a storm.

“Cap!” he called out, mimicking Tony and the billionaire realized his mistake, judging by the silent dammit that left his lips. Steve raised the flask in a mock toast, turning around and nearly tipping over his feet. “Captain ‘merica! What a heeero! Cheers to him!” He took a long sip before continuing, his gestures animated. “Swin’ in, safe th’im all! Kill his g’l, why ‘ven care… hero, murd’r, potato, tomatho…” his voice slurred into a murmur, until he spotted a newcomer and came to life again. “Ah! Hey, Clint!”

Clint was quick to understand the situation and it took one glance at Natasha for them to agree what needed to be done. He approached Steve cautiously with his features emotionless.

“We should get you to bed-“

“Nope! No!” Steve howled instantly, taking several steps backwards to get out of Clint’s reach. His expression was dark, tears welling in his eyes. “Smell like h’r. Not ‘nymore. Hurts!” He sobbed, pressing the heel of his hand to his forehead, his figure swaying dangerously as he closed his eyes
and lost the visual control of his balance. “Hurts!”

“Come on, Steve…” Clint coaxed him gently, attempting to close the distance between them again. His gaze flickered to Bruce and Tony and they took few steps towards Steve as well.

“Nope! Gotta-ta sssay sm’thin’!” Christ, Natasha had never seen him like this and she wanted to bleach both her eyes and ears. He pointed the flask at Clint resolutely. “You knew. You warn h’r. Fuck-fuck up. Shouldva told- I ain’t gettin’ killed. I kill h’r.”

“Steve…” Natasha approached him as well, grimacing when she saw the flash of emotion on Clint’s face.

Steve spun to her immediately, this time accusing her. “And you! Goooood job. Pushin’ us togthe’. You kill h’r too.”

“Hey! Watch it!” Tony snapped at him, running out of patience, but Natasha knew Steve didn’t quite mean it. Pushing them together wasn’t her fault – the fact she had tranquilized him was her sin and she was aware he had the right to be mad at her.

“Your friggin’ ‘stem! You too- n’t fly fast ’nough!”

“Steve, you’re wasted. You’re going to bed before you say more things you regret,” Bruce said calmly after Steve managed to finish his roll and blame another person.

Bruce speaking up gave the captain a pause and he looked like his brain froze. His brows knitted together and he nodded, another sob erupting from his throat, his inhale shaking his whole being as he crossed the distance to Bruce, murmuring.


Steve’s large frame enveloped Bruce, resting his whole impressive weight on him. The scientist was nearly tripped over – except a hint of green flushed his neck, Hulk coming to rescue before the other men and Natasha rushed to help. Steve went completely limp, the flask falling to the ground, the little liquid remaining in it spilling and staining the carpet. No one cared as they tried to support the supersoldier’s goo-like body, exchanging desperate glances.

“Well, that was… enlightening,” Tony summarized, his poor attempt at joke that not even he apparently believed in barely gaining any reaction.

Clint sighed. “Please, this is hardly any news. We knew he blamed himself.” He readjusted Steve’s arm he had slung around his shoulders and Tony’s right side of suit came to the rescue, taking most of the weight off from the billionaire. “I hate this, but I think he needs this.”

Natasha wasn’t so sure about that, but yeah, Steve definitely needed to start accepting the reality. It was probably a natural reaction to want to dull the pain with something else when work was off limits. She pressed her lips together as their whole grouped slowly made their way to Steve’s room.

“Let’s just get him to bed.”

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Not many people could probably brag they had Black Widow’s number. Well, probably no one could, because if they would tell a living soul, they’d meet their end. So Sam Wilson didn’t brag. And he sure as hell didn’t call her first.
That said, he did not hesitate when she called him with location and time to meet, no greeting, no goodbye. Rude, but he’d take it. He had more than one reason, not that he would advertise it.

So there he was, sipping coffee from a take-away cup as he sat in Central Park with Black Widow, both of them having the best super-spy disguise; sunglasses.

The silence between them was getting awkward and Sam couldn’t take the tension anymore.

“Well, this is much more... civil than our last meeting,” he noted casually, hating to admit he was... nervous.

“I’m not gonna say sorry,” Ms. Romanoff hummed back, sipping her latte.

“Guess I wouldn’t expect that…”

He didn’t expect her to face him either but she did, a reminiscence of a sad smile gracing her lips. The warmth around his heart was familiar and not entirely unwelcomed. He found himself longing after seeing her whole face.

“I’m saying thank you, though.”

Huh.

“Didn’t expect that either,” he admitted and one corner of her lips rose higher in a smirk. Sam had a hunch she loved surprising people – or rather shocking them. “How did it go?”

She huffed out a sound that could only mean frustration and Sam grimaced. Confrontation usually didn’t go very good, but this sounded awful.

“That well, huh?”

“No, no…” she shook her head, red curls swaying around her head elegantly. “He’s... an asshole. He fell asleep on a mission. In a cockpit. When he was piloting. Can’t believe I’m saying this, but God bless Stark’s inventions and auto-piloting,” she grunted and removed the cap of her cup before taking a long sip of her coffee.

She seemed to be gathering thoughts. Sam might not be able to see her eyes, but he did learn to read people. She didn’t like talking about feelings, but she was making an exception. Whether it was because of him, because of his job or because she wished to help her friend so badly, that remained a mystery. Either was pleasing though, the action itself intriguing Sam.

He had given her a lot of thought after their first unconventional meeting. He could not get her out of his head and for a good reason, of course.

He came to a conclusion that... despite her manners, she probably wasn’t a bad person. There were rumours about her past, but everyone had one. She was with the Avengers now, getting clean and the present and willingness to fix mistakes often mattered more than what had been done – especially when it came to a past like her own. Sam had made living by helping people dealing with their past actions and failures; judging her would be a hypocrisy and as far as he knew, he was a killer too. And if it came to it, he would punch, sliced or shot his way out again.

“It’s just... he’s... he’s really at the bottom,” she Natasha spoke softly, emotions lacing her voice. Regret. Compassion. Helplessness. Sam knew all those too well. “Seeing him going from one mission to another just to pass out in exhaustion was bad enough, because I knew it was wrong, but... seeing him drink himself into oblivion? One time only, but it was a nightmare. And seeing
Steve doing *nothing*? Struggling to find a purpose, himself… that’s just…”

“It sucks. But he has a good friend in you. He needs time.”

“I know that, it’s… I wish there was someone hurting him so I could just punch them in their face and call it a day. But that one guy blew himself to hell and the others just… don’t really matter, getting them doesn’t do much help Steve.”

Sam couldn’t help but smile softly as she said Captain’s name. It held a meaning – he was clearly dear to her and it went way beyond professional relationship. Not that the fact alone that she had shown up at Sam’s apartment the way she had wasn’t enough of an evidence. Not to mention her surprising openness.

“It’s a long way to recovery, Natasha.”

Her first name just slipped past his lips unwittingly, but he didn’t feel like apologizing. The informal space they found themselves in, the honest open conversation… first names suited it better. He was aware he sounded like he was speaking from experience on top of that, but it wasn’t like she didn’t know. She had done a thorough research on him.

As if she agreed with him feeling his surroundings and the atmosphere, she put away her glasses, her green eyes burning with honesty when she met his – he automatically lost the barrier too, because it felt unjust for her to be left… vulnerable like that.

“I’m truly sorry about poking at your past, Sam,”

Sam felt the last remains of hostility towards her resolve. That apology meant more than he had realized it would.

“Thanks. I get it, you know. Being worried for someone so much… he’s gonna be okay, eventually. Scarred, but okay.”

*“He could be better than that…”* she sighed, leaning onto the backrest of the bench tiredly.

“What was that?”

“When I confronted him on the plane… he told me he had another words,” she revealed hesitantly as if she wasn’t sure if it was her secret to tell.

Sam’s heart positively stopped. Was she telling the truth or was this a game? Did she know about his own too? He swallowed the panic when he saw her resigned gaze.

She wasn’t playing no game.

“Two soulmates. That’s rare,” he remarked, a lump growing in his throat. His palms started sweating and he hated it. Fortunately, Natasha didn’t seem to notice – or she politely ignored it, her voice dry and laced with a bit of irritation.

“He never wants to meet her.”

*“That’s not rare.”*

Sam would know. He had struggled with the same feeling, after all. He wanted to forget the world existed. He wanted to live peacefully and alone. It was probably no coincidence fate sent him Black freaking Widow as the one – if she was willing, Sam would not be alone. And definitely wouldn’t
get 'peace'.

If he was being truly honest with himself, he wouldn’t be able to say he minded.

“He thinks… he thinks he doesn’t deserve her or something.”

Sam sighed, mentally chuckling at the irony of fate once more. The Universe did have a messed up sense of humour, didn’t it?

“Because he thinks he blew his chance. Because he thinks that he will mess it up again and fail her. And it feels like being unfaithful,” he offered, venting his own feelings for the first time.

He had never told that to anyone, ashamed of the set of words sitting on his other collarbone, appearing shortly after Riley’s death. Why did he tell her of all people? He wanted to question his own actions, he barely knew the woman, but… there was a significant but, wasn’t there?

Her emerald eyes were searching on his face, recognition lighting them up. She fidgeted, something he hadn’t seen her do before and he was sure not many people had either. It was a privilege and while his heart started racing, seeing her nervous eased his own nerves the tinniest bit.

“…yeah. I guess. You… uhm, you dealt with someone like that too?” she asked, looking away, seemingly intrigued by something in the distance.

Sam didn’t buy it and swallowed loudly.

“Just one case in my whole carrier.”

“What did you tell them?” she queried gently, her shoulders tense.

Sam shrugged. He told himself a lot of things, but he wasn’t certain they were all presentable.

“Never figured it out. First, the meeting with his other soulmate was a bit unconventional. He kinda hated her,” he admitted, glancing at her with the corner of his eye. She gave almost an inconspicuous nod, her gaze casted down. She took it as a rejection, he realized. “Then he started thinking and realized she wasn’t too bad. He’s still struggling to make up his mind – whether he should try. Whether she would want to. She would be a catch though, no doubt,” he lighted it up, biting the inside of his cheek right after.

Was he really trying to flirt now?

One corner of her lips rose in a smirk. “Somehow I doubt that. Sounds like a bitch.”

Sam wanted to chuckle at the joke, but then her eyes lifted to him and his heart just… stopped, the amused sound stuck in his throat. He had to clear it to be able to speak up, but it did nothing under the intensity of her gaze.

“Not to me. Not anymore.”

Natasha licked her lips – and Sam would lie if he claimed he did not mirror the motion instinctively – and finished her drink.

“Wouldn’t do that if I were you, huh? That must have been a pleasant surprise when it appeared,” she stated, a hint of amusement along with relief that the secret, the whatever that had been hanging between them, was finally addressed.

Sam snorted, not necessarily because he found his next statement funny.
“Yeah and I bet growing up in Russia and have an English soulmark must have been walk in a park.”

Good, there was so much sarcasm in his voice he might even feel ashamed. But the redhead – his second soulmate, holy shit, it really happened – didn’t seem to be offended.

“Wow, this almost beats the way Steve met his and that was some story….”

“Yeah, I bet.”

Silence fell on them then, both of them unsure how to continue and where to go from here. They found each other – their other half, supposedly, but no one could tell the outcome.

She was an Avenger. Sam was a therapist, a veteran at ridiculously young age, because he had lost his partner. They had a perfect example of how wrong it could go, served on silver plate – it was how they had met for God’s sake. But once again – Sam would lie when saying he didn’t miss some of the adrenalin. He did. A lot, actually.

The reason he had left the field was his soulmate. Was there any better reason to get back in when the need would rise, than another soulmate?

“Do you want to explore this?” Sam broke the uncomfortable silence, lacking the courage to look at her expression. The tension in her shoulders he could almost feel told him enough. He didn’t want to see her rejection. Did he want to see her agreement though?

“No?” she hummed back, staring ahead just like him.

“That’s the million dollar question.”

Riley had been… his everything. But could he ignore something like this? Could he ignore the opportunity, a woman who was no doubt fabulous and he was already finding interesting and that apparently was matching his sense of humour? Did he believe in fate? Did he have the right to try again?

Deep down, Sam knew he had already made his mind about it. Now it only depended on her.

“But I keep telling everyone to move on,” he mused out loud, catching her gaze. “Try to live. Some do. Neither of them had the… advantage of having another soulmate, if we can call it that.”

Small smile appeared on Natasha’s lips, new twinkle lighting up her eyes and Sam knew he had made the right decision, no matter the outcome.

He didn’t complain when she rose to her feet to clearly leave though – they had enough to deal with today, they needed more time to think of how to approach this.

“Okay. Okay then… You have my number. Call me,” she offered simply, saying goodbye only with a nod and spun on her heels.

“Oh, I will!”

She casted a flirty grin over her shoulder and Sam found himself smiling.

“Hey, you bowl?” he blurted out his first idea and this time she stopped in her tracks, her smile turning almost wolffish. It might have done a thing to his crotch.

“I do, but you can’t run crying when I beat you!” she smirked and gave him a wink, hips swaying as
she left him behind.

His laughter sounded like a soundtrack to her catwalk.

_Cheeky lady._ Sam liked her.

Chapter End Notes

That was… long. Eh. Lemme know what you thought of this two-parts-chapter of sort.

We’ll return to reader in the next chapter, promise. Gives you something to look forward to at least; I’m leaving for several days, but the next chapter is pretty much ready and I’ll post it when I can ;)}
Chapter Summary

Arrival to NYC is what neither the Winchesters nor you expected. Like… not even in your wildest dreams.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Natasha slept like a baby – or like a dead. Sam didn’t find either of those options comforting. He couldn’t say he wasn’t glad Rowena had assisted them – but he would also be lying if he claimed to be happy about their particular ‘ally’ on this case.

While Dean’s eyes were glued to the road, Sam’s kept flickering between Natasha’s torso, always making sure she was still breathing, and his tablet, where he had started a search. Manhattan was surely a smaller place than the whole world, but it still had over million and half residents and finding Natasha’s soulmate wouldn’t be easy in the slightest.

He was still searching police databases for missing person cases and for house fires and gas explosions. The only problem was, he had no time frame to search – with Dean, it took three months for him to be resurrected and while his particular case had rather different circumstances (with angels having to fight their way through literal Hell and the whole Righteous Man versus apocalypse thing), Sam had no clue when exactly Natasha died.

It could have been the same day Castiel had brought her to them as well as months ago, years even. It wasn’t helping they still didn’t have her name and didn’t know the circumstances.

In other words, they didn’t have jack squat. Then again, Natasha believed her soulmate was a man, probably around her age – that would narrow the search then. If they failed, they could always try to create her a tinder account and see who would super-like her.

Sam huffed in irritation and amusement, happy that Dean was pulling over. His legs might have been dying for the past few minutes.

“Where are we?” he hummed, cracking his neck.

Dean tuned down the volume before answering – and really, if the loud music hadn’t woken up Natasha, something must have been seriously wrong, Rowena’s magic messing her up on a level eleven on a ten points scale.

“Harrison, New Jersey. About an hour drive to Manhattan. Figured we would be no good in the overpriced hotels in the city, especially with her like this. Plus, I’m hungry,” Dean replied honestly and Sam raised one corner of his lips in a half-grin.

“Fair enough.” Dean opened the door, climbing up. Sam looked around, confused, not seeing any hotel, only a diner, and it got him get out of the car with an exasperated whisper-yell. “Where do you think you’re going? We can’t just leave her here!”

“Oh, we don’t. You’re staying, I’m getting food,” Dean grinned at him cockily, earning Sam’s

“Get something to Natasha too, in case she wakes up any time soon,” Sam growled, but obediently folded his long legs back to the car, casting a glance over his shoulder at their last passenger. “Jerk, isn’t he?”

Naturally, Natasha didn’t even stir, let alone reply.

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She didn’t regain consciousness until late night. When she did, she seemed to be convinced this was what hangover felt like – neither of the brothers opposed her. She ate two good portions of dinner, drank a litre of water and passed out again, absolutely exhausted.

“I don’t even wanna know what she would have looked like if Rowena drained her as much as she wanted to,” Dean noted darkly and Sam silently agreed, ready to hit the hay too.

“You think she’s safe to be left on her own?”

“You mean if she suffocates in her sleep? I wouldn’t worry about that now,” Dean shrugged light-heartedly, patting her calf that slipped out from between the covers. She didn’t seem to mind – or notice for that matter. “We might leave the bathroom light on so she wouldn’t crash into something when waking up groggy like before, but I think she’s good now. Get some sleep.”

Sam casted a glance at Natasha’s peaceful face, watching her form moving ever so slightly as her chest was rising and falling regularly. He sighed and made his way to the bathroom, humming in vague agreement. He was still going to set an alarm for every two hours to check up on her.

Funnily enough, Dean’s phone woke him up sooner as they had got the same idea. Sam snorted in amusement as Dean seemed ashamed for being caught caring for their protégé.

The next time Sam woke up, it was only due to his alarm at four a.m. About an hour later, he was snapped from his dreams by Natasha’s loud cursing as her shin met the nightstand; they had forgotten to leave the light in the bathroom on.

Well. At least she was alive and clearly alright enough to walk and talk.

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“So… what happens now?” Natasha asked the burning question as she finished her croissant and fruit.

Sam had been the one to go grocery shopping this time, adding apples to the cart. Dean had been mockingly disgusted, but Natasha seemed ecstatic, discovering she liked red apples better then green ones. It was adorable and Sam felt an uncomfortable pang near his heart when he realized what a little thing like this meant to her, an amnesiac.

He truly wished he had better news for her in a form of some masterplan. The true was they weren’t sure about their next step.

“Now we go to explore the island of Manhattan,” Dean shrugged, causing Natasha to tilt her head and squint.

“Okay…? How is that going to help?”
Dean made a face. “You women are so hard to please sometimes…”

Sam snorted, but quickly fixed his expression when Natasha’s eyes fell on him. He smiled at her tightly with a bit of guilt.

“We’re not sure how to proceed to be honest. Police station is an option, but I searched their databases – they probably won’t have any more luck than I did.”

“Oh,” she said only, her voice sad, her hopeful expression falling. “Can’t you like… eh, post my face on the internet or something? Could that help?”

Sam bit the inside of his cheek, the one ridiculous idea popping up in his head again. He glanced at the woman, her eyes full of steadfast trust in them.

Sam cleared his throat, uneasy sensation in his stomach.

“Well… I actually thought of creating you a Tinder account-“

“Dude!” Dean cried out, exasperated. “You don’t mean that!”

“I’m sorry, you have a better option?” Sam demanded, irritated as he spun on his chair to face his brother.

Sam was aware it was a lame-ass plan, but there were kind of out of options.

“…what’s a Tinder?” Natasha asked cautiously and Dean answered her swiftly with the ominous words.

“It’s a fuck-app.”

“I’m sorry?”

Sam beat his brother to speaking this time. “It’s a form of a dating site – or better, a dating app for your phone. You create a profile and-“

“So it’s a dating side. Basically. What’s wrong with that?”

“It’s known for finding a quick lay,” Sam explained bluntly, making her eyes widen, blood rushing into her cheeks.

“Oh.”

Dean gestured towards her wildly as if wanting to scream ‘see?!’ when a mixture of emotions played on her face. Sam rolled his eyes and huffed.

Natasha, seeing their exchange, worried her teeth over her lower lip.

“Well… how about we have a trip to the city and if we don’t come up with anything better, we give this a go?” she offered, causing both brothers to look at her as if she had grown a second head. Frankly, Sam was pleased too, though.

“Seriously?” Dean questioned in disbelief.

“We don’t have a better plan, do we? Desperate times. Besides… I have two bodyguards if someone lures me out under false pretences, don’t I?” she asked innocently, an honest smile lighting up her face, her unshakable trust in them showing again.
It made Sam’s stomach flip and his heart melt like hot butter. His lips spread in a smile as well unwittingly and he exchanged a look with Dean, who shrugged.

“You got balls. Let’s go then.”

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It took them an hour to get to the city and find a spot and neither of them had a better plan. Which meant they wandered the streets – earning strange looks for some reason –, postponing the inevitable until they found a small homely café.

Sam gulped. “Well, looks like this is it. We’re gonna dive into the Tinder jungle…”

Dean scoffed as he entered the café, looking around for a free table in the friendly space. It was clear that this wasn’t a franchise type of thing and Sam couldn’t tell he minded.

What he did mind were several pairs of eyes falling on them – and few of them growing wide, having their owners nudge their mates and whisper.

The taller hunter glanced at his companions who seemed equally uncomfortable under the glares. Good, Sam wasn’t getting paranoid then.

The moment only lasted few second though, then an orange-haired barista making rounds approached them with a smile, pointing them towards the counter, breaking the spell.

“Welcome to MDDC. Order at the counter, please. Oh and I recommend our caramel latté. It’s known to be magical,” she winked at them and Sam winced, mentally pleading for no more magic.

Squinting at her nametag, he thanked her for the recommendation anyway.

“Thank you… Terri.”

She threw another wink over her shoulder as she spun on her heels and headed the same direction. Unlike some of the patrons she seemed unfazed by their presence as she should. Yet, Sam still caught some people watching them with interest and shuffled, uncomfortable in his own skin.

“Am I like… famous? Or are they staring at you?” Natasha whispered, cautiously walking to the line of customers.

“They are staring, aren’t they?” Sam agreed, his mind racing. Was it a good thing? What did it mean? Could Natasha be famous?

“Maybe they think we’re all in poly.”

“Dean,” Sam snapped instantly, not amused as much as his brother clearly was, judging by his smirk.

“What? They could,” Dean offered innocently, earning a curious glance from Natasha, followed by a shake of her head.

“I’m not even gonna ask.” Good choice. “Grab me the caramel latté, please? Maybe it won’t taste like coffee too much. I’m… ugh, gonna…” she pointed towards the ladies room and Sam just nodded.

A quick scan of the room confirmed his suspicion – there were eyes following her. Whatever this was, it was about her, not them.
Good news, no one was about to call the police, recognizing them as criminals. Good news no.2 – finding information about Natasha might not be as hard as they had thought. *Might.*

“So, what are we thinking?”

Dean joined him in the line, losing his carefree attitude. “I think it’s worth asking. This ain’t coincidence. I just don’t get it – if she *is* famous, how did you not find a match?”

Sam grimaced, wondering about the same thing.

“Maybe it’s her family – or her soulmate. They could be annoyed with people, wanting to have their peace. How much it can cost to have someone cover the digital trail? Or maybe they sued someone and it resulted in that.”

“Or we could be wrong and they’re just looking at her ‘cause she an eye-candy,” Dean hummed, sounding perfectly serious. Sam hoped that the look he sent him spoke volumes. “What? She’s cute, we’re both thinking it.”

Sam rolled his eyes, but didn’t protest. “Let’s hope that it’s not the case, otherwise we’re about to sign her up for a ‘fuck-app’.”

This time it was Dean who glared mocked murder. Sam grinned.

“So, guys, what can I get you?” *Terri* asked them cheerily, genuine smile on her face. It somehow made Sam smile back automatically.

“Flat white, medium for me. Americano, no sugar for him. Tall? Yeah. And one of those caramel lattés,” Sam ordered.

“Here or to go?”

“Here. Add one of those… cheesecakes or whatever it’s called,” Dean requested. Before Sam could ask, he explained. “She liked trying new stuff. And Rowena said to eat.”

“That’s surprisingly thoughtful of you,” Sam blurted out, not watching his mouth. It earned them a giggle from their barista.

“Shut up, Samantha. You’re paying.”

Sam snorted as his brother aimed for a free table in the back and he pulled out the cash.

“He looks like a piece of work,” *Terri* commented lightly. Sam silently agreed. “I’ll bring your order to the table, okay?”

“Thanks.”

The boot in a quiet corner was a good choice, though Sam felt a little sorry for Natasha, who would have to walk through the whole café and face the strangely curious eyes.

“Here we go. Enjoy,” the barista landed their coffees and dessert.

“Thank you. Uhm… Terri? Can I ask you something?” Sam asked and straightened in his seat, which earned him a suspicious look from the woman.

“I have a boyfriend.”
“What a shame for the rest of us…” Dean sighed, shooting Sam an amused look when he noticed how flustered he grew.

“Huh? No, that wasn’t what I was-! I mean, not that you weren’t- uh, I mean-” Sam stuttered, horrified she came to such conclusion.

It was when she giggled, her eyes sparkling. “I’m messing with you. What is it?”

Sam huffed, but couldn’t help but sigh in relief. He even charmed a little smile, trying not to look too self-important and showing he was okay with her teasing him.

“This might sound strange but… I think… people are kinda staring? At our friend? Do you have any idea why?”

“Well… if I could take a guess… it’s… it’s just that she looks so much like her,” she said slowly, glancing around. No one paid them any mind as they lowered their voices.

*Jackpot.* Sam’s eyebrows jumped and he leaned in, intrigued. With the corner of his eye, he registered Dean doing the same.

“Like who?”

“Cap’s girl,” Terri said simply, her expression darkening and softening at the same time. “God give him strength and let her rest in peace.”

Millions of questions popped up in Sam’s head, mostly whirling about *what, who, why, when*. A tragedy had struck, that was nothing new, they expected as much, but not an event of public manner.

“Cap?” Sam questioned, confused. What kind of a nickname-

“Do you live under a rock?” Terri asked with a strange expression on her face. She seemed… surprised and weirded out, honestly. Sam couldn’t help but be offended at such blunt and mean question. “Sorry. Not much of a patriot then? Not from around here?”

“Wait, you mean Cap as… Captain America?” Dean whispered, sounding excited and Sam felt his heart skip a beat.

No way. Sam wasn’t very patriotic, never felt it, but even he knew who Captain America was and what role he had played in history – and present. But… she had to be shitting them, right?

“Well… yeah.”

Apparently not.

“Captain America? The Avenger?” Sam checked, making sure there was no confusion between them.

“Sure thing.” Terri shrugged, a small smile tugging at her lips.

“And she looks like his-…?” Sam hinted her, trying to mask his impatience and excitement, probably failing epically.

“Soulmate, yeah.”

“That’s…” The younger hunter jerked his head, exchanging a meaningful look with Dean. “… 
interesting. Can we find her picture online? What’s her name? You know… celebrity look alike
game and all that…? They do say my brother here looks like Bradley James.”

Oh yeah, Sam was totally making this up as he went. Dean was going to murder him for that
comparison, but sacrifices needed to be made in the name of their rescue case. Terri tilted her head to
side, examining Dean’s face, her smile growing wider.

“Huh. You kinda do,” she concluded and smirked. “I always was a sucker for Arthur and Merlin
bromance.”

Sam snorted. They had watched an episode of Merlin. Dean had been horrified.

“I hate you. But yeah, do tell us.”

“Sure. But you can just check out the church on West 59th Street,” their barista confided them in –
except neither of the brother understand what it meant. Dean was the one to ask.

“Why?”

“It’s the closest church to the Tower,” Terri announced, seemingly bewildered as she looked
between the two of them. “How did you miss all this? It was all over the news.”

“We’ve been… travelling a lot.”

“Oh. Okay. You can just check it out. Light a candle for her. She died so a lot of others could live,”
Terri explained them softly, clearly about to make her leave.

Sam had one last question though – well, among like million others.

Light a candle for her? What the hell?

“Thanks. Just… how long has it been?”

“Not too long. Few weeks.”

The moment their barista was out of hearing rage, Sam turned to Dean, whose shocked expression
matched his own, and started whispering hastily.

“What the hell?!”

“Yeah, I’m right there with you. But it sounds legit. You check it out?“

Sam glanced around before pulling out his tablet. He liked this option better than the Tinder one, but
an anxious knot was tying up his stomach as Natasha still didn’t find them at their table. She sure
was taking her time. Sam hoped she was okay and wasn’t having a panic attack or something. And
that there were no windows she could climb through – because if she was Captain freaking
America’s soulmate, she might as well be a superhero just like him.

Seriously – what the hell.

The amount of results for ‘Captain America soulmate’ search was ridiculous, climbing to astronomic
numbers. Links to articles, pictures, videos… and lots of the links had only the headline and nothing
more to it – had been deleted.

Sam wasn’t surprised anymore. Once again, if Natasha – which wasn’t her name at all, of course, as
he found out – was the one for the supersoldier, there was no wonder someone would want to
protect her privacy.

Sam roamed through the links, finally finding a photo – a photo of an altar, a picture of what clearly was a woman of Natasha’s hair colour, though blurred via filter, surrounded by teddy bears, flowers and candles.

The younger hunter gulped, satisfaction at possibly solving the mystery mixing with nervousness and compassion.

“Got something,” he hummed, passing the device to Dean.

“Well, that’s not creepy at all. Found any picture of her that actually shows her?”

Sam glared at his brother. “I’m trying,” he hissed, returning to his search.

He clicked on several videos – it was no surprise they had all been removed. He grunted in frustration, trying out what could be twentieth link, some no-name person Tumblr blog who had reposted it about three minutes ago.

Bingo!

The blurry picture moved a little, showing a blond man standing up from a bed in a plain room, crackling sound in the background. Sam froze the frame, attaching headphones and pressed play again.

The camera finally cleared and… the frame split in two. In the other frame, a woman strapped to a chair appeared, causing Sam’s heart stop along with his breathing.

Holy shit.

Holy.

Shit.

“Dean, you have to see this,” Sam choked out, a lump growing in his throat as he pushed the tablet to sit at the table between them and passed one headphone to his brother. Dean’s eyes went wide upon seeing the people in the video.

“Life is full of hard choices, isn’t it, Captain?” a scratchy male voice mocked the desperate man in the picture and Sam’s shoulders tensed when he realized just how hard choice the soldier was given; two bombs showed in the frame.

Well, shit.

“Steve?” Oh yeah. This was definitely Natasha’s voice. This was hundred percent Natasha. Who wasn’t Natasha, but whatever. “It’s… it’s okay. Go. Go save lives. I… I knew I’d have to share you with the world. Frankly, I didn’t imagine it would be like this, but— you go and be hero. My life is nothing compared to thousands and we both know that.”

“Is that really-“ Dean questioned incredulously, eyes glued to the screen.

“Yeah. I… I think it is.”

They spoke no more, watching the video as if it was the most suspenseful thriller they had even seen. Which it was, because the plot was very much real and they had the main character in the near bathroom. Risen from death.
Someone should probably check up on her, but Sam couldn’t tear his gaze away. It was like watching a train wreck to happen; they knew how it must have ended. Thousands of people the man in the video had mentioned got to live; because Captain’s soulmate was about to blow up.

Both brothers still winced when the explosion did end the video.

*Christ.*

Dean slowly pulled out the earplug and gulped, glancing at Sam.

“Well… son of a bitch.”

**Chapter End Notes**

I hope it’s clear enough now that there’s a slight time shift between reader chapters and Steve/Nat/Sam/Bucky chapters (theirs are earlier, while reader had been resurrected a few weeks after her death, about after Steve’s drinking night.)

P.S. – I couldn’t resist that little cameo :D If you know who I mean the better, if not, don’t worry about it ;)

Mostly an emotional turmoil in this chapter, bear with me. ‘Shit’ will happen soon enough, promise ;). For now… cat gets out of the bag and ‘Nat’ isn’t sure whether she didn’t prefer it the other way.

Sam and Dean seemed more than a bit dumb-struck when you finally emerged from the bathroom, which had you shift uncomfortably. Now they were looking at you like the rest of the café and wasn’t that just perfect. You were regretting choosing to dress like the Winchesters now; maybe that was why people here kept staring at you. Except it didn’t explain why Dean and Sam were staring too all of sudden.

Despite their expressions, Sam shook his head as if snapping from some kind of daze, his eyes again displaying concern for your well-being, asking about it. To be fair, it was a very valid question.

“Hey. You okay?”

No. “Yeah. Just… dunno. The staring doesn’t make me feel good,” you muttered, taking the seat next to Sam.

It was only partly the truth. While you didn’t have any solid lead on your soulmate, being here, possibly closer to him… it made you as excited as nervous. Restless, definitely.

“Well, it helped a lot,” Sam announced, sounding almost cheery. It got you shift your gaze to stare at him, your expression no doubt as puzzled as you felt at such statement. Huh? Sam smiled softly. "We might have found your soulmate.”

“Really?!” you yelped, quickly covering your mouth when you realized how loud your voice went. But frankly, you didn’t care much about that. Because… WHAT?! When? How? “How is that possible?”

Sam’s gaze travelled to the counter, where the orange-haired girl who had welcomed your trio was smiling your direction subtly. You lowered your eyes, your mind racing. What did that woman had to do with it? Had you known her? From… before? Did she know your soulmate?

“Yeah. He’s Captain America,” Dean dropped the bombshell bluntly.

You saw clearly that they expected you to have a flash of recognition in your eyes at least, but it wouldn’t come. You had no clue what they were talking about. Was that some kind of a… special army rank? Or… a stage name for an artist or something?

God, you hoped it wasn’t a stripper’s name.

That idea made blood rush into your cheeks, only a dumbfounded noise leaving your mouth.

“Huh?”

“Right,” Sam cleared his throat, shifting in his seat. It took your eyes from slightly disappointed
Dean.

“He’s a superhero—”

What.

“-he kinda is around hundred now—”

WHAT. ‘Kinda?’ What did that even mean?

“-so that would explain the… peculiar soulmark you have. But don’t worry, he doesn’t look hundred, he isn’t really, it’s complicated…”

Nope, still not following.

A superhero? your mind echoed again, not even the tiniest bit helpful. Kinda hundred, but not really…?

“Anyway, even the way you were when Cas brought you in? It all checks out with the story. Even the last name you picked. His name is Steve Rogers,” Sam added, his voice dropping in both volume and tempo, seeing your brain momentarily fried.

You stared blankly ahead, trying to process all the new information you were given, letting it merge with what you had already knew – which wasn’t much. Sweet ‘doll’ caressed your ears, Dean’s joke about time-travel and a mafioso kind of soulmate, about Rowena talking the strong bound with the man you had met but hadn’t met.

You didn’t realize you had closed your eyes and how long you had remained quiet until a warm hand landed on your shoulder, Sam’s voice calling out your given name.

That was funny, wasn’t it? You chose Natasha, not knowing why. But you also chose Rogers – because clearly, that was your soulmate’s name. A soulmate who was sort of hundred years old and a superhero.

You blinked your eyes open, still unable to let the supposed facts sink in.

“Nat? You okay there?” Dean joined his brother in mother-henning you and you couldn’t help but try and charm a slight smile on your lips at their care.

Sam gently squeezed your shoulder to ground you.

“I… I guess. It’s just…I … a lot. This is a lot. I’m… I’m not sure I get it,” you stuttered finally. Judging by their expressions, they didn’t trust you that you were okay, but didn’t push you. It was a lot to process. How was such thing even possible? “You really need to explain further. What even made you think I’m some… superhero’s soulmate?”

“We will explain it all,” Sam promised, removing his hand only to motion toward the latté and cake on the table. Why was here a cake? And why only one? Was this about Dean making you eat more again? You didn’t even need an answer. “But first, eat. Then we might have a trip.”

You honest to god would have raised the tea spoon to start eating, but his Sam’s later words had you frozen in mid-motion. A trip?

“To where? To find this… Steve Rogers? You know where he lives?” you blurted out, shocked. The sinking feeling in your stomach, the nerves working, nudged you intently.
“Yeah. Kinda. Though maybe we could stop by in a church first.”

You frowned at Dean, your confusion spiking. Was there anything at all that actually made a freaking sense?!

“Church? Why?”

“To light a candle for you,” Dean hummed, almost indifferent as if he was talking about weather and not about visiting your grave or whatever.

“…what?” you squeaked, earning an eye-roll.

“Just eat, Nat.”

Right. They probably knew your actual name now. That was why Dean made the point of… articulating it so pointedly.

Upon that, you dug into the cake obediently. Something told you that you’d need that sugar rush.

---

It was a good thing that Dean had forced you to eat first; if you had been eating when being shown the pictures of Steve Rogers, you would have choke to death and that would be embarrassing. Not to mention ironic.

Sam was introducing the man known as Captain America in a hushed voice, clearly not wanting to attract attention. He explained that the man was the Second World War hero (what?) and how he had become one.

You saw a black-white picture that had been taken around 1942, showing a handsome light-haired man, maybe too skinny and short, but with a determined spark in his eye, lop-sided soft smile gracing his lips. For some reason, a warm feeling pooled around your heart – he looked adorable. A man would probably punch you if you told him he was that, but it was how you felt.

The very same year, only few days later, actually, had been taken another photo. You could tell it was the man still, but he was… bigger. Like… bigger. You weren’t sure you were buying the fact that some sort of a serum had made him like this, but… angels were a thing. So you didn’t voice your disbelief.

You did though when Sam got to the pictures of him in a ridiculous costume – and there it was, Captain America being his stage name. You were quickly explained that his performing to raise money for weapons had been a very short-lived gig. He had soon earned the rank of a Captain for real.

You couldn’t believe your eyes when the current pictured appeared. Steve Rogers, who had apparently been trapped in ice for seventy years, still looked the same and was still saving the world.

It was too much.

It had become too much about half an hour ago.

You stared at the device in your hand, a close-up picture of the man in question on the display, the very same spark you had seen in the old picture of him pre-serum now flashing in beautiful blue eyes.
He was a special breed of a man from what you saw and heard and for some reason, Sam and Dean believed your soulmark led to him.

_How?_

“That’s… you think… you think that _this_ is my soulmate?” you whispered, voice weak, laced with uncertainty. Hell, doubt even.

How could this be?

“Yeah,” Dean shrugged, a playful smirk playing on his face as he lost the let’s-break-it-to-her-slowly attitude. “That’s what we said. What, you’re not into blonds?”

You scoffed, resisting the urge to massage your temples, suddenly bone-tired, a headache starting to build.

“That’s not… are we seeing the same pictures?”

“I sure hope so,” Sam noted, head tilted to side in confusion, begging you to elaborate even without words.

“He’s… just look at him. And he’s some kind of a hero, a _superhero_? Again or… _still_? How could a guy like him be paired with someone like me?”

Was this man even real? You weren’t sure about it. If he was, there was no way you were his soulmate. Right? That would be _insane._

“I’m not even sure what that means and what to say to that,” Dean replied, his brows knitting together. You were confident he knew exactly what you meant. “Just… look, we have a video evidence—“

“I beg your pardon?!” you squealed, jumping in your seat and tossing the tablet to Sam’s hands.

“Not like that!” the taller man chimed in instantly and you gripped at your chest, your heart beating rapidly under your palm. _Christ._ You having certain kind of _video evidence_ online was really the last thing you needed – or even wanted to know. “It’s from when you… died, well alright, when you were killed… it was sorta by a supervillain? He broadcasted the whole thing to every channel in US. There’s a footage of you… dying and Captain here running to your rescue. Would you- eh, would you like to see it?”

_I bet you would prefer the porn kind of evidence now_, a low solemn voice mocked you in your head, while your ears started ringing, your stomach making somersaults, your head pounding.

“I… I don’t know. Definitely not- not here.” _And now._

_Or, you know, ever._

Sam and Dean nodded in sync, expressions solemn all of sudden. They slowly rose from their seats so you followed their suit. You weren’t you sure wanted to or that your trusted your body to stand upright without passing out; however, you chose to trust the brothers to catch if your brain suddenly decided this was even more than too much and you’re sending your body vessel to the ground.

It didn’t feel like you had a choice anyway.

…
As they gathered their belongings, none of them saw their barista smile for herself and being nudged by her friend. The orange-haired girl smirked, but couldn’t keep her excitement contained. She spilled the beans about the woman; along with the fact that two days ago, she had already seen them all coming here.

That shit happened when one was a psychic after all.

---

Sam and Dean decided to take a walk; more precisely, Sam had made the decision and dragged Dean away in a way that was anything but subtle. You didn’t pay any mind to that as they left you in the car with a burner phone (a gift from Dean that earned the man an appreciating look from Sam) and the tablet to go down the rabbit hole – whatever that meant. It kinda felt like it though, surfing through the net again.

First, you learned your actual name. It felt almost foreign, you had got used to Nat now, but it still had an air of it being right and you knew it was the truth.

Only then, you watched what Sam prepared for you. The so called video evidence caused tears to fill your eyes, soon flooding down your cheeks.

There was no faking it. There was no doubt it was you strapped to the chair. There was no doubt it was your soulmate’s voice, even when modified by the unclear record – you had heard this voice in your dreams. There was no doubt that what you heard in his words was a desperation worth losing a person he loved.

Seeing your fear and resignation-filled expression had you know that once you had felt the same about him. There was no mistaking that at least part of the fear was for him as he rushed towards the bomb instead of sprinting away to save his own skin.

A pain so sharp it made you gasp expanded in your chest, burning sensation on your skin for a fraction of second and you had to wonder if it was the last memory of your past life. Being blown up.

You had been blown up. And your soulmate witnessed it. What a twisted way to go.

*What a twisted way to return*, echoed in your skull and if you hadn’t been already pre-occupied with the record, you might ask heavens why you were brought back from death.

But you weren’t sure you wanted to know anyway.

To take your mind off the horrifying pictures flashing behind your eyelids, you searched the web again in attempt to find *anything* else.

And there was a whole new rabbit hole to find.

People indeed lighted candles for you, built altars with what you assumed was a picture of you; there were all around the United States, but mostly in New York City, near places where the explosives had been planted, where many people would have died if *Captain America* ran for your rescue first.

It only brought fresh tears to your eyes.

Fanfiction was a new concept to you – but what wasn’t these days. You read a few summaries, very few stories which focused on Steve after your death. It was so surreal.
Some plotlines had Steve Rogers die in the battlefield soon after losing you, often including your souls reuniting in Heaven. Those were beautiful. Others had you resurrected somehow – which… good guess, whoever wrote that. You weren’t confident the reunion would go that smoothly though. Or, well, that passionately, as in jumping-to-bed-with-him good. All of those had a ‘fix-it’ tag. The amount of hits with those was dizzying.

Another tag that caught your eye was ‘dark!CaptainAmerica’ and dark!SteveRogers’; naïve, not knowing what it meant, you read summaries at least. It had your insides clench in the worst possible way, reading about the clearly good-natured man turning into a twisted stalker, sometimes even a rapist, in better cases a guy looking for a mindless fuck each night. When the element of the stalked girls looking like you joined in, you had to leave the site.

It was simply too much.

Hoping to move on, you went to click on something else entirely.

There was a website dedicated to… peculiar offers, suggestion to the hero. Basically, many people were offering to suck captain’s sorrows through his-- yeah. Sometimes, the posts were accompanied by naughty pictures and it made you ridiculously angry on both captain’s behalf and yours (not that you would ever admit it, because there was no way you were jealous, right?).

It was almost a relief to read some posts from people who had lost their soulmates too and simply were looking for a new connection. Was that how it worked? Was this what people did, drowning their sorrows together? Did it work? Was there someone who caught the captain’s eye? Or was he hoping to meet his soulmate, having a new set of marks like she – possibly you – did? He must have, right?

You shook your head and sighed, absentmindedly going through some comments on what was called Tumblr. A long post with many reactions caught your attention and you had decided to read it, rather not trying to figure out what exactly possessed you to do so when many things seen today had already made you sick from your stomach.

He used to come to our coffee shop sometimes. I was trying to woman up and flirt with him for weeks. Never got to it and now I’m kinda glad.

One day, he didn’t order and just sat there, clearly waiting for someone – and looked super-impatient. I swear he was tapping his foot. I didn’t call him out on it despite how annoying it was. I couldn’t even tell him to order or get out – try to say that to a national icon! And then… then she came in.

You know, I read a lot of chickflics, not gonna lie. But for the first time, I actually saw someone looking at another person as if ‘they hung the moon’. Seriously. He had hearts in his eyes. I would wish everyone to find themself a better half that looks at them like that.

She wasn’t any different, but that’s implied – she was dating a gorgeous man and a hero on top of that. They were so obviously in love and while they were polite all the way – that woman was super-nice, alright, – it was clear the rest of the world disappeared when they were together.

Just wanna say: stick your disgusting offers to cure his heart by sucking his D to your arse. That man is mourning the woman he clearly loved with his whole heart and he has every right. I want to thank him for the lives he saved. I want to thank her for not spending their last moments yelling accusation to his face to make him feel guiltier than he already had, no doubt. I hope her soul is in a good place and one day, they will reunite.

Rest in peace, sweetie. I hope you get see the way he was looking at you every day.

→ Amen, sister.
That’s equally heart-warming and heart-breaking. Poor girl. Poor guy.

Has anyone actually seen him outside since it happened? I hope he’s handling it. As much as a person can.

So what? You think he should just be alone for the rest of his life? Grow up, girl. Guy needs to get laid on regular basis. And yes, I’d gladly offer when given the opportunity.

Jeez. She didn’t say anything like that. But it’s kinda soon to get laid, don’t you think?

This is clearly a note exactly for people like you. Let the poor guy his peace. Let him mourn and come to terms with what happened before offering him a BJ. Excuse me while I go throw up…

God let her rest in peace indeed. My daughter was at school at the time, few feet from one of the bombs. She’s alive and well. I won’t forget this woman, ever.

Can we talk about how a person can date Captain America and be actually a nice person, not bragging all the freaking time? Like, even I might gain a superiority complex or something tbh.

I hear you. Same.

She sounds cool. Seems like they were amazing together. Life can suck. RIP.

This is so sweet and heart-breaking I’m crying.

The person writing the last comment wasn’t alone in her misery, having her heart breaking and warmed up at the very same time. Fresh tears welled up in your eyes and you vainly tried to blink away as you sniffled and covered your mouth with your palm to muffle your sob.

You gave up then. You tossed the tablet on the driver’s seat and hid your face in your palms, letting the tears stroll down your cheeks as your loud sobs filled the car.

You had no concrete the reason to cry, you reasoned with yourself, but it was all in vain. The many confusing and overwhelming emotions swirling in you finally found a proper out – and it was in the form of salty waterfalls on your face.

So be it. God knew that good cry might be exactly what you needed. Better now than in front of your soulmate.

Something told you it wouldn’t be too hard to find him.

---

“Well. You look like shit,” Dean exclaimed when he opened the door, effectively causing you a heart-attack. Your tense shoulders slumped and you melted into the seat, looking up at him with your no doubt red-rimmed eyes.

Still, his compassionate eyes somehow smiled at you, warm and open and you couldn’t help attempting a smile in return. You were the luckiest girl on Earth to be taken care of by them.

Thank God for Sam and Dean.

Or thank angels? One in particular? You didn’t know and perhaps you never would.
“Thanks, Dean. You know how to sweet-talk a girl,” you rasped, blowing your nose in an unladylike manner (not caring).

“Ha! Sassy mouth is back. Sam, she’s good!”

Sam peeked to the car, his tall form nearly bending in half to do so. He offered you an apologetic expression along with a ‘hi’ and a pointed look at his brother, but you mouthed it was alright. Dean actually lifted your spirit.

“So… what now?” you asked in a small voice, which caused the brothers to exchange a look.

“Well. Two things. First, we have lunch—“

“Not really hungry, honestly—“ you interrupted Dean, only for the younger brother to interject.

“A small lunch then, even if it’s only the cake you had earlier,” Sam offered with a wink which would have made you laugh, because health-freak Sam suggested a cake for lunch, but you were dreading the second step in their plan.

“And then?”

Instinctively, you knew the answer. It was the writing on the wall, really, the only logical step. The cause of the knot in your stomach of which you weren’t sure was nerves, nausea or excitement.

Dean confirmed your suspicion of course.

“Then we go to the Avengers Tower to find America’s sweetheart.”
Chapter Summary

Aka Make believe. Getting an appointment with Captain America isn’t exactly easy—especially when one looks like his deceased soulmate and his friends are very protective of his fragile heart.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

If you hadn’t had your nerves wrecked, you would have laughed your ass off when entering the Avengers Tower, the supposed residence of superheroes (besides other things, apparently).

The face of the receptionist upon your entrance was simply priceless.

You wished someone took a picture. Then again, her gaping lasted long enough for your trio to cross the better part of the lobby to her desk, her eyes nearly bulging still as you stopped in front of her, so you had enough time to feast your eyes—only to find yourself unable to indulge it fully. Clearly, you weren’t a diva type of person.

The woman behind the counter couldn’t form words, apparently. Neither were you, the lump in your throat simply too big. So it was left to the brothers.

“Yeah, we know what you want to say. She gets that a lot.” Dean announced brilliantly, smirking. Sam rolled his eyes at his brother’s behaviour and hurried to talk to the poor woman instead of him.

“Is there any chance we could talk to Captain Rogers?”

The receptionist gulped, clearly uncertain how to proceed. She frantically searched her desk as if she had some note to tell her what to do. In the end, she looked up back at you, blinking.

“I-I’ll see what I can do,” she stuttered as her shaking hands found a button to press and adjust the microphone on her headset. “There’s… there is a woman to see Captain Rogers.”

Low and very much annoyed female voice replied through the loose headphones.

“There are too many women to see Rogers these days. Why are you calling instead of following the protocol?”

The receptionist’s eyes never left your face, but she didn’t hold your gaze, as if shy or scared. You didn’t want to think about what it meant and prayed it was only shock showing. Seeing a supposedly dead person probably did that to people.

Also, really? Those nags whose posts (read: dirty suggestions) you had stumbled across when surfing the net actually came here?

“You might want to come see for yourself, madam.”

A short pause followed, causing your heart to nearly jump out of your chest as it hammered in
“Fine. Send her to the conference room on the first floor, 1.03. I’ll be there in five.”

Dean sent the woman behind the counter a blinding smile and she reluctantly showed you towards the elevator. Sam had to nudge you slightly to follow; your feet felt like they had taken roots in the floor. It wasn’t just the receptionist staring now and you just wanted to turn invisible and run.

This had been a terrible idea. What happened to the Tinder one? It suddenly sounded more appealing.

The swift ride in the elevator that flipped over your stomach already floating as if was stuffed with cotton didn’t help at all.

Neither did the redhead who barged into the way too luxurious conference room (the door fucking opened itself), shooting you all three a quick glance that appeared like an assessment of weaponry (Dean did have a pocket knife, you thought, just like Sam, which probably wouldn’t help when fighting a superhero, but whatever) and froze when seeing you.

If she didn’t look so indescribably tough and badass, you would think her emerald eyes turned glassy; before they grew cold and calculating, her already tensed shoulder straightening even more.

“Who the hell are you?!” she barked out.

It was almost funny, seeing as there were two large men with you, that you had her undivided attention as if you were the threat to her.

“I… I’m not sure,” you stuttered, barely audible, your heart leaping into your throat.

Whatever she had expected you to say or do, this clearly wasn’t it. She looked gobsmdacked and utterly taken aback by your response. Her stiff and delicately beautiful features twisted in a grimace of disbelief.

“What do you mean you’re not— what the hell is this?”

“You’re Black Widow,” Dean stated when the questioning look of the intimidating woman shifted to them. He looked… star-struck? You vaguely recalled reading that there was a woman on the… Avengers team. This was probably her. “Natasha Romanoff. Well, that would explain it.”

A metaphorical light-bulb flickered above your head.

Natasha. That couldn’t be coincidence, could it?

“The… the name I chose. You think it was because of her? Are we friends?”

“Are we—“ she parroted your apparently stupid question incredulously, measuring your trio from head to toe. “The name you chose? What does it even mean?”

“She’s amnesiac,” Sam enlightened her matter-of-factly, which caused her to snap her gaze back to you, eyes narrowed.

But there was a spark of something in her irises, more of an interest than suspicion now.

“Jarvis, is she wearing any tech that would disguise her voice or her face?”

Before you could question whom she was talking to, a voice with an accent answered her, making
you jump.

“No, Agent Romanoff. There is no sign of a plastic surgery either.”

Sam and Dean seemed almost unfazed by an invisible person speaking up; thinking about it, they were probably used to it. But you weren’t, nearly going into a cardiac arrest.

“Gotta love natural beauty,” Dean hummed teasingly, earning a glare from Sam that screamed hypocrite.

You suspected that the site named BustyAsian Beauties.com that popped out in the tablet’s history was Dean’s doing then and it eased the tension in your stomach for a bit. With those two, everything would be alright. Manageable, at least. The banter, it was the highlight of your days.

“And my recognition system involving body and gait analysis is finding 98% match,” the strange male voice continued and you couldn’t help but grimace.

Dude. That’s… creepy.

“Well, that’s just rude and invasive,” Dean voiced your thoughts and crossed his arms on his chest with a scolding look.

Natasha Romanoff was clearly having none of his shit as she mirrored his position. You noticed that while Dean’s arms were clutched tightly, hers weren’t. You had a funny hunch she wanted to be ready to punch someone. Namely you, Sam or Dean.

It wasn’t a pleasant feeling. But then her eyes shifted towards the ceiling, her teeth grinding.

“Jarvis, why didn’t you inform anyone about a woman who matches you-know-who entering this building in the first place?” she hissed and you couldn’t say you minded her irritation being aimed at someone (?) else.

“…I simply thought there was a glitch in my system. I focused on finding the glitch causing my malfunction,” the ghost-like voice replied politely, though sounding guilty.

Everything was pointing the direction of Agent Romanoff finding the system – artificial intelligence, you finally realized, which what the hell was the world anymore – very much guilty. Or someone named Stark, because you would swear she had muttered ‘Fuck Stark’s inventions’ under her breath.

“You three. Start talking. Right now.”

“You might want to explain the frauds too,” the voice chimed in again and the brothers tensed.

“What frauds?” the woman demanded in a snarl, giving you an impression of wanting to bare her teeth like an animal.

“We’ll get to that,” Sam assured her, raising his hands in attempted ‘we-mean-no-harm’ gesture. “It’s just… how we get money, because our job doesn’t exactly pay great.”

“…and the murder.”

The movement was so fast you had no chance of seeing it. All of sudden, there was a gun aimed at Dean’s face, then moving to Sam’s and flickering to you as well, as Romanoff stood two steps farther than before.

“What murder?!”
Good question, not the point at the moment. There was a murder about to happen and sure as hell didn’t like it!

This time, Dean raised his hand in surrender. You mimicked him instantly.

“All right. Who the hell is speaking and I said it and I’ll say it again; it was a shapeshifter—”

“What the hell is a shapeshifter?” the woman barked, clicking the safety lock.

Your head started swimming, the world muffled as blood pounded in your temples. Someone had you on gunpoint.

Shit, shit, shit, how is this my life? Whose life is this?

“Cas, we could really use your help—“ Dean called out to the ceiling and nothing happened.

You heard the shot before you saw the movement on your left. It rang in your ears, echoing in your skull and making you crouch on instinct, your arms protectively wrapping around your head.

Two more shots were fired, but no pain came.

Fear squeezed your heart, your knees getting wobbly. Did that mean Sam and Dean got shot?

A gasp from the shooter picked up your curiosity and had you peek through your improvised protection.

“Oh, I think you’ll get along with her, Dean. Same manners. Summon, shoot first, ask questions later,” a familiar voice of an angel sounded from your left and you breathed in shakily, assessing the situation.

No one was hurt. Castiel seemed offended though, so you assumed he was the one being shot at. And he was unharmed. Jesus. They had forgotten to mention that he didn’t really mind bullets, but that was not the point.

There were no other shots and you slowly straightened back as Dean scolded the angel, almost annoyed.

“Cut the sass, Cas. Could you… explain miss- Agent Romanoff that there are monsters and you’re who you are?”

By the look Castiel gave him, he wasn’t happy. You weren’t surprised – his beige trenchcoat now had three bullet holes in it, Romanoff’s gun in his hand. Speaking of which…the agent was kinda frozen? Like, literally? It was freaking creepy, but it was probably the cause of you not bleeding to death momentarily, so you were grateful.

“Again?” Castiel whined and you pushed down the urge to label them ‘married couple after 20 years’. “We work really hard to keep supernatural world a secret! … but in this case, I guess I could make an exception.”

He sighed and flicked his hand, which caused the woman to start moving again, her face raining holy fire as she found herself… unarmed and clearly out of loop.

Castiel only smiled at her, welcoming, before she could jump him and strangle him to death – she seemed to be about to do so.

“Miss Romanoff, I’m an angel of the Lord. Pleasure to meet you.”
Agent Natasha Romanoff was sitting with her elbows leaning onto her thighs, fingers interlaced between her knees. Her face wasn’t giving away much – only that she was… overwhelmed, if you could take a guess.

She believed you, you recognized as much. After everything Castiel had told her and showed her, which included an interior thunder and lightning, illuminating his figure only to project a shadow of freaking wings on the wall behind his back, and a hovering healing hand over her left knee, clearly working its magic, you weren’t too surprised about that.

Despite all of that though, her eyes were mostly on you, making you shift uncomfortably every now and then.

“I know it’s hard to believe,” Sam spoke up when the silence stretched; with the angel of the Lord having nothing more to say and simply flying away, disappearing with a flutter of momentarily invisible wings, no one else had seemed inclined to talk.

The agent sighed and raised her head in the giant’s direction, eyebrow crooked up.

“I know a guy who was frozen for seventy years, I met two demigods from Asgard, there’s a man turning way greener and bigger and I fought an alien army. I’m not sure what ‘hard to believe’ means anymore, but seeing an… an angel or whatever he was and him getting me rid of pain that’s been bugging me for months helped too. But… it’s still a lot to chew,” she explained matter-of-factly and you couldn’t say you didn’t agree.

Also, you weren’t quite following her speech, assuming she was talking about her colleagues. You had registered the existence of Avengers, group of people and more-than-people, when searching the net, but your main focus had been aimed at Captain America; for obvious reasons.

“Well, why don’t we let Cap decide what he wants to believe?” Dean offered, tone light, but heavier than usual. “Captain Rogers, I mean.”

The woman eyed you again, clearly struggling with something she didn’t want to share. “I’m not sure that’s a good idea.”

“Why?”

Romanoff snapped to Dean at the simple question and shot him an ugly look.

“He lost his soulmate several weeks ago in the most horrifying way and there’s a woman who looks just like her, not remembering a thing about them or herself for that matter, and I don’t even have a way of being hundred percent sure she is who I think she is. What do you think?” she finished, rising to her feet in a challenge.

Sam pouted shortly, as if wanting to say that she made a good point. “Touché. But I’m pretty sure she’s her.”

The Whatever-spider-she-was-called crossed her arms on her chest, her mind clearly preoccupied, squinting at you for a moment. You winced under the strict glare, lowering your gaze. She sighed at that and when you looked up again with reluctance, you noticed her features softened.

“Would you be willing to take a DNA test?”

“I… I guess,” you replied, a lump in your throat. You clenched your fist so it would stop tremble.
You weren’t scared of their probing. A DNA sounded rather innocent. No, you were worried about the results. The results that would lead to certain encounter you were once again not feeling ready for.

“Jarvis, get Tony’s ass in Bruce’s lab and open the private elevator for us. We’re coming up.”

After another nauseating elevator ride in a cabin that had no buttons to press, a retinal scan of the woman and a sacred promise you wouldn’t touch anything without permission, you were led to a room that was less strictly clinical than you expected – you only saw glass walls separating the white part of another lab in the corner of the room.

The welcome was about as warm as with Lady Spy though.

“What the hell?!” two men cried out in unison, looking up from some sort of a robotic… thing, matching shocked and exasperated expressions on their faces.

One of them was in a lab coat, wearing seeing glasses, suntanned skin and dark curls wild around his head, while the other seemed more caring about his looks with short hair and a goatee; he was wearing a plain dark long-sleeved t-shirt and grey sweats.

“Yeah, I know,” the woman who had brought you in said, not quite elaborating. It didn’t go unnoticed by the goatee man.

“Who the fuck is that?!”

“Cap’s soulmate. Probably,” Dean responded dryly, smiling tightly.

The guy was having none of it as he probably should. Still, you winced when he threw up his arm towards you, brown fire in his eyes – partly directed at you, partly at the redhead woman. He paced towards your group rapidly.

“What? And who the hell are you? Romanoff? Who are these people? Where did you get them? Is that another stunt of yours? Is that what that Wilson therapist told you to do?”

Romanoff’s eyes narrowed, her forehead crooking. “How do you even know about- no, don’t tell me. But don’t look at me, they came on their own.”

“To this lab?” the man sassed her. She clicked her tongue, rolling her eyes.

“Yeah, okay, that’s on me.”

“You trust them enough to bring them here?” the lab-coat man spoke up for the first time and shifted his weight from one leg to another, fiddling with his fingers nervously. You would swear you saw a hint of green on the side of his neck, but it must have been a trick of light.

“Long story. Wanna run some tests?” she offered, sounding rather commanding.

The goatee man narrowed his eyes, but quickly caught up, a flash of recognition on his face. “Good plan. Want Jarvis to update the security protocols?”

“Good plan. Though I don’t think it will do any good.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?” he hissed, while the curled-hair man hesitantly beckoned you to follow him to the white part of the laboratory. You gulped at the sight, but hoped it didn’t show on your face much.
“Thanks,” you quipped up shyly, your fingers fiddling with the loose end of your plaid shirt. “Good afternoon. Sorry for barging in and interrupting your work.”

You didn’t know what possessed you to say that – perhaps you were wishing to smoothen the messy and rather hostile situation. To be fair, you were sorry; whatever they had been doing when you stumbled in looked important.

“Just… ask Jarvis later,” you heard behind your back and then the glass doors fallen shut behind you.

The man in the glasses observed you with brilliant eyes, curiosity, a hint of anger, confusion and a spark of hope written all over his face.

“We’ll see if it’s a problem. Who are you? Why are you here?”

You slowly climbed to the examining table, waiting for instructions, not sure what exactly he was about to perform. His questions were good ones, but there was a tiny catch.

“I really wish I knew answers to at least one of these questions, sir,” you whispered honestly, the pool of chocolate in his irises softening a fraction at your admission.

“You don’t know who you are?”

The velvet of his voice, soft question and gentle movements of his hands as he prepared your arm to take your blood summoned tears to well up in your eyes and you only shook your head, not wanting for your voice to break.

“But you’re here willingly, right? These men out there – they can’t hear you, don’t worry – they didn’t force you to come here, did they?” he continued kindly, a worried crinkle on his forehead now.

You were quick to understand that he worried whether two random fellas didn’t take an advantage of your similarity to Captain’s soulmate.

The shook of your head was more rapid this time, especially as you noticed the green patch of skin on his neck again. You understood finally that this was whom Natasha Romanoff was talking about – ‘greener and bigger’, she had said. You didn’t want to upset him, more so with a syringe in his hand.

“No. They have been helping me from the moment I woke up with no memory. They are very kind to me. We didn’t know to come here until we walked into a café and people were staring at me.”

As you explained it quietly, you barely noticed the pinch and the vial filling with your blood. He disinfected the puncture then, wordlessly instructing you to keep the pressure on it.

“Well. We’ll see if this can help us at all,” he offered as he placed the vial to a machine you had never seen before. “But if you are, in some impossible way, the person you are scarily similar to, we’re about to have a very long chat.”

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The chat wasn’t long at all in fact. The machine spitted out a result within five minutes in which you had returned to the cosier laboratory to witness the trio of Sam, Dean and Romanoff explaining to the goatee man how supernatural world worked.
He appeared sceptical, but Doctor Banner – as you learned – supported the spy when she pointed out her chronic pain in her knee that she now claimed to vanish.

Mr. Stark, aka the goatee man, seemed very relieved at the ping that sounded from his computer, an excuse to pause the weird conversation. Seeing the window instantly pop out in the air in front of his face, little lights drew some kind of results you couldn’t read.

You could read the actual text though. There was your supposed name, a series of lighter and darker bands, and next to it, a tested subject (actual you) with matching set of bands.

The match: 100%.

Stark’s head snapped to you along with Romanoff’s and Banner’s. They all stared at you speechless, disbelief at something beyond their comprehension clearly on display on their faces.

You shuffled uncomfortably, your gaze falling to the floor. You could still sense Dean’s and Sam’s satisfaction as they stood by your side. You, on the other hand, felt like you couldn’t quite breathe in, your chest too heavy and constricted.

“Well,” Stark broke the ominous silence, voice with a barely audible tremble in it. “Either you’re good, like really fucking good, or… you’re actually her, which… what the hell. People don’t just come back from death.”

Yeah, no shit. Tell me about it. And they told me that people actually do.

Too sheepish and not knowing what was a proper thing to say to that (was there even such thing?), you remained in your position and quiet.

Dean was kind enough to voice your thoughts though.

“Well, all of us, including the angel Ms. Scarily Pretty and Pretty Scary here met, did. That’s our world,” he stated, moving closer to your side as if he wanted to comfort you as he sensed your discomfort. Which probably wasn’t that hard. “I’m not saying it happens every day, but I’ll be damned if it doesn’t happen here and there.”

“In the end, I don’t think it matters,” Romanoff sighed and you finally found courage to look up as her words shocked you.

What did that mean?

“Why?” Stark questioned.

“Because she’s already here. They should talk.”

“Why? That’s gotta hurt like hell if nothing comes out of it, Natasha. You saw how he’s coping. Or, you know, not coping.” Banner reasoned this time and you bit your lip, glancing away at the thought of hurting your supposed soulmate.

“What he said. But I wouldn’t say ‘hell’,” Stark supported him and then added for a good measure: “I’d say ‘fuck’.”

The woman huffed exasperatedly.

“Yeah, guys, I’ve been there for the past weeks. You said it yourself, Tony, I did look for a therapist. But cut Steve some slack, he’s trying. More importantly, this can’t be a coincidence. I don’t believe
Your heart fluttered at the mention of his name and you weren’t sure you wanted to probe at why. Having the picture of him in your head, his voice caressing your ears, then pleading desperately as he had tried to save you – and there was no questioning it anymore, was there, even the DNA had confirmed you were she and she was you – made one hell of a mess of you.

As if you hadn’t been one already.

“Explain.”

“When I told her… that I might have sent Steve her way the first time, you know what she told me?” Romanoff reacted to Stark’s blunt request and all eyes shifted to you once more and you panicked.

“I have no idea what she’s talking about, I clearly didn’t!”

“Enlighten us then?” Banner sighed, tilting his head to side curiously, glancing back at the other woman in the room.

“That it was okay. That either way, it was meant to happen exactly like it happened, because why else the words would have already been on their skin? Exactly those words?”

You blinked in surprise, taken aback at how much the words resonated with you. You could hear yourself say that and it probably shouldn’t shock you since you had your identity confirmed now, but… still.

When the spy spoke the words out loud, they made perfect sense.

“Wanna go all ‘you can’t escape the fate’ on me?”

Or maybe they didn’t, you thought grimly as Stark’s voice turned sceptical.

“Well, she wasn’t wrong, was she?” the redhead opposed him dryly, raising a challenging eyebrow.

The doctor grimaced, probably wanting to say something, but not having a counterargument.

“That’s fair. But that was different. There are no words-“

“There are. Steve… he’s got a new set of words.”

“Aha!” Sam and Dean called out in unison, pointing their index fingers to accent Romanoff’s words, once again in creepy sync.

You, on the other hand, were less confident.

“Really?” you whispered, relief washing over you like a tide wave. You hadn’t been aware of how much the possibility of everyone being wrong weighted you down until now. What were the chances Steve Rogers wasn’t your soulmate – again and still – after this revelation?

The spy only nodded, sending an approximation of a smile in your direction.

“Wait, really? Son of a bitch.” - “What does it say?” Banner asked at the same time as Stark and you bit your lip.

Should you even know that? Would they tell you? If they would, you could say them to the captain and call it a day – but that wasn’t how it worked, right?
Should you like… cover your ears?

“He wouldn’t tell me,” Romanoff sighed, solving your moral dilemma for you. You were glad, not caring whether she was making it up, because she didn’t want to tell you or whether it was the truth. “To be fair, maybe he would have done it, but I tranquillized him about thirty seconds after he told me about them, so I understand he didn’t feel like sharing after that.”

Yeah, you could see that happening. She seemed to be one for a quick and radical solutions, which tranquillizing someone – like drugging him to fall asleep, right? – definitely was.

“Fair enough,” Stark hummed and then turned to you with curiosity in his eyes. His whole stance seemed to change though upon the mention of Steve Rogers having new words. He believed you now and it caused him – just like everyone else you had met in this strange Tower – to treat you… kinder. “Do you have two sets of words?”

“I… I do.”

With a deep inhale and painfully slow exhale, you started to unbutton your shirt, revealing both of your sets of words. The shock and something indescribable in the air was almost palpable as there were no doubts left in anyone’s head.

The silence was weighting a ton and you were immensely grateful to Banner for breaking it – until you heard his words that scared you as much as they excited you.

“Yeah, they should probably talk.”

Chapter End Notes

Damn, that was long one. But suspicion has been drilled into Natasha’s nature and science bros are not to be fooled with. Then again, it’s hard to argue with angels and scientific evidence when they team up.

Also the bit about Jarvis ’malfunctioning’ was heavily inspired by Tetyfernands’ idea, so the credit goes there :) I liked it too much and couldn’t resist :D Hope it’s okay.

P.S. – thank you very much for the comments under last chapter. They warmed my heart ♥
14) God's will and Fate's jokes

Chapter Notes

Ah, you want to know how the reunion will turn out? Understandable… So I’m gonna insert a Bucky chapter, with fragments of how he had been. I promise two little cameos from a Netflix TV series in exchange though, so hopefully I can be forgiven.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The wind was gradually getting chillier with New York City further diving into autumn. Bucky readjusted his leather jacket to shield himself from it, but it was just a force of a habit. He had been frozen – several times, as he remembered now – and cold didn’t bother him for a while now. This was barely ‘cold’. His boots shuffled on the pavement with each step, a noise that seemed to drown in the busy streets.

The evening was slowly drifting into a night time, but in Manhattan, the streets never really fell into silence, always pulsing with life, sometimes calmer, mostly rapid.

Bucky shoved his gloved hands into the pockets of his jeans and sighed, stopping in front of the rather tall building – then again, this was New York, tall meant something different here –, his destination.

His mind was preoccupied, for the millionth time lost in the past; for a change, not in his own.

The fact he had been unfrozen during the decades gave him an advantage of being able to keep up with modern times; and there was nothing that couldn’t be found on the Internet, especially when one knew where and how to look, maybe even peak where others couldn’t for the lack of access or ability.

Then again, Captain America’s life story wasn’t exactly a heavy guarded secret and Bucky couldn’t decide whether he couldn’t believe his eyes while reading, or whether he actually wasn’t surprised at all when learning what his former best friend had been up to after he (and the rest of the world, for that matter) thought Bucky was gone.

He had dived a plane which was about to level New York and other great cities of America to the ground. Everyone thought he died, but instead, he was trapped in ice; Bucky prayed Steve had been unconscious the whole time, not feeling the biting cold. Then, the proclaimed war hero was found and been woken up seventy years to the future, throwing himself into a fight as soon as it was needed.

And wasn’t it damn necessary – aliens attacked the Earth. Bucky now remembered seeing a lot of weird inexplicable shit. But still, this? What the hell.

The thing was, despite that, Steve’s life wasn’t all bad. He became a part of a band of superheroes and… the punk finally found his soulmate, the one he could never find before, because she hadn’t been born yet, which was insane enough on its own. However, he seemed happy.

Naturally, it had to nosedive after that; the woman of his heart and soul was dead.
Some nuthead – and to Bucky’s rage, a nuthead Bucky knew, he had been part of Hydra, which he now hoped didn’t exist anymore, because he read about Pierce being locked up along with others – had murdered her in the worst possible way right in front of Steve.

If Bucky ever considered becoming a murder machine again, after everything he knew he had done, it was upon that revelation. He wanted that man’s head. He wanted to tear him limb from limb. He was a villain, sure, that need was natural, but he had hurt Steve on top of that. *No one* hurt Steve and got away with it.

Apparently, the man didn’t, because he was blown up along with everyone in the building minus Steve.

Still. If Bucky ever questioned whether he still had a heart, he was sure upon that realization; he did have one and it bled for his best friend.

He wished he could be there for him, but he wasn’t ready. He didn’t know if he could even show up after everything his hands had done, no matter who forced them. He didn’t know if he could mug up Steve’s life even worse.

It was weeks now since he had been freed and his feet led him to a church – the one church where people said goodbye to Steve’s soulmate. Bucky had read about it too, her funeral; a small service for her friends and family, but many others wished to express their condolences, say thank you to the poor soul who lost her life to theirs and their loved ones and they chose this church to do so.

Bucky had figured he could pay his respects as well.

What he didn’t count on was the roller-coaster of emotions hitting him when seeing her picture, her smile radiant and brighter than the candles illuminating her photograph.

She was pretty, there was no denial. The photo printed was from Avengers’ archives, he read that much – Bucky had no doubt that it was Steve who put that bright smile lighting up her eyes on her face. He believed Steve had found true happiness with her and it wasn’t just because she was his soulmate or because Bucky watched the video evidence as she faced her death and showed great bravery and kindness or because he saw Steve’s desperation in the very same footage.

Bucky simply knew; the woman seemed to truly love Steve and that was all Steve ever needed. A woman to love him unconditionally.

Life was cruel and fucked-up to take that away from him.

No, Bucky didn’t count on the rage and heartbreak chasing tears into his eyes. Neither did he expect someone to pull him out of his musing.

“Did you know her, son?” amiable male voice caused him to wince and mentally yell at himself for a dumb lack of awareness of his surroundings. Had it been a Hydra agent, Bucky would have been dead.

He forced himself to calm his sprinting heart, the rush of adrenaline unnecessary when the only person disturbing him was an old priest with nearly bald head and a soft soothing tone of voice.

His breath shuddered.

“No, Father. I didn’t.” *I knew her soulmate*, Bucky could have added, but he couldn’t afford to draw attention to himself; everyone knew who her soulmate was and it would lead to uncomfortable questions. Instead, Bucky’s mind supplied him with an easy lie. “But she had her life ahead of her,
all of it. She must have been happy with her soulmate if he made her smile like this.”

The shorter man nodded, removing a candle that burned out from the altar with her picture – Bucky hadn’t noticed before with many others still warming up the space with their tiny flickering flames.

“Indeed. And she surely made him equally happy,” the priest hummed, sorrow darkening his face. His eyes carried a hint of curiosity, watching Bucky inconspicuously. “It’s a shame for such joy to be stolen by madmen. Her soulmate… I pray for him as much as I do for her soul. Broken heart heals much longer than bones.”

_No shit. Especially when it comes to supersoldiers with enhanced healing._

“Not wrong there,” Bucky whispered, hesitantly reaching out to the small metal basket with candles and a thin piece of wood to borrow the flame from another.

Bucky didn’t believe in God for almost seventy years now. Still, when the wick caught fire, he sent a silent prayer for both Steve and his gal.

“Still, you seem troubled by more than that,” the priest whispered and made a kind offer. “You could confide me in. It is what I am here for. Perhaps it would ease your sorrow.”

_I don’t think so. Neither will it ease the craving after tearing a dead man’s head off._

“I don’t think you could help, Father, no offence. I’ve never been a good Catholic and lately even less so. And you sure don’t want to hear what troubles me.”

Despite a gentle nod of understanding, he nudged Bucky once more. At the very same moment, the soldier could hear the heavy door of the church open a crack and a man walk in with a periodic tapping of a thin stick.

“I only wish to help you. If something of what you possibly have done heavies you… I wouldn’t be able to tell anyone. I’m not allowed.”

“I believe you, Father. But I’m not sure your own conscience would _allow_ you to keep quiet in my case,” Bucky admitted honestly, shifting under the presence of another man despite the fact he wouldn’t be able to hear them. A periodic tapping the man carried with him was getting to Bucky’s nerve already.

He should leave. Another lost soul seeking the help of a church was a good excuse anyway.

“Trust me, son. Whatever your sins are, I’m certain I have heard worse.”

“No, Father. You haven’t,” Bucky muttered under his breath, aware of the stranger getting closer.

He turned to him, surprised to find a man of such built, carrying a walking stick for blind. His stance and body was one of a fighter, even when cladded in a cheap suit, red-tinted glasses preventing his real thoughts from displaying on his face. He appeared blind but not quite. To Bucky, he was giving an impression of pretence, at least partial.

He could only wonder why; however, he could do so on his way out.

“I’m pretty sure he did,” the newcomer joined their barely audible conversation without permission and a scowl twisted the Father’s face.

The fact the not-so-blind? man could hear what Bucky was saying had everything in Bucky scream
fight or flight.

“Matthew. What brings you here at this hour?”

The suited man shrugged light-heartedly; Bucky didn’t believe him for a second. “I thought I’d stop by. See how you’re doing.”

“Always with the jokes, Matthew. It’s not decent.”

It wasn’t. Except if Bucky was more comfortable at the moment, he would have snorted in amusement. This man was clearly comfortable in his own skin, but the skin was a charade too. Bucky didn’t want to stay to crack the mystery though.

“Forgive me, Father, then.”

“Did you come to confess?” the Father continued and Bucky recognized this was as good opportunity to leave as any, making space for the blind man to approach the priest more easily.

A brief smile passed over the Matthew’s lips. “No. Like I said, only wanted to make sure you were alright.”

The backing out of the soldier was less inconspicuous this time, caught by the priest.

“You don’t need to leave, son. Matthew is a dear friend.” And there’s more to him than it seems, Bucky was certain.

Were his the sins Father had mentioned? This man’s? Bucky wouldn’t be surprised considering the dangerous vibe he was radiating.

“I’m Matt,” the man offered swiftly and held out his hand for Bucky to shake.

Bucky was stupid enough to accept it and really, wasn’t he out of his game to make such an idiotic mistake. “…James.”

“Rather hot for gloves, isn’t it?”

Bucky fought the urge to punch this man for pointing it out and took a deep breath.

“My past injuries can… make people uncomfortable when seen.”

“I won’t see them,” the blind man challenged with the light tone to his voice again, his head tilting to side and Bucky could see the corners of his mouth twitch. It gave him the impression of the man wanting sent him a wolfish grin.

And that was the time to get the fuck out. What was Bucky thinking anyway, showing up in here?

“Matthew… perhaps it would be for the best if we leave James to his prayers and have a talk over a latté, if you’re interested at this hour?” the priest offered in a conciliatory manner, beckoning to the back for Bucky’s benefit – or for Matthew’s too?

How deeply ran the lie, the pretending? Bucky didn’t want to hang around to find out.

“Yes…” Matt hesitated, but nodded. “Perhaps. James.”

“Matt. Father.”
Bucky strode between the two lines of the pews, kind words reaching his sensitive ears.

“My invitation still stands, if you ever feel like talking. If you’re not comfortable confessing the traditional way… there’s always coffee. Same rules apply for me.”

Bucky nodded, definitely not planning on taking him upon the offer. “I appreciate the offer, Father. Goodnight.”

Since fate was a cranky bitch, a night full of horrors of the past had him wandering the streets before the sun even began to rise to the horizon.

The Father didn’t seem overly surprised that Bucky showed up again, at such ungodly hour no less.

“James. Latté?” he asked, unfazed almost.

Bucky wanted to question his decision. But he was an old man, older than the priest himself and he could believe his secret would be kept.

He nodded.

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Opening to someone about the horrors he had lived through and had been a source was surreal. No, scratch that, it was fucking weird and telling that to a priest was twisted and seriously messed up.

Yet, once Bucky started, he couldn’t stop the verbal vomit, his hands in his hair, tears welling up in his eyes and the hoarseness of his voice that seemed to be impossible to disguise.

And the whole time he talked, the man sitting opposite to him – not touching his latté either – listened intently with compassionate and understanding eyes full of sorrow and offering kind words and his own insights of a person watching the event from a reasonable distance, far enough not to get tangled in the emotional turmoil.

It caused Bucky’s breathing to turn so difficult he thought he might actually suffocate, but he didn’t. He might be close to choking on his own spit though at priest’s forgiving words several times, words of redemption, a chance on it only proven by a mysterious man building miracles by a flick of a hand.

“You were a victim, James. Just like anybody else,” the Father explained his point of view slowly and with patience battling the one of saints themselves. “These are not your errors to carry with you like a burden. Forgive yourself. And allow your friend the same thing. I’m sure he could benefit from having someone by his side in a time difficult like this.”

Bucky gulped, looking away as he felt awkward burn in his eyes again, a lump in his throat never disappearing.

“I can’t. At least not yet, I’m-“

The sudden change of atmosphere was palpable, the safe environment carefully created by the priest vanishing at instant as Bucky’s instinct screamed about someone else’s presence in the church – someone else’s besides the God’s servants. His senses tingled, hairs rising at the back of his neck.

“Someone’s coming.”

Father Lantom seemed once again rather unfazed, his gaze shifting to his watch.
“Well, it is after six a.m., James.”

“Father-“ the soldier warned him breathlessly, otherwise rising to his feet soundlessly, sneaking to
the door, opening them for a crack to glance at the newcomer that made his heart beat out of his
chest.

One peek and he swiftly pressed his back to the wall, his head hitting it with a soft thud, eyes falling
shut. Even with eyes closed, he could still feel the priest’s worried gaze.

“James?”

Bucky took a deep breath, arguing with his frantic mind and heart to calm the fuck down.

It was alright. He just needed to get the Father to cause diversion and he would sneak out, making no
sound. He excelled at disappearing.

“Go greet him, Father. Don’t tell him a word about having me here. Please.”

The desperate plea was enough to light up a flare of recognition in the priest’s eyes, no matter how
hard it made him frown.

He sighed, sounding resigned.

“I cannot do that choice for you, James, even if I wished. I promise to keep quiet.”

Bucky clenched his jaw, squeezed his eyes shut and nodded, beckoning to the other man to move.

The soldier stayed aligned with the wall, waiting for the right moment. It was killing him, freaking
him out and yet luring him in, a mess of emotions, memories and possible scenarios of reunion
playing out in his head, ranging from a fistfight to a hug even.

He needed to snap out of it.

He wasn’t ready. Not yet.

“Steven. What a nice surprise,” the priest greeted softly and Bucky barely contained the whine
drawn to his lips. His hands curled up into fists and he bounced off of the wall, quickly assessing the
most secure escape route. "Do you require my assistance?”

“Not today, Father Lantom, but thank you.”

It was like a slap to Bucky’s face, a punch to his gut, hearing Steve’s voice; the melancholy in it and
the burden he was never supposed to carry only making it worse.

For a second, Bucky wavered, faltering in his steps. His friend – former friend, still, his best friend –
was right behind that door, needing someone and hurting and what was Bucky doing? Running
away, like a coward?

“Are you alright?” the punk continued, expression concern for the not-exactly-older man and that
was it. He caught a scent of something fishy right away.

Bucky’s mind yelled at him to get the hell out. His gaze returned to the door leading to a chamber
and bathroom, hoping to find a small window. He crossed the distance in long quick steps.

“Yes, Steven, thank you. I simply have another troubled soul in the back room...”
Bucky slipped through the other door, finding what he wished for – an escape route. As he opened the window, taking care not to make the tiniest sound, Steve’s voice was slowly fading away.

“Don’t let me disturb you then, Father.”

By the time Father Lantom returned to the chamber, James Buchannan Barnes was gone. The priest only sighed in resignation; he more than half-expected it would come to that. He only hoped that the troubled soldier would find his way back eventually.

Chapter End Notes

So… am I? Forgiven? Please? I prooooomise the Steve/reader reunion will take place in the next chapter and it might actually be worth the wait ;)
15) When you come back to me

Chapter Notes

Let me voice what I assume are your thoughts (and mine too, tbh): Fucking finally!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

So… you might be panicking.

A little.

To be fair, all of your worries were justified, every single one of them, and that was why you voiced them.

“What if he’s gonna attack me? I mean, you thought I was a fake.”

“What if he passes out from the shock? I know no first aid! I barely know my own name!”

“What if he jumps out of the window? I mean, I might if thought I was seeing a ghost-“

Natasha Romanoff shot you an amused glance, continuing her stroll through the halls of Tower, and you had a hunch you weren’t the only one well-aware that the last question was simply you making excuses for not meeting your soulmate just yet.

It wasn’t that you didn’t want to. You did, so, so much, but at the same time…. yeah, you were definitely panicking.

“He’s not gonna jump out of a window. As for the other cases, which are about as likely, I’m gonna be there with you to make sure it doesn’t happen before you get to actually talk. Happy?”

Not really.

Your brain was still coming up with more ridiculous what ifs, that annoying little things, and now your frantic heart and the actual worries joined the party and you had a strong urge to spin on your heels and walk the fuck away.

“What if… what if he hates me?” you whispered, your chest tightening at the thought. That was the real concern, wasn’t it? “I mean, I’m alive and he was through hell, because he thought I wasn’t. What if he hates me, because I didn’t come sooner? I can’t even remember him – how messed up is that?”

It wasn’t until the redhead stopped in her tracks and turned to look at you that you realized you had in fact frozen on spot.

“He’s not gonna hate you, милашка,” she assured you with softness you didn’t expect her to be capable of, her features compassionate and kind. “None of that was your fault.”

You ignored whatever she had called you in favour to focus on more important matters. “But neither it was his.”
A smile flirted on her lips, a simple tug of the corners of her mouth, brief – but you still saw it as she continued walking then, speaking up again.

“You tell him that.”

“Uh-huh…”

By the universal law of the Universe, the she only took few more steps before facing the captain’s door, apparently.

“Ready?”

“Not really,” you murmured honestly, earning an understanding nod.

“That’s fair. Jarvis? Is he decent?” the spy asked lowly as she gently pushed you in front of herself so you entered first.

Instead of an answer, the door slowly opened on the AI’s command, effectively sending your heart to a gallop you weren’t sure it could handle. The door could creak for a dramatic effect and you wouldn’t be able to hear it over the whooshing noise in your ears.

Natasha Romanoff might have nudged you to come in. You weren’t sure; your legs carried you on their own without you remembering ordering them so.

The spacy bedroom slash private living room with a couch and coffee table was plain. Nothing special about it, huge slats covering a window replacing one of the walls only partly opened.

Sure, it was kinda was impressive and it kinda wasn’t and it didn’t matter the moment you had laid your eyes to the second door of the room right opposite to the window.

A blond man stood still in the doorway to what you assumed was his bathroom, hand frozen in motion as it went through his damp hair.

You couldn’t help but stare at him for several reasons.

Firstly, he looked… familiar. There was an air around him, screaming sincerity and gentleness, kindness. Comfort. And sorrow.

You had seen the pictures of him, sure, the video even, but this was something quite different. Upon meeting him in flesh, you somehow knew… it wasn’t all a lie. You were meant to find him and your racing heart and mind were on board with that.

He was also incredibly handsome. You had met a real-life angel and you were confident he must have helped to sculpture this man’s face and body. He was wearing a white tank top, revealing his muscled arms, dark sweatpants hanging from his thin waist, seemingly even thinner with comparison to his broad shoulders.

His face had shock written all over it, but still held beauty no man should possess. Men were supposed to handsome, but seeing his eyes, you couldn’t help but think of the word beautiful. His lips were plump, no doubt prettier than yours, his cheekbones and strong jaw were a gift from God and… you had a hunch that when his hair wasn’t wet and was lighter tone, it resembled a glowing halo.

For some reason and out of nowhere, you recalled the phrase ‘I once saw a man so beautiful I started crying’ and had to wonder if the author of those words thought of this man when writing
them down. You could totally see that happening.

Your gaze was glued to him, the depth of his eyes leaving you unable to form words.

“I hate dreams like this,” he whispered hoarsely, sending a shiver down your spine.

His voice, god, his voice, the one you had heard in the video, carrying the same pain, but more importantly, the one you had been hearing in your dreams … said the words written on your skin. There was no doubt now.

It didn’t make you less dumbfounded. What should you even say in a moment like this? What could you say to a man who was your soulmate, the mere sight of you chasing tears into his eyes, because you were supposed to be dead?

“I’m sorry?” you offered hesitantly, causing the man – Steve, Steve Rogers, he had a name, he was your soulmate for god’s sake – release a choked sound. You needed no other confirmation of your words matching the mark on his collarbone.

Also, go me. What a first line to bless him with on his skin.

No other words were exchanged, two people utterly mesmerized by one another, staring at each other in stunned silence.

Agent Romanoff, leaning onto the doorframe, cleared her throat, causing you both wince. You had totally forgotten about her, to be honest. Clearly, so had the captain.

“Before you ask: yes, she’s real, Steve. Very real,” she emphasized as if she wanted to prove his exclaim about dreams wrong. “She’ll explain what she can, which… isn’t much. Just so you know we ran every test possible already. She’s no faker. I’ll leave you two some privacy.”

With a quiet clank, the door closed shut when she slipped from the room and seemingly, she took all the air from your lungs with her. Or maybe just your ability to speak, you weren’t sure.

“You’re… what—how?” he asked, his face pure shock, unhealthily pale.

Seeing a tear rolling down his cheek and hearing his voice crack nearly broke your heart.

You had a feeling you had always been a softie, the story about soul bonds torn apart enough to make you weepy. Living it though? Being in the centre of such heart-breaking story, standing few feet from the man who had lost his soulmate, being able to almost touch the pain and shock on his face, only now noticing the lines of exhaustion, the bags under his eyes… your own eyes started to burn. Again.

He took several hesitant steps closer, his gaze fixed on your features.

“Ca-captain Rogers, I…” His face twisted in a strange grimace, causing your stomach to clench. He probably wasn’t happy about you calling him that. You had been calling him Steve, at least in the video. Obviously. “I mean… Mr. Rogers. Steve.”

He seemed utterly confused and you couldn’t say you blamed him.

You were all really friggin’ confused, alright.

“I don’t… I don’t understand. You— you.“

“Look just like the woman in the video? The one telling you to-“ let her die. Your stomach rolled
over at finishing the thought. You tried to shake it off, focusing on keeping your voice somewhat even. And on actually explaining the situation as much as you could.

“I know. I didn’t remember my name, I don’t remember me, my family, my friends. I don’t... I don’t remember you and yet... there is no way I’m not the person everyone claims I am and you... you seem familiar and I heard your voice in my dream, which is entirely crazy and....”

Steve watched you, mesmerized and frowning as you chuckled self-depreciatingly. Not knowing what to say next, you unbuttoned the top of your shirt, revealing your collarbone, first the crossed out words, only then the fresher ones.

Steve erased the distance between you completely, reluctantly holding the hem of your shirt to see.

And the strangest thing was that you wanted him to linger with his gaze. To touch your skin even, run his fingertips over the words, hell, place a kiss over them... and it should freak you out, wanting this from a stranger, but it felt right. You weren’t intimidated by the intimate proximity of a man whom you just met. You liked it. You felt safe. You longed for his arms around you.

Rather than saying your desires out loud – and it would be ridiculously easy under his intent eyes – you breathed in slowly and collected your thoughts.

“I’m... this is gonna sound insane, but Ms. Romanoff already heard this whole story and I know it’s incredible, ‘cause it kinda involves angels and resurrections, but if you’re willing to listen-“

“I’ll listen,” he promised lowly, his brilliant eyes – not blue as you thought at first, but with a little drop of green paint in them, as if God thought of the blue being too perfect and the joke ended up being on him, because they were breath-taking – meeting yours, a vow heavier than his words written in them.

Your breath hitched when the pools of the fascinating colour welcomed you sincerely. You... you wanted to drown in them.

“Thank you. I... you should see something first though.”

“More than the words?” he asked in a whisper, bewildered.

You nodded, taking a hesitant step back, his fingers hovering in the air for few seconds, twitching even, before his hands fell to his sides. You hastily fished out your fake ID to cover the fact his motions made you blush and handed the item to Steve, who frowned in confusion.

You licked your lips and went to explain.

“Sam, Dean and Cas – the men who helped me to get here and find you – they...” How exactly you should put that? Telling a superhero that they faked your ID? “-ugh, they found me and faked my ID since I needed in order to... eh, exist. And I don’t remember a thing, alright? I didn’t know my name until I read about myself on the internet and Ms. Romanoff – Natasha, ironically – confirmed it, along with the Jarvis. So I picked one. ‘Natasha’ came to my mind first. And-“

“-and Rogers,” he breathed out, slowly lifting his gaze. You couldn’t read his expression, but there was undeniable fascination in his sparkling irises.

“I don’t know you and yet I do. I don’t remember us, but there’s this feeling. I believe this isn’t a coincidence. Or maybe it’s nothing,” you chuckled self-depreciatingly once more. God, what were you doing now... “Maybe I’m not supposed to be here, maybe I’m being silly now-“
Steve interrupted you with a watery laugh, tears springing from his eyes. The sound shut your mouth effectively, surprising you greatly.

“What?”

“It was one of the first things you told me. You being silly. Stupid even,” he explained and your chest tightened. What did that mean? And how could you not remember that damnit!

“…oh. Did you… agree?” you pried, worrying your teeth over your lower lip, only to earn a gentle shake of his head.

“No.”

“What did you say?”

A sad smile graced his lips, soft thing full of sorrow and fondness. “I’ll tell you later if you still want me to.”

“I will!” you reassured him swiftly, perhaps too eagerly. You weren’t sure whether it was the prospect of his presence or learning about yourself (and him) that had you so eager. Probably a bit of both. “I… I’d like to hear the story behind my soulmark too… and to know yours.”

He nodded, thoughtful. “Okay. I promise to tell you everything I know as long as you ask it.”

The message of you having the courtesy to set the direction and pace of the next moments – or perhaps hours, days – didn’t escape your attention and warmed you heart, causing your lips to turn upright a fraction.

“You’re a truly kind person, aren’t you?” you more stated than asked lowly and Steve lowered his gaze as if sheepish, scratching the back of his neck as his eyes frantically searched the room.

“You… uhm, you can judge that later. Why don’t… why don’t we sit on the couch?”

And here went the kindness again…

“I’d like that. I think it’s better if you sit down for what I have to say too.”

---

You were surprised Steve didn’t interrupt you once.

Sure, his face spoke volumes whenever you found enough courage to look up at it, instead of keeping your gaze down in your lap, mostly fascinated by your fiddling fingers.

At the end of your narration, you shrugged and sighed in relief of getting it all out.

“So, here I am. Zero memory besides the dreams of you talking to me and calling me ‘doll’. I’ve seen a video of myself dying, learned about people actually lighting candles for me all over the United States, like I’m… I don’t know. That’s a kind of thing done for a Princess Diana, for god’s sake. I did my reading – because I don’t remember who that was. I don’t know things and I—I don’t want to complain, I was apparently brought back from death, I should-- I should be grateful, I know that much, and I am, okay, but-“

You weren’t sure when you had lost control over your brain to mouth filter, when you had lost control over your emotions, because since meeting him, you had been somehow coping, so why now, why-- why were you just pouring words to the limited space between you and couldn’t just
Large, slightly calloused and very much warm hand caught your suddenly trembling fingers. Your mouth fell shut, your eyelids closing on instinct. Why was there the burn in your eyes again as if you wanted to cry? You had no right to cry.

…did you?

“Hey, hey, don’t do this,” Steve coaxed, his other hand brushing your shoulder and you just wanted him to hug you. You would take the soothing touch and calming circles drawn on your shoulder since he offered at least that though, but god, a hug would feel so much better. “You lost your memories. Your life.”

“You lost your soulmate,” you whispered back, opening your eyes with a shaky breath. He averted your gaze and you caught a flicker of shame and anger before he did so.

“I killed my soulmate,” he corrected you, his voice turning hoarse and hard, his touch disappearing from you. You wanted it back instantly, already missing it and hating how his hands clenched into fists in what could be self-hatred.

You shook your head. You two were being ridiculous and downright stupid. Instead of being happy to find each other again – though not quite – you were having a pity party and going for guilt trips. You bit your lip nervously when reaching to cover one of his fists for a change.

His fingers immediately twitched and you fought the instinct to pull away. Or lean in?

“You were given an impossible choice, Steve. No one can blame you for trying to save everyone.”

“I can. I do… as you should,” he uttered and you sighed, realizing that maybe he did believe you that you meant it – maybe he didn’t – but it didn’t matter as long as it was eating him up from inside.

You shrugged rather light-heartedly, but took special care to emphasize every word that came out of your mouth next to show you were hundred percent serious and honest.

“Well, I guess I don’t. All of this sucks and I cannot imagine what it’s like for you, me being here, maybe acting… differently than—ugh, than me. The me you know. The me that remembered us. But I’m here. Alive. If there’s a chance…”

This got him look at you, expression conflicted. Yeah, you understood ‘conflicted’, alright. You wanted to learn everything you forgot, but upon saying out loud how hard it must have been for him, you realized just how natural would be for him to ask you to leave and let him have his peace after… everything.

“But if… if you want me to leave, I mean, I won’t be very happy about it, but—”

His fist opened immediately, gripping your hand almost painfully before you could even pull away an inch.

“Please don’t!” he pleaded hastily, effectively starling you. His features softened when you nodded then, his eyes burning with sincerity. “If you still want to hear about how we met…”

“I’d like that very much,” you attempted to smile at him, calmness washing over you when his face lit up.

Crisis averted.
Though not the threat for your heart. It didn’t ache as much as it had when you first entered – but
boy, now it started swelling in your chest as his eyes sparkled, his whole being coming a bit more to
life. It was a breath-taking show to watch.

“Do you want something to drink? I’m being a terrible host, sorry-“

He stood up quickly, releasing your hand, his own instantly going to clutch at the fabric of his
sweats. It was endearing, seeing him being the nervous one.

“Feels like you’d be entitled. But you’re doing fine, Steve.”

“Okay. Tea?”

“I guess…? I found out I don’t really have a thing for coffee…?” you explained hesitantly and for
some reason, it brought a smile to Steve’s face. Maybe there was a story?

“I wouldn’t expect you to.”

Right. You probably hadn’t been a coffee person before- before. That would make sense. Him
knowing that would make even more sense.

“Well, I’m glad at least some things apparently don’t change.”

A hint of a blush painted his cheeks and you watched him, fascinated. Aw, now that was so
precious. Why blush though?

“I… uhm, I still have what used to be your favourite tea stocked, so… maybe that?”

Your lips parted at his thoughtfulness. It made you wonder; just how far your relationship had been
when you had… ugh, died? Were you official? Probably. Was there any funny business involved?
With your dreams, you had a pretty good idea about that, but you could never be sure they weren’t
just memories of your… fantasies. Were there… plans for the future already?

Just how well did you know each other? How much you were robbed of? How much of you Steve
was missing? How could you not remember this amazing man, who apparently cared about you so
deply?

Your dark thoughts must have shown on your face, because he wavered.

“Or not. I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to, uh, freak you out or-“

“No! That’s not—it’s just-I--it-ugh-“ Oh wow, you were so terrible at speaking. ”That… the tea,
yeah, that sounds pretty nice.”

His smile had faltered earlier, now returning, only less convincing. “Okay. I’ll be right back.”

“And I’ll be waiting right here,” you declared, patting the couch with both hands for demonstration.
Perhaps it was only your imagination, but he actually seemed assured at that. Less worried.

Yeah, you definitely made that up. For sure.
Chapter End Notes

So… that happened :D Worth the wait? Yea/nah?

Btw, Natasha called ‘Nat’ a cutie (or a loved one).
16) Down the memory lane

Chapter Summary

Dialogue heavy. Fluff. Angst. Dean’s human (macho) skills in overdrive. The usual ;)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The ten minutes it took Steve to return from the communal kitchen was enough of a breather, allowing you to put yourself together at least a bit. A bit. You spent most of the given time staring blindly ahead with your brain in overdrive, alternating it with the urge to get up from your ass to inspect the room closer.

Steve had your favourite tea stocked; did he have a picture of you somewhere? Was there anything that would clue you what he enjoyed doing when he wasn’t working? What did he like to wear? If you opened the rather spacious closet, would you find a pile of white tank tops and sweats like the ones he was wearing now or would there be a variety of shirts – blue ones, preferably, ones that would bring out his eyes? Was he a tea drinker like you (apparently)? Was he a health freak or that kind of a person who could eat anything and still stay fit due to lucking out and probably working out like a half of a day?

What was the notebook placed on one of his nightstands with a pencil on it? Was it a diary? A place to write down random thoughts? Things he remembered to do right before falling asleep, writing them down rather than leaving the bed to complete the task instantly? Or did he like drawing?

So, so many questions… the anxiety from meeting him was still more than present, but now the curiosity was gently nudging it away. You felt calmer. The minutes were enough for settling your frantic thoughts.

That was what you kept telling yourself until Steve showed up with two mugs that smelled like heaven and… a plate of cookies.

They looked like sugar cookies (how did you know sugar cookies again?) and your mouth instantly started watering. You were very quickly falling for this man. It probably helped he knew how to make you fall for him, because he knew what you liked better than yourself, but damn.

You watched him put the items on the table, waiting for him to sit. He seemed more at ease too, as if the short time apart helped him collect himself, though his eyes were red-rimmed as if he had a quick cry and freak-out; to which you could easily relate.

Nevertheless, his whole body appeared more relaxed, the tension in his shoulders dissolving. His features were soft, less worries clouding his expression. He even gave you a brief smile, gesturing towards the coffee table.

“Steve, how dare you?” you quipped in return, making him freeze.

“What did I do?” he asked, sounding wounded and alarmed.

“Cookies. How dare you to serve cookies with what apparently is my favourite tea. What is it, by the
way? It smells amazing.”

His smile shone brighter when he realized you were only being playful. Why were you being playful again? Where did it come from?

“Black tea. Flavoured sweet cherry. And I thought… uhm, I saw the cookies in the kitchen and thought you might like some,” he revealed, the subtle blush rushing back to his cheeks, much to your delight. The tips of his ears turned pink too. It was adorable.

While you believed there was more behind his statement, you didn’t call him out on it. Yet.

“Thank you.”

“You’re welcome.”

You took one of the mugs to your hands, gently blowing the tea, swirling the aroma. Yeah, you could see this thing being your favourite beverage. When you sipped it carefully, you were sure.

Glancing at Steve, you saw him watching you, clearly content with your reaction. You smiled at him over the edge of the mug before setting it down again.

“So… what was the first thing I told you?”

“…that there must be a mistake,” he admitted slowly, a hint amusement soaking through his voice.

You, on the other hand, were horrified.

“I did what?! Oh my god, why would I do that?”

Steve’s amusement only seemed to grow, a bashful smile curling up his lips, an eyebrow slowly rising.

“I told you I really was 95. If you want to get into conversation about which of us should reconsider thinking before speaking, you might need a better argument here.”

That… yeah, okay, you had to give him that. But still.

‘There must be a mistake’ and ‘I’m sorry’? Wow, you rocked this whole talking to your soulmate for the first time thing, didn’t you?

“…okay. That’s fair. But that must have been terrible for you to think that… I dunno. Maybe thinking that I would consider meeting you a mistake, right?”

Steve shrugged and delicately –yes, delicately, despite his huge hands – pulled at the straps of his top, revealing the words for you to see.

Oh, great, the first time when you met him, there was even an ‘Oh no’ involved.

Upon seeing the lines of ink, your heart tried to beat its way of your chest. You convinced yourself it was the words and the words only. It had nothing to do with the fact you peaked a patch of skin you hadn’t before. It wasn’t that you could see his muscles shift. Nope.

Your mouth also didn’t feel like watering; that would be embarrassing. And inappropriate.

You really hoped Steve would think the heat in your cheeks was caused by seeing an evidence of your perfect human skills showing when meeting him for the first and the second time (for the first
You cleared your throat awkwardly and lowered your gaze.

“Uh-uh. You told me you were hoping to meet me at very late age, because otherwise would be weird. Not ideal either,” he remarked and once again, he was right of course. After all, you remembered the confusion it caused when you had been trying to figure out what it meant. “But I’m getting ahead of myself. Both yours and my words actually have perfect explanation.”

You hummed, encouraging him to continue, taking a cookie.

Which was a mistake. Like, a real fucking mistake.

Because they weren’t sugar cookies. They were peanut butter, you knew that much even though not being sure how.

And you very quickly understood that you loved peanut butter cookies. You almost choked on the heaven that exploded in your mouth.

Steve raised a questioning eyebrow, but the way he bit his cheek gave him away. He knew exactly what he was doing.

You pointed an accusing finger on him, earning a sheepish chuckle and a confession. “I was hopeful.”

“Oh-um. Good call. I honestly know like five people by their name so far, but you are quickly becoming my favourite,” you joked, turning horrified a second later.

How did you make fun of your amnesia?

Steve stiffened too, but he was fast to recover. He breathed in shakily, catching your gaze, his suddenly serious eyes boring into yours.

“Look, I know… this must be really hard for you, but… if you let me, if you let me,” he emphasized, the blue with just a drop of green of his eyes calming and sincere, “I’ll help you. We contact your family, your friends, we tell you everything we know. We help you to explore what you like and what you don’t and… and if it’s different from what you liked before, that’s fine. These are… stupid cookies, but they made me think. You just met me, I’m aware, but I want to be there for you. If you let me, I will.”

You watched him breathless, absolutely taken aback by the honest aura around him. He meant every word. You barely registered that he took your hands in his again, too busy processing what he was saying, moved to tears. How much kindness and strength this man carried? How was he even real?

“Someone… something up there might be offering me a chance to fix what I messed up so badly, but it’s not guilt why I’d wish to be with you, I promise. I like you. You’ve just met me, but I already know you’re amazing. If there is a chance that maybe… maybe you could like me too, I’ll do everything to prove to you I could be worthy of carrying the soulmark linking me to-- oh god, please don’t cry.”

You blinked, realizing that silent tears indeed started rolling down your cheeks. You stopped thinking.

You freed your hands of his hold, catching a glimpse of panic in his expression at that and then you couldn’t see his face, because you attacked him, throwing your arms around his neck, making him
sway hazardously. You had a hunch that he wouldn’t have even flinched in any other case, the solid wall of muscle he was, but you took him by surprise.

The moment he steadied you both, his shaking hand went to rest flat on your lower back, his other arm curling around you in what could only feel like protectiveness. He held you a bit tighter than was decent, a barely contained tremble in his embrace. It might have even been a little painful, being squished like that, but you weren’t about to complain.

“Oh sweetheart,” he whispered softly, lowering his head to nuzzle in your hair slowly, as if he was afraid you’d withdraw with that action.

*Not fucking happening.*

This felt familiar.

It felt like scratching an itch you weren’t quite aware of having ever since you had woken up from the dream called Death.

It felt right.

Which made you cry harder, ironically enough. You were a mess of a woman, happy tears mixing with those of regret and shame, but Steve still held you, steadily now, his *doll* and *sweetheart*, and you felt warm and comfy and safe, pleasant sensation curling around your heart like a fluffy blanket.

“You’re already doing it,” you murmured into the fabric of his top, already damp with your tears.

“What was that?”

Why did *he* sound apologetic for such petty thing like not catching what you were trying to mumble, when he was being the rock to your emotional raging sea?

You cleared your throat, this time taking care to articulate like an actual human being. “You’re already doing it, Steve. You’re so nice to me, so considerate and I’m such a mess. Keep this up and I’m not gonna think but *know* I don’t deser-“

He squeezed you tighter in what felt like a warning and you realized that once more, you were being ridiculous. This wasn’t a competition. And if you were self-conscious about being Steve’s soulmate, worrying you might not be enough with what a mess you were, well, he didn’t need to know. God knew he probably felt the same, his past choices haunting him.

“Just… thank you, Steve. I couldn’t wish for a more amazing soulmate,” you said honestly and when he pulled you closer after that statement despite you not thinking it was possible, you sensed his gratitude.

You stayed in his comfortable embrace for a while, just breathing in, wrapped in a somehow soothing scent.

A giggle escaped you when you realized what exactly Steve must smell.

“What?” he muttered lazily, clearly enjoying the proximity as much as you were – hell, probably more, because this could be what he was used to.

“Just wondering what it’s like to be hugging a girl who smells like men’s shampoo.”

His body shook with hushed laughter in response and he eased his embrace, retreating enough to
look at your still damp face. He dared to fix your hair a bit with his gentle fingers, smiling sadly.

“It’s about as surreal as seeing you in plaid,” he remarked, sparkles in his eyes, and you had to admit that yes, your choice of clothing didn’t quite suit you. This couldn’t be your usual wardrobe. “But if this is gonna be the new you, I’ll take it. I meant what I said. It really doesn’t matter what you wear or smell like, though maybe next time I’ll just lend you my things instead. I like it. I like you.”

No. Don’t. It would be really awkward to start crying again. Stop that. Nope—don’t you dare…

You closed your eyes and breathed through the burning sensation in your eyes and rather focused on the pleasant warmth pooling in your chest.

“Steve, stop turning me into a puddle of jello. You’re laying it on a bit thick here,” you whispered, mentally begging him not to stop.

He was so sweet.

And apparently was a little shit too, because the corners of his lips twitched.

“Sorry. Can’t seem to help it.”

You couldn’t but roll your eyes at the cheekiness somehow tangled in flirtation and absolute seriousness.

“It’s… not bad,” you assured him, feeling a bit self-conscious under his intent gaze. “I guess I’m just apologizing in advance if I’m not… responding the way you would wish or you’re used to. I know you said you’d take what you can get, but still—“ Upon seeing the silent warning in his eyes, you pressed your lips together to contain the babble threatening to spill out again. “Okay, shutting up now. Tell me about how exactly we met.”

“Uh-um.”

“Can we stay like this though? Please?”

You looked up at him, hopeful, your heart skipping a pleased beat as he allowed you to nestle into a less neck-breaking position, letting you to lean onto his shoulder as his lips slowly curled up in a spine-melting smile. He made space for you by moving his arm on the backrest, allowing you to rest rather against his chest than shoulder.

Yep, this was it. This was your new favourite place… your only favourite place? Never mind.

“Only if you have another cookie and finish your tea,” he teased, his fingers daring to tickle your arm lightly.

“Hard bargain, Captain,” you chuckled, but obediently reached for not one, but two cookies, offering the other to him.

He accepted it with a smile. “Deal with it.”

“Oh, gladly. Now spill…”

---

Steve talked for a long time, smoothly moving to different stories of you two after the meet-cute; and there was no mistaking it, it had been a meet-cute, sweet and a little embarrassing.

His narrative was surprisingly detailed – he remembered what the weather was like, what you were
wearing, little things about Ryan, who was apparently your best friend. It should sadden you, all the things you forgot, but with the way he was talking it was as if you were there.

Simultaneously, the *sharpness* of his memories broke your heart – it only showed just how important those moments were to him. And you knew nothing of them.

Despite being intrigued by the stories and curious about what Steve had to say, you soon found yourself dozing off. You blamed the strange familiarity, Steve’s soothing timbre and the gentle warm embrace that instinctively made you feel safe and at home. You didn’t think he realized he started rubbing your arm in tender periodic motions, slipping into what he actually knew – unlike you – way too easily.

“Steve, should I sent the Winchesters who brought her here to a hotel for the day?” a low voice asked, sounding from too much of a distance for you to bother opening your eyes.

“Unless Tony lets them stay. Tell them we’ll pay all of their expenses and not to worry about her. I promise to take care of her and not to let her out of my sight,” an equally hushed voice replied.

“As you wish.”

Your body felt too heavy, yet like belonging to someone else, your mind floating above it. You couldn’t move. You felt the change as you were being moved, warmth of another body replaced by soft cushions and a thick blanket smelling of comfort and home was tucked around you. A soft brush against your forehead and a light weight over the comforter in one particular spot on your arm.

“They don’t seem assured, Steve. They say they’ll wait for you so you could talk.”

“Okay. Thanks for letting me know, Jarvis. I’ll see them in a minute.”

You were far too gone into the dreamland to know just how long Steve sat beside you on the mattress, his hand on you to make sure you were truly here in his bed, no matter how little you remembered, silent tears of happiness and a pained smile never leaving his face.

You were only aware of your dreams being sweet, tasting of peanut butter and cherry flavoured black tea.

---

Steve was a bundle of nerves and heavy emotions by the time he finally forced himself to leave her bedside. It was one of the hardest things he ever had to do – both leaving her and spending the better part of the afternoon and evening with her.

He was… less cautious than he should have been from the very moment she walked into his room with Natasha at her heels, he was aware of that, but just seeing a person that looked *exactly* like her to very last freckle on the side of her neck was like a punch to his solar plexus; seeing her walking, talking and *breathing* was making his chest ache and as much as he wanted to believe from the start, he forced himself to be just a tiny bit cautious.

It all went out of the window the moment she said the words written on his collarbone. She was alive. His beautiful, sweet soulmate was alive and well, and nearly perfect.

Steve knew it was profane and that he should be grateful for such miracle; he was, God, how grateful he was and he was willing to do *everything* if it only meant she would stay, but meeting with her gaze, still admirable and curious, but not adoring as it used to be, not so full of tender love, because she had no real memory of him, broke his heart to tiniest pieces, shattered it just like he did
to the mirror when finding his new words.

She didn’t remember him. He was her soulmate to her still – but a stranger. When she threw herself around his neck eventually, the sensation was as bitter as sweet. Steve belonged to her – he was so entirely hers with the every bit of his very being – but she wasn’t his.

It made him swallow thickly as he leaned onto the wall by the door to his room, unable to summon the strength to deal with the men who had brought her back to him.

He was honestly grateful – beyond words, actually – and his actions towards her were genuine, every word true, every single of his smiles, her presence truly making him happy, but by God, there was a lot of pain he had to swallow whenever she asked him something about them and he was confronted with her amnesia once more.

Confronted with him being nothing to her.

Steve didn’t know how long it took him to actually emerge from his position, his eyes burning with fresh tears, but when he entered the common room and a snarky male voice welcomed him, he knew it was longer than it should have.

“Well, look who it is. The great man himself,” the shorter man of whom Steve assumed was Dean exclaimed and it caused both the other hunter – Sam, Steve recalled – and Bruce, who kept the brothers company, massage the bridge of their nose tiredly.

Steve sighed and nodded politely as the brothers stood up from the couch. Bruce had clearly dined them with a take-out judging by the boxes on the table, which Steve was grateful for. He mentally noted to thank his friend later.

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“Dean Winchester, I presume,” he croaked, wincing and clearing his throat at the pathetic sound it released.

The sandy-haired man quirked up. “I see my reputation precedes me. Good. Because, you see, I’m a big fan. Really. You’re doing an A+ plus work, most of the time. But something happens to Nat-ugh, you know who I mean – on your watch again, I’ll find you, skin you and make sure your soul never finds rest.”

“Dean…”

Steve only nodded at the threat, ignoring the scolding look the taller hunter gave his brother.

“What he meant to say was: nice to meet you, I hope it went well. She… uhm, she is your soulmate, right? You exchanged the right words?” Sam asked kindly, his eyes compassionate and inviting.

Steve smiled tightly, ignoring the knot in his stomach and deliberately passed on the unspoken question if it did go well. He assumed it had, but… well.

“Yes,” he whispered softly, offering the man a hand to shake, which was instantly accepted. “We did. Thank you for bringing her here. Keeping her safe. Taking care of her. I already asked Jarvis – we’ll make sure to pay any expanses-“

“Alright, stop with the speech, Captain. We did what he had to – what we wanted to. She’s a good kid. She deserves the best, though she wasn’t always willing to accept that as a fact. If you want to help guys with little money, that would be nice. But we’re not bounty hunters or some shit. You’re not paying us for her,” Dean stated, sending a white lightning of rage though Steve’s body at his implication.
She was not a merchandise to order and have delivered. She was a human being. Steve was very much aware of that.

He took a deep breath to tell the man what an inappropriate comment he had made. “Mr. Winchester-“

“Oh god, don’t ever call me that again. And relax. Please. I’m not totally serious. Calm your tits.”

“Captain Rogers, I apologize for my Neanderthal of a brother. He grew rather protective of your soulmate as did I. I assume she’s asleep-“ Sam interjected again with his diplomatic talk and Steve forced the indignation aside, trying to remember he was beyond grateful. He only nodded once more.

“Good. We thought to stay in town in case she needed anything. We left a small bag for her, but she doesn’t have much, she’s modest. Had a little trouble eating, worrying about spending our money. Please, make sure she eats.”

A sharp pang hit Steve’s chest when hearing another implication of her doubting her worth. He had a lot of work to do. He was going to spoil her. So much. As much as she let him and just a tiny bit more. She always seemed to have a weak spot in the form of his pleading eyes, she was a pleaser and Steve would be very much pleased to give her everything. All of his things, all of him.

“Thank you for telling me. I’ll look out for that. Hopefully, she’ll let me.”

“Good. You do that. She just needs a little push sometimes,” the older brother smirked and finally shook Steve’s hand too, possibly going for tighter grip than necessary. Good tactics that didn’t quite work on a supersoldier, but Steve met his gaze to hint him he received his message again clearly.

Hurt her and you’re a dead man.

Steve felt the same about everyone.

“Now, she has our number and we should probably hit the hay. Before we leave though…” Dean hesitated and the sudden lack of snark surprised even Bruce, who released his head from his hands as he had rested his elbows on his knees, sitting on the couch, embarrassed for their guests; he looked up curiously as Dean continued.

“Can I have an autograph? I really am a huge fan…. And I’d love to touch the shield.”

Chapter End Notes

Absolutely irrelevant note: I’m educating my man J in Marvel and we finally got to Infinity War. I thought he was kinda keeping up with who was who, hell, he surprised me when he said he remembered Steve was born in 1918… and then the iconic moment of not-exactly-Cap-anymore in A:IW came up, his figure emerging from the shadows in his all bearded glory… and J was like: who the hell is that?!
Yeah, so that whole ‘grow a beard, you’ll be unrecognizable’ thing actually worked; on my boyfriend anyway :D

Aaaaaanyway, thoughts about this chapter? :)
Chapter Summary

‘Nat’ sorta meets two more people – one of them personally, the other only by voice. You can guess which one is more pleasant.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

You snapped your eyes open to the softly illuminated room, the remnants of a terrible dream of fire and wicked smiles causing your hands to twitch, a muffled groan escaping your throat. You should have never watched the video of your death. You liked the previous images better, a soft voice of your supposed soulmate had been so much more pleasant to dream of--

You heart stopped when more memories of yesterday’s events rushed back and your body froze on spot – the spot being a comfy bed, your legs tangled in cushions you didn’t remember laying into.

Of course you didn’t remember it; it didn’t happen. You oh so brilliantly nestled yourself basically in Steve’s lap instead. And everything was pointing the direction of… you actually falling asleep there. Oh God.

Your groan was more distinct this time, the sound followed by a rustling shift of a mass on your right; you nearly jumped out of your skin, your heart hammering against your chest, air caught in your throat in fright. You dreaded what you might find when looking the direction.

Maybe you were still dreaming. There was no way there was a crumpled form of a sleeping man in a chair at your bedside, right? Because that could mean it wasn’t your bedside at all – then again, you didn’t own any bed, let’s be real here –, but it was actually his and since it already had an occupant, he aimed for the chair.

Shame instantly filled every cell of your body for being the cause of his future back-cramp; not that the chair didn’t look comfortable. It sure did. But not for sleeping. A second later, you wondered why Steve wouldn’t opt for the couch instead, where he could be at least lying down. You didn’t question why it wasn’t you on the couch – of course a man like Steve Rogers wouldn’t let a woman sleep on a couch when there was a perfectly fit bed; the short time you remembered spending with him was enough to tell you as much.

You feasted your sleepy eyes on him, your lips unwittingly curling into a small smile.

He looked almost peaceful – almost. Upon inspecting Steve’s handsome features, you noticed little things that lighted up a flicker of concern in your chest. His sharp jaw was too tense for him to have any kind of a pleasant dream, his eyebrows knitted, the right corner of his plush lips twitching nervously. Following the lines of his shoulders and arms with your gaze, you stopped at his hands balled in fists, tendons on his forearms prominent.

Nope, he didn’t seem to have a pleasant dream in the slightest.

You only argued with yourself for a short moment before sitting up on the bed – still dressed in the
plaid and jeans, but shoes removed (by Steve most likely, which wasn’t awkward, like at all) – and reaching out to him. You stopped an inch from his hand, a realization of just how badly a touch could end dawning to you. Touching a man with enhanced strength having a nightmare did not sound like a good idea.

So instead, you worried your teeth over your lower lip, looking for a better option. For a brief moment you considered finding a stick around here to poke him, but that seemed pretty rude.

“…Steve?” you called out silently in the end, only causing his lips to twitch again and not in a smile-like manner. Nope. You gulped and tried your normal speaking volume. “Steve? You’re dreaming. Wake up.”

Nope. Nothing. Except a jerk of his head further to the side. You grimaced, feeling completely useless.

Well, you guessed physical contact it was. You just hoped your bones would still be still in place when he fully woke up.

Cautiously, ready to jump away if he flipped out, your fingers brushed his knuckles with another call of his name.

The sound of distress leaving his lips had your insides clench uncomfortably. This time you laid your whole palm over the back of his hand.

“Steve. Come on. Wake up,” you coaxed, squeezing his hand lightly.

That did it.

His eyes snapped open and with a movement too fast for you to register, he suddenly stood on his feet two steps from the bed, face perplexed, and the chair he had been sitting on hit the ground with a thud that made you jump backwards.

Thank god Steve had a big bed otherwise you would have been on the floor.

“What-“ he rasped, the look in his eyes almost haunted as he stared at you, pupils dilated and skin pale as if—oh. Oh.

As if he saw a ghost.

“Steve? Are you okay? You looked like you had a pretty bad dream,” you said slowly, observing his reactions.

He blinked rapidly and you noticed his feet shuffling backwards a fraction. His expression shifted to one of disbelief.

“Bad dream?” he parroted incredulously. His eyes searched the room and you tried to follow his line of gaze; until it fell on a small sports bag by the door, your whole property, a gift from Sam and Dean.

At that, he swiftly returned his attention to you, his shoulders slumping, his fingers going up to pinch the bridge of his nose. You waited patiently for him to reassess the reality, using the momentary lack of his inspection of you to at least smooth out your hair a little, which was probably a vain effort.

Oh so slowly, his hand fell down to his side, his face apologetic. The fact his eyes turned glassy didn’t escape you – but he wasn’t crying. He even fixed a smile for you, one that couldn’t even hope
to reach his eyes

“I’m sorry. Did I wake you?”

You only shook your head, returning the smile and hoping to erase the shadow of pain in his brilliant irises.

“I… didn’t hurt you, did I?” he asked softly and your heart wept for him. He was just thrown into reality and his first concern was for you, about him causing you harm. *Because he had already caused enough of that,* your mind whispered hauntingly and you shushed it harshly. Then again, it was probably Steve’s train of thought too.

You really, *really* didn’t want him to feel guilty for having nightmares. It was ridiculous.

So you climbed from the bed, not exactly gracefully, while his gaze remained fixed on you, watching your every move – as if he was actually checking if there was any damage.

*Oh Steve…*

Feeling bold, you crossed the short distance between you, standing face to face, chest to chest with him, only two inches of space between your bodies, and gently wrapped your fingers around his right hand.

The change in his stance was instant, tension leaving, features softening as much as his eyes; the blue and green was much more inviting now.

“No, Steve, you didn’t hurt me. Even in my state of mind I know better than to approach a guy caught in a nightmare. Let alone a supersoldier—” His face fell again than and he went to take a step back; you quickly gave him a firm squeeze before he could do so as you realized your error.

“No that I’m afraid of you! I’d be cautious with anyone! I just said that, didn’t I —ugh, why am I so bad at speaking… Steve. It’s fine. Thanks for moving me to bed. I’m sorry to… eh, fall asleep on you. I swear I was listening-- I guess it was just really comfy and--- not that your body is soft or anything, you’re more like super-ripped, okay, what I mean was that---- that I… I felt really good. With… with you. I mean. I-- I felt safe, so... I guess I was more tired than I realized—”

An honest smile was gradually forming on his lips as you continued your nonsensical babble that in fact held an important and serious message, which was clearly received, because Steve definitely was one step from *beaming* now.

His thumb ran over the back of your hand, the fingers of his other hand tenderly running through your no doubt messy hair. The gesture almost turned you to a lovesick jello, leaving sparkles in their wake, brilliant eyes boring into yours with an emotion you couldn’t quite describe.

“I’m glad. How do you feel about breakfast?”

---

Steve left you some privacy to make yourself more presentable and you nearly cried at the soothing spray of warm water with a perfect pressure against your skin and for some reason still weary muscles. You thought back to the moment you said yes to Rowena stealing some of the soulmate energy or whatever, not knowing for how long it would affect you, and you wanted to curse – the thing was though, she had brought you here. To Steve. And so far, things seemed… nice. Really, really nice.
However, it wasn’t all sunshine and rainbows. When you told Steve you wanted to call the Winchesters to catch up before eating, there was this… unreadable expression on his face. You understood very soon though. No, it wasn’t jealousy. It was hurt.

You had noticed it yesterday as well; moments in which he seemed to slip from his carefully guarded role of a man delighted at your presence. You didn’t doubt Steve was happy to have you back, but you were too perceptive to ignore that he was holding something back. If you could take a guess, it was caused the state you had been found in; an amnesiac. A shadow was always casted over his face, the light in his eyes dimming just a fraction. And you hated it.

When Dean asked you how it had been, you didn’t mention it though; it wasn’t their problem to deal with, they had already done enough.

“Good. Really good,” you assured them instead, wavering only for a moment. “I think? I mean… it’s a lot to process you know? But Steve’s being very kind to me. More than I-“

“I swear that if you say ‘deserve’, I’m busting into the Tower and kicking your ass,” the older hunter threatened and to your surprise, Sam supported him in that.

“It’s just… I know, okay? What I wanted to say was that you don’t need to worry about me. I feel like I’m in good hands.”

Still, the Winchesters, while already finding a new case, insisted they would be leaving in the evening only and any given time before or after that, you could call them and they would beat their way through the Avengers themselves to rescue the Fire Princess from the Tower.

The urge to punch Dean for the last remark was about as strong as the need to hug him. Soon after that, you ended the call.

You patted your way to the communal kitchen then, led by the Jarvis, aka the strange voice from the ceiling, an artificial intelligence. The world was a crazy place for sure.

“What the hell?!” a man cried out at the end of the hall just before you could enter and made you jump few feet above the ground.

Your head snapped to the sandy-haired male individual in a violet bathrobe, his face pale as a sheet of paper, his eyes bulging so intensely you saw it even when he was several feet away.

“Uhm… hi?” you offered a cautious and awkward greeting followed by even more awkward wave and the man’s hand rose on autopilot to return the gesture, but then he stopped himself as if he was weirded out by his own reaction.

He pressed the heels of his hands to his eyes, murmuring something than sounded a lot like ‘coffee’ while he walked to you.

You shifted your weight from one foot to another, wavering at the door, arguing whether you should introduce yourself or not. Or did he know you? From before? He looked kinda spooked if you were being honest, so you should probably explain… and ask about his wellbeing, because you were getting concerned as he retreated his hands and seemed shocked to still see you standing there.

“Are you okay?” you asked hesitantly and he squinted at you, gulping.

“Am I going crazy?” he whispered, sounding seriously on edge and no, you were certain it wasn’t because his voice was still rough with sleep.
“I don’t think so, sir. I’m-”

“-getting breakfast!” Steve rushed to your side from the kitchen, only to cause the other man’s expression turn absolutely baffled.

“Steve? What the hell is going on? Are you seeing her too? Is… what is this? Who is this?”

Yeah, now you were sure; no one had shared the delightful news with him. You rose from the dead. Yay! Except you didn’t remember who he was. Or who Steve was. Or you, for that matter.

Steve cleared his throat. “Clint. This, uhm… is really complicated. She doesn’t remember you. Or me. Or anyone.”

The shadow of hurt was there again and you mentally kicked yourself – but there was nothing more you could do.

So you intelligently stuck your hand out for the man to shake. He examined it as if it was a bomb about to detonate, eyeing Steve warily.

“Don’t ask. She’s back. That’s all that matters,” Steve pleaded him with his gaze just not to ask any questions and Clint, as it seemed, went along with it, so the introductions could be made.

“Hi. Nice to meet you, Clint. Sorry for not remembering you.”

He observed you with a funny expression on his face you couldn’t quite read. “Right. Nice to meet you too.”

---

Clint clearly wanted to please Steve – or was too freaked out by your presence to stay -, because he entered he kitchen right at your heels, only to grab a pot of coffee black as night and a mug and walk away the same path he had arrived.

Guilt gnawed at you for making him feel like he couldn’t stay where he probably usually had his breakfast, but before you could voice your thoughts, a plate with a pancake landed in front of you.

You thanked Steve politely and couldn’t but examine him as he stood by the stove, flipping another pancake. What you said to Dean and Sam was true – Steve truly was very kind to you, sweet even and you felt a strange tugging at your stomach when you realized you couldn’t quite give him the same. You promised yourself for the millionth time that you would try your best; starting with complimenting his cooking.

“I forgot to tell you in the morning…” he mumbled after he thanked you for the praise, still turned to the stove. You glimpsed the tips of his ears turning pink and you tilted your head to side while chewing, intrigued. “Tony had you set up a room. He… uhm, he also moved some of the clothes you had here—before, I mean, so—I don’t mean it like you have to change, just that there’s the option. And of course, you deserve your own space, your own bed, as much as I am okay with sharing mine-- giving up mine, I mean.”

You swallowed before speaking, finding his embarrassment about the topic equally endearing and heart-breaking.

Bet we didn’t have to worry about that before…

“Thank you. That’s very kind of him,” you replied, unsure what else to say.
Was there even anything else to say? You weren’t sure how you felt about your old things existing – about Steve not getting rid of them, at least not yet. You didn’t want to examine the dull ache it left around your heart, wrapping it in a fluffy blanket at the same time.

The other thing was that you… kinda didn’t want to move from Steve’s room. But hey, he sure as hell needed his own privacy as well. Plus, there might be a teeny-tiny part of you that would welcome it too, because while you wanted to make him happy, you… yeah, you felt like there was too much pressure, things happening too fast despite Steve attempting not to push you; you recognized as much. This gesture must have been rather hard for him too.

“And of you,” you added then and he casted a brief smile over his shoulder before turning to you fully, spotting your empty plate and tossing his freshest creation there. “Thanks. They’re really amazing.”

“Steve, if I may…” the voice of the ceiling interrupted your peculiar conversation and Steve only hummed, continuing showing off his skills in the kitchen. “Director Fury would like to speak with you.”

The change in his posture was instant – he tensed, as you did upon hearing a name that sounded important – and he appeared to be struggling; his hands moved rather frantically as if not knowing whether they should stop their action or not.

“Well, send him to hell,” he requested of the AI nonchalantly in the end. “I’m busy.”

“I’m afraid he’s insisting on a meeting. The revelation of Director Pierce being HYDRA along with several other members of SHIELD struck quite a blow and even after weeks it’s still being dealt with.”

That… sounded like something you weren’t supposed to hear and you were already opening your mouth to tell Steve it was fine and that you were going to wait… somewhere else, but he was faster.

“I’m aware. But as Tony would say, grow a spine, Jarvis, please. I have my priorities straight and he’s not on the top of my list at the moment.”

Oh. Oh. That was… brave. And kind of him. And pretty cheeky? Maybe a bit reckless?

Or was he being patronizing? Didn’t trust you to keep yourself occupied while he was busy with something else? Or was he afraid? Damn, mind-reading would have come handy. Why couldn’t you return from the death with such ability at least? It would be so much easier.

Or would it? You might not like what was on Steve’s mind. You were not who he used to know. You were a woman without memory, without personality almost. You were a burden. And you were staring to question whether you weren’t weighting his shoulders more than being the world’s first superhero ever could.

“Steve, I’m-“ you started, but he only turned off the stove and faced you with a swift smile, shaking his head.

“It’s alright. If he really needs to talk to me, Jarvis, let him make it over the phone. Final offer.”

“Oh, I’ll just-”

“Stay. It’s okay. There’s nothing I need or want to hide from you,” he assured you in earnest and you bit your lower lip; that felt like a bit of an overkill.
Or maybe your insecurities were getting to you and Steve was still being the sweetest human being you had ever met and you were turning into a cranky cynical bitch.

God only knew.

“Very well. He’s on the line, Steve,” the Jarvis announced and you eyed Steve once more. He squeezed your shoulder reassuringly in return and the ease he touched you with effectively shut you up.

“Rogers,” sounded roughly from the speakers and Steve sighed before replying – it nearly made you jump, because you had never heard his voice so firm and even. Not in this life anyway.

“Nick.”

Silence fell on the room and you wondered if the man on the other end – a director, Steve’s boss you assumed – recognized something was wrong. You opened your mouth to soundlessly offer your leave again, but Steve put his index finger over his lips and shook his head again. You swallowed loudly and looked away, but didn’t move otherwise.

“You’re a hard man to reach these days.”

“And I’m not planning on changing that. What’s so urgent it couldn’t wait for a while? I have other things to do.”

“… I’m aware? I think. I guess?” the strictly sounding man muttered, clearly bewildered. “What crawled up your backside, Rogers? You sound… different.”

And here it came. You bit your cheek to stop yourself from saying ‘I happened’.

“Don’t worry about it, Nick,” Steve bit back, a hint of cheekiness creeping into his voice.

“It’s not like you to decline so many meetings and going to a mission only when you feel like it, Cap.”

You bit your cheek harder – Steve was changing his routine for you. Steve was neglecting his duties no doubt. That wasn’t right. Was it? You had figured he had, but this sounded rather… serious, grim even.

“People change.”

“I only recall one moment you preferred other things to your job, Cap, and I’m sure I don’t need to point out which one.” Why did you feel this man was the one who held the meeting Steve felt to take you to a date? The one with the dancing he had told you about yesterday? “I get it, things went to shit. But now it’s more than that, I’m not stupid. What’s going on?”

Oh, he was onto you. Shit. That couldn’t be good. It was strange how Steve kept his cool, sounding annoyed even. You wouldn’t be able to tell that if it wasn’t for him crossing his arms on his chest; you tried to ignore the little voice in the back of your mind that whispered praises about what it did to the broadness of his shoulders plus the size of his arms and what it did to you.

“Nick, if you have something to tell me, you have about a minute. We’re not talking about me.”

“Fine,” the director growled. “I’ll manage on my own, call Romanoff in. You… do whatever you think you need to do.”
“Yes, Sir. That was my plan.”

Your eyebrows shot up in shock and Steve had the nerve to wink at you. Your heart racing with worries jumped a bit at that for a completely different reason.

“You’re sassy. Again. I like it.”

“Bye, Nick.” He was almost smiling now, as if he was bantering with an old friend.

“Rogers. Good luck.”

The moment the line went silent, you finally opened your mouth.

“He’s onto you, isn’t he? I have no idea any of what he said meant, but he sounded really important and… dangerous, Steve. I don’t want to keep you from-”

You didn’t realize you had stood up until he gently pushed you back to bar stool, a relaxed smile on his lips.

“Don’t worry about it. He’s just cranky. I wasn’t at his disposal lately.”

*I was too busy mourning my soulmate,* you heard unspoken and winced. Oh. Oh god, could this get any worse?

“I’m sorry.”

“That’s not on you,” he shook his head gingerly, his thumbs caressing your shoulders over the plaid shirt. He beckoned to the pan then. “Another pancake?”

When you shook your head incredulously, still unsure this wasn’t going to blow up into your faces later, he shrugged and cut the pancake in half – one went to your plate, one to another for him.

He winked at you again and you suspected Dean might have blabbered out on you that you refused to eat properly. Honest to God, right now you were just too full, no ulterior motives, but seeing the spark in Steve’s eyes and wishing for it to stay, you dug in.

Chapter End Notes

Slow chapter and a bit of a filler maybe. Uh… sorry? :) Calm before the storm maybe…
Chapter Summary

Natasha is showing a bit of tough love, ‘Nat’ is on a shaky ground and Tony is being mature. Seriously, I mean it, this isn’t a joke, Tony actually can be an adult. See for yourself.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Despite Steve’s initial protests, you started cleaning up while he was still trying to sooth his supersoldier appetite.

You weren’t finished yet when irritated Natasha Romanoff paced into the room.

“Come on, Rogers. I get the situation you found yourself in, I really do, but try to be smart next time,” she hissed and seemed ready to yank him to his feet by his ear.

If she hadn’t look so intimidating, you might even laugh. Steve had the decency to look guilty and you quickly realized this was about him denying the director his wishes.

‘Smart’ though? Meaning?

“Sorry, Romanoff.”

“Don’t you ‘sorry’ me and think for a second! I have two SHIELD agents downstairs, keeping them from coming up here only by telling them I bring you down there in my teeth if I have to!”

Your blood turned to ice. That was much more serious than Steve had led on. What the hell?!

Steve shot the fellow agent an angry look, his teeth clenched, clearly about to snap back at her – he never got a chance.

“You’re coming with me. Do you really want them to sniff around here? I have nothing to worry about, but you might want to sort things out before Fury finds out what’s going on and tries to stick his nose in it,” Natasha stated flatly and the glare she sent his way spoke volumes. Also, the flicker of her gaze towards you during her speech was everything but inconspicuous.

You gulped in fright and resisted the urge to take a step back despite the murderous glare being aimed at Steve.

“Stop scaring the shit out of people!” Steve hissed, rising to his feet and protectively standing in front of you.

Natasha sighed and eased her terrifying manners; the switch to a friendly demeanour was almost too sharp to wrap your head around.

“Sorry. You know I’m not afraid of him. I know you aren’t either. But think, Steve. Do you want Fury to find out right now and have him on your ass – hers, more importantly, because she’s the one
who rose from the death — or do you want… more time with this very charming person, who happens to be your soulmate?” she bargained and threw a wink at you over Steve’s shoulder. What was this, a fucking wink day? And how was she switching between her moods so quickly?

“I know which I would prefer,” she added softly and smiled at you.

Her gentleness surprised you just like when she had led you to Steve’s room only several hours ago — really, only hours had it been? — and more so, her authenticity. This was a side she was willing to show her friends — for some reason, to you as well — and the strict uncompromising agent was her everyday mask.

Steve let out an indistinct sound that told you he admitted to himself she was right and that he resigned, though very much unwillingly.

You forced yourself to gather some courage and plastered a smile on your face as he turned to face you.

“If this is just about me, don’t worry about it. Go.”

Thee lamely covered hurt at you sending him away tugged at your heart, but if you were being honest, you maybe needed a time to think and Steve being away could help.

“I’ll still be here. I promise,” you assured him and just like yesterday, he seemed calmer after that. Yet, there was still something that had him frown as if he was being torn in half, having an itch he wanted to scratch, but was afraid of revealing to you where it was.

You exchanged a look with Natasha and took a calculated guess when you saw her eyes turning compassionate. You finally understood why you had found him in the chair by your bed this morning — it was closer to you. Definitely close enough to cover you in case any kind of shit went down.

“And I’ll be fine here. There’s no safer place in New York, right?”

The thumbs-up from the woman were subtle, but you still noticed them. Jackpot. If it wasn’t so sad that Steve was terrified for your safety, you might even cheer. In this case, not so much.

Steve’s eyes found yours, boring into them as if looking for the last remnants of anything that would keep him in the Tower. He must have found none, because he nodded softly. Your smile grew more honest.

“Oh, Alright. If you don’t mind. I promise I’ll try to be quick,” he declared at which Natasha cleared her throat.

“Because you can totally tell the World Security Council to suck it up…”

…what? Did Steve nearly refuse such an important meeting (it sounded pretty important, okay) for you? Thank God for Natasha Romanoff. You weren’t sure your conscience could live with that…

“You did,” Steve threw over his shoulder swiftly and that caused both yours and hers lips to twitch. Yeah, she seemed like the type. “Jarvis, does she still have the authorisation to walk the Tower without limitations?”

“She does now again, Steve,” the AI announced and you only then realized he was talking about you. Oh.
“Thank you, Jarvis.”

“You didn’t have to do that. I would have just-“ you blurted out and was cut off by his eyebrow arching.

“-sit in the same room all day?”

Point taken. “…yes. If necessary.”

“Well, it’s not,” he exclaimed and pressed the lightest of kisses to your temple. “Let’s get going so we can be back.”

With that, the agent and the captain took off, while you were left there standing, dumbfounded. Your face was burning hot, the warmth focused into one particular place where Steve’s lips brushed your skin.

As you automatically reached for Steve’s plate to clean it as well, you wondered if he did it on purpose or if it was something he did automatically.

Either way, the recovery from the shock and the pleasant feeling the gesture left in your chest kept you busy for the next half an hour.

And suddenly you knew it wasn’t thinking what you needed to do, no. You had to talk to someone. And you knew exactly who.

“Uhm… Jarvis? Can I ask you something?”

---

When the AI opened the door for you, you came to face Mr. Stark’s backside. Admittedly, it wasn’t the worst view you could be offered, though Steve’s would have been more impressive; yes, you had noticed, that man was impossible not to ogle. More importantly than the view being acceptable, you’d rather spoke to the man eye to eye. Which was rather difficult seeing as he was partially buried in… a robotic suit with shiny colours of red and gold?

A superhero suit, you realized. Right. Because you were momentarily accommodated with superheroes.

“Uhm, Mr. Stark?” you addressed him warily, not wanting him to-

A clank sounded as his head snapped up, its back colliding with a platter of metal above it with deadly precision. Your hand shot up to your mouth to cover it before you could embarrass yourself by a squeal coming out of it.

“Goddammit!” he cursed loudly, making you wince in compassion as he rubbed the injured spot on his head, turning around. ”Who- oh. Oh. Hey, kid.”

“Why is everyone calling me that?” you complained, remembering Dean’s set of nicknames involving exactly this. Then you grimaced as he abruptly let his hand fall to show you he was in fact not hurting. He even grinned, an expression of emotion you believed only with hesitance. “Also, sorry.”

“I’ll live,” he waved it of before answering your rhetorical question. ”It’s ‘cause we’re old and respectable. Does Cap call you that too? ‘Cause that might be a bit weird.”
“Uhm… no…?”

“Oh, good, I was getting worried,” he hummed light-heartedly and then went to a container on his right, pulling out an icepack to place over his wound after all. He gestured towards a swivel chair politely. You shook your head. “What’s on your mind?”

“The… uhm, the Jarvis told me I wouldn’t be interrupting…” you pointed vaguely at the ceiling, suddenly realizing this was a bad idea. Probably. Not to mention Mr. Stark was apparently in a middle of something, so… “Clearly, I am. Sorry, I’ll just-”

“Nope! Stay right here! And it’s Jarvis without the… ‘the’. You didn’t answer the question.”

He took the seat since you seemed uninterested in it and tilted his head with one corner of his lips raised.

“I… I wanted to thank you for your hospitality. And… I’d like to ask you something, but it might be a bit strange?”

He removed the icepack with a chuckle, tossing it carelessly to the middle of his workspace. “Kid, for all we know, you were brought back from death by an angel who spilled your memories on your way from Heaven. There’s no such thing as ‘strange’ these days. Kinky might weird me out – maybe –, but strange? Nah.”

Kinky? Really? You were so not about to talk sex with this man. His jokes were slowly putting you at ease a little though, despite what you had come here to ask.

“Right. I… uhm… I just wanted to ask… uh, what am I like? Or… she was, I mean.”

The man frowned at you, sitting upright instead of basically lying in the chair.

“You still are. Her, I mean,” he mimicked you. “Why would you ask me that? Why not Cap? Or is he only bragging about himself?”

“No! No. Steve’s… very helpful.”

“Oh. Good for him. ‘Cause being narcissistic is my jam, not his, he’s more like ‘I’m just a kid from Brooklyn’ kind of guy,” he impersonated Steve with his chin stuck out, while his voice fell an octave. The corners of your lips twitched. “Then again, he’s a hundred-year-old man and me, on the other hand, I’m slightly younger, a genius, a billionaire and overall perfect.”

That drew a chuckle from you – you simply couldn’t hold it back anymore. This man was a clown. But he was also speaking very bluntly, which was why you had chosen him to be your source of information. You liked his demeanor; he reminded you of Dean. You had a feeling that you might have been the teasing kind of friend with him. She had been. Whatever.

“I bet,” you humoured him and he squinted at you playfully.

“Correct answer. You want an opinion of someone who isn’t smitten by you,” he stated confidently and you felt the blush instantly colouring your cheeks as his choice of words.

“Smitten is not… uhm-“

“Kid, he is definitely smitten. He was and still is, or is again, whatever floats your boat,” he smirked and leaned his elbows onto his thighs. “Not that I can blame him. You’re easy on the eyes, ridiculously good to him and for him, because you are the same breed of creepy romantic, you can
keep up with my and Clint’s verbal combat, because clearly you were born with the sass gene, and believe it or not, you showed quite early on that you had guts and quite steely nerves, which is something Steve’s girl desperately needs.”

You blinked in surprise at such long speech. You had no idea what to say to that shower of compliments, having a bit of a problem to believe it was you he just described. So you focused on the safest topic.

“Steve?”

“What about him?” Mr. Stark asked, confused.

“This is the first time you called him ‘Steve’, not ‘Cap’,” you elaborated, only to earn an almost tired sigh.

“Well, obviously. Cap has a stick up his ass and jumps out of planes to save the day. It’s mostly Steve who’s a little shit and doesn’t use parachute for the said jump.” I beg your pardon? Steve is doing what? “And he’s always Steve first to you, Steve with the job of being Cap.”

That quickly distracted you from the stunts Steve was apparently pulling on missions of saving the world. You could imagine that – seeing Steve as a regular person, no matter how unique he was.

You had a hunch he appreciated that too.

“Oh, I didn’t mention that before? That you were the first civilian he bothered to drop the bullshit superhero persona with? Demolished the walls keeping his little precious heart that’s actually too big safe and never rebuilt them? My bad, so I’m telling you now. And he’s willing to bend the rules for you. I never saw him leave a meeting early until you showed up.”

He gestured wildly with his hands as he drew metaphorical walls in the air and made them crumble down and then his fingers curled with his thumbs straightened, connected to create a heart from his hands.

Your own heart swelled in your chest a little. Could it really be true? Could Steve have been honest with you? And… could you be that person for him?

You had no idea what to say. Or do, for that matter and the man huffed exasperatedly.

“Look… I’m not great at this, okay? That’s why I built robots, not humans.”

“Jarvis seems human enough,” you quipped, taking care to leave out the ‘the’ this time.

“Thank you, miss,” the AI quickly chimed in.

Of course, he was listening now too. You hoped he wasn’t recording or something, because this was a very private conversation you wouldn’t want anyone to see and hear. Especially not Steve.

“That’s because he has a human template. He was a servant at my house when I was a kid. Great guy. deserved to be immortalized.”

That little piece of private information in exchange of opening yourself to him about your insecurities and worries was highly appreciated. Your next confession was the only thing that kept you from smiling at Mr. Stark gratefully.

“I… I think I’m hurting him by being here,” you whispered the darkest secret and his eyebrows got nearly lost in his hairline with how swiftly they jumped.
“You? Hurting Steve?” he repeated incredulously and you worried your teeth over your lower lip, curling into yourself, averting his intense glare bashfully.

“Hurting him and his reputation on top of that. And his job…. I don’t remember him. I can’t and I hate it, because I met him only yesterday and it would be ridiculously easy to fall in love with him, but how can I? How can I be that person to him, when he’s in love with someone I don’t know anymore?”

“First – if this is about his job, about Fury mostly, screw that. Focus on what’s important here. Him,” he emphasized, rising from his seat to stand face to face with you – which he did, because he wasn’t as tall as Steve.

You opened your mouth to oppose him that his job was sure as hell important – to Steve and to the world – but you never got the chance as Stark raised his index finger warningly.

“Uh-uh. I talk, you listen. You’re asking me how? Duh. Meet him again. Know yourself again. I told you – so far, you seem to be the same. But even if you’re not…” he mused, shaking his head with his jaw clenched. “Cap- Steve’s been at the bottom, okay? If you think you’re hurting him by being here in any form different than a literal ghost haunting his ass-- he’s… you’re not hurting him is all I’m saying, okay? So what, you might order different toppings on your pizza or like a different shampoo, show up here wearing a lumberjack shirt, whatever. But this…” He tapped approximately on your soulmarks, oblivious to how much his words had affected you so far. Which was a lot.

“Means something. It means everything. To you, to him, to you together.”

“You… you didn’t seem to believe that too much yesterday. Now you do? So what, we’re okay and we’re going to be, because fate said so?”

Your question might have sounded sceptical, but on the inside, that was another matter entirely. What Stark had told you was already worming its way through your brain, very effectively.

Could this, whatever this was, be better than you not being here at all? You had thought so, but Steve’s interaction with the director, the carefully guarded pain being his kind eyes… it made you doubt. You hadn’t meant for it to sound like you wanted to flee, because you didn’t, but… your overloaded mind was getting the best of you.

And Tony Stark was apparently having none of it, because he made a face and shrugged.

“I don’t know who said so. It could be fate, it could be God, it could be the fairies for all I care. The thing is, you believe in that, don’t you? That the soulmark means something and that there was a reason for you to meet him again, exactly like that.”

You had no counterargument since he hit the nail on the head, so you remained silent. He charmed a lop-sided smile singing of victory.

“That’s what I thought,” he exclaimed, satisfied with himself. Then, his face softened a bit. “And that’s fine. You thought that before, which is my point. You’re still you. You might not have concrete memories, but I think everything about you does. It feels like it sometimes, doesn’t it? Weird things, things you shouldn’t feel, things you shouldn’t know, but you do.”

Your heart positively stopped as you recalled the familiarity of Steve’s face, the comfort of his embrace, the warmth in your chest that shouldn’t be there, not so shortly after meeting him.

“How… how do you know that?” you whispered, voice barely audible but still very much shaky.

“I didn’t. I took a wild guess. Looks like it was a good one.”
You huffed a short laugh, unable to comprehend how this man even existed, brisk and arrogant at first sight, but very much intelligent, funny and wise.

“Yeah. Looks like it…” you mused with an absent smile remaining. “Thank you, Mr. Stark.”

His arms went around you a bit awkwardly and for a very short moment, but they did, a pat on your left shoulder following. He withdrew fast then, his hands stuck into the pockets of his jeans.

“Let’s never speak of this conversation again, alright, kid?” You nodded obediently, glad he wanted to keep this under wraps. “And stop calling me Mr. Stark. It’s Tony. Leave that mister shit for bedroom games or whatever.”

You shook your head incredulously as you recognized the moment you should distance yourself and leave him work. “Whatever you say, Tony. I owe you one.”

“Ha! You wish. It’s like a thousand. No, three thousand!”

“You’re rich enough not to dwell on such petty debt,” you called back at him and even without seeing his face, you were able to tell he was smirking.

“Oh, am I? How would you know?”

“I wouldn’t. Took a wild guess!”

A chuckle walked you out of the door instead of the man himself.

“See? Still the sassy queen!”

---

You wandered the Tower then, visiting the rooftop even and taking in the marvellous view. When you spread your arms to feel the wind better, you felt a ghost of fingers trace your skin, nothing concrete, just a whisper of a touch. You smiled sadly, wondering if it was a memory trying to fight its way out of the knot in your brain Castiel had mentioned when he had first attempted to figure out what was wrong with you and possibly fix it – which he had failed.

You didn’t blame him. Truth was, you didn’t know who to blame; not Castiel, not Steve and you had enough reason to know it wasn’t exactly your fault either. When you spread your arms again, the sensation didn’t return. So you left the open space, perhaps in search of the similar feeling throughout the Tower.

After Jarvis nudging you to take something from the fridge at least to imitate lunch, you met Clint again. You only nodded in a greeting at the man from the morning and continued your route. He didn’t engage, sensing you needed an alone time – which you did. Ever since the talk with Tony, a smile never quite left your lips, no matter how small.

You didn’t know what time it was when Jarvis addressed you again, polite as always, to tell you Steve was back. You felt your face lit up and headed the direction you believed was his room.

You never ended up in a rather open hallway leading to it, stopping in your tracks when you heard a sudden rustle of fabric behind you. You spun on your heels only to meet an unfamiliar face of a woman, watching you with interest. A creepy interest, the kind of an examining glare that made you shiver.

You would swear you could feel the air crackle when her lips curled up slightly. Hair stood at the
back of your neck and you fought a tremble. There was something powerful about the woman and you didn’t know whether it was safer not to move anymore or try to take a run for it. Since your feet took roots in the ground, staying still it was.

“Hi,” she breathed and it felt like she stole the air right from your lungs only to say the one word.

“Who... who are you?” you queried shakily, something in you screaming to kneel in front of the woman who carried an immense power; how you knew that, you couldn’t tell.

When you didn’t listen to the instinct to submit to her, it was only due to the numbing horror as she took a step closer.

“Oh, do not fear me. I’m just here to fix what my brother obviously didn’t think through. Close your eyes,” she requested almost gently, but you couldn’t. You were afraid that if you did, you would never open them again.

And while you didn’t remember what it felt like to die, you sure as hell didn’t want to relive it.

When you didn’t obey, the woman sighed.

The very next second, you swiftly turned your face away, shading your eyes the second the sharp glow hit you.

You screamed at the burning sensation suddenly coursing your veins, lighting up every cell in your body, setting it on fire. Tears prickled in your eyes, running down your cheeks, leaving a burning trail like acid in their wake.

And then there was nothing.

Chapter End Notes

*runs and hides*

To distract you: wasn’t that a lovely moment with Tony? O:-)
19) Us redefined

Chapter Notes

*wordlessly hands the readers several insulin shots* Not to spoil anything, but you might need those.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

_I'm holding out til we're out of time_  
_Would you pierce the veil_  
_Would you cross the line_  
_I can feel you here, souls redefined_  
_I can't let go of our design_  
_Would you pierce the veil_  
_Would you cross the line_  
_Come back to me_  

_(Les Friction – Come Back to Me)_

…

Soft, but frantic hands cradling your head, caressing your face.

Your body too heavy to move a muscle.

Weak ringing in your ears.

The world spinning.

An angel speaking, his whispered pleas squeezing your heart like a cold fist.

“…Oh, oh doll, sweetheart, please, look at me. Say something. Tell me you’re okay, please, please… don’t do this to me, not again, _please_, you’re gonna be okay…”

You knew that voice, that much you were aware of. You knew that touch too, careful and carrying gentleness despite the callouses on his fingers. Your mind was buzzing with blurry images and a building headache. You were sure the pain would get worse if you opened your eyes, but hearing the growing anxiety in the voice, you knew leaving them closed was not an option.

Dark spots were dancing in your field of vision, but you got glimpses of a worried angelic face, making you smile automatically, even when you were barely controlling your mimics or any muscles really. You were aware of meeting a real-life angel before, but Steve was simply something else.

You blinked heavily, hoping for the dark patches to disappear and reveal Steve fully. He was frowning, his lips moving rapidly and his eyes were glassy, the blue and green brought to life.

Was he… was he crying?
You squeezed your eyes shut, convinced the image would resolve when looking at him after that. It didn’t change.

“Doll? Oh, thank god… can you hear me?”

One of his hands shifted, sliding under your shoulder blades to lift your torso from the hard floor, bringing you closer to him, while he was still cradling your head. He was so gentle in his motions, manipulating your body as if it was made of glass. It was nothing new to you, he had done it before; he would sometimes start making love to you that way, his demeanour gradually shifting as he got lost in his own pleasure after he took care of you.

You managed to sit upright on your own, Steve’s thumb running over your cheek.

“Doll?” he questioned lowly, his eyes widening as he finally realized this was probably not the appropriate way to address you. “I mean-“

“I’m fine,” you croaked, your throat dry. You couldn’t say more. The tide wave of emotions flooded your brain, sea of images, words, sensations overwhelming.

And god, couldn’t you tear your eyes away from him. He was as beautiful as ever, even more so, even with dark bruise-like circles under his eyes, smeared with tears.

“I’m okay,” you repeated, hesitantly reaching to caress his cheek with your fingertips, wanting to assure yourself he wouldn’t dissolve.

You knew for a fact this was very real, but still… gotta make sure, right? Everything felt so surreal lately…

Steve blinked in surprise, few salty drops escaping from behind his eyelids as he was watching you with wonder. You felt the same burn in your eyes – you wanted to cry, you wanted to laugh, you wanted to-

His hand caught yours on his face, his fingers tenderly wrapping around your wrist, bringing it down. You pretended it didn’t hurt you, that you didn’t feel the pang near your heart; it grew rapidly when you realized just how much that gesture of yours could have hurt him. This was probably too much.

Steve didn’t know yet. He didn’t know what you knew.

“How do you feel?” he asked slowly, the pad of his thumb stroking the back of your hand.

You could tell he was holding something back, but hey, so were you. Your body was itching with the need to throw your arms around his neck and snuggle him. Your lips burned with the desire to get familiar with his again, craving to find out if they still tasted the same.

“I’m-ugh…” my head hurts. Seeing the fear in his eyes, you didn’t have the heart to tell him the truth. This was too much already. “-okay.”

“I heard you screaming, Jarvis went on about an unauthorised entry. What happened? Do you remember?”

Oh, you did remember. There was a lot of things happening in your head, so many pictures, blending together and then falling into place only for another to appear. It was hard to make sense of it all and give him an acceptable answer. Your heart was ahead of your brain. Feelings were clearer than actual memories.
“There was a woman. Rather tall, long dark hair, dark gown. I’ve never seen her before, I’m sorry,” you babbled, too fascinated by more important matters.

Steve was here. Right here in your reach, touching you and you were… you were.

“I know. I saw her when I ran in. She just… disappeared. It’s okay, we’ll have Jarvis to show us the record. We’ll track her, the others will get on it. You’re more important. Bruce is on his way to the medical. I’ll get you there, okay? Just hold onto me,” he coaxed and the next thing you knew, you did exactly as he asked. Mainly because he lifted you from the ground as if you weighted nothing and you really didn’t want to fall.

It brought a smile to your face and butterflies to your stomach. How many times he had done that and it still affected you so with such intensity, your fingertips tingling?

You stared at his face, so up close, wishing for nothing but to kiss him. There was a worried wrinkle on his forehead and you wanted to smoothen it with your fingertips. You recalled how he had reacted the last time you touched him though.

You needed to tell him.

“Steve, I-“ you started, only to be interrupted, much to your frustration.

“What is it? Are you uncomfortable like this? Tell me what hurts.”

You shook your head lightly, the movement actually making you dizzy. Alright, maybe a trip to the medical wasn’t that unjustified, but… but!

“No, Steve… I mean, yeah, my head hurts a bit-“

“Bruce will take a look at it and work it out,” he assured you with a sad smile and you just gaped, wanting to throw your hands in the air.

There was a sheer determination written all over his expression and you… understood. There was no way you two could talk until you were checked up. You had been hurt. Injury was a threat to you. Steve had seen you die before. It probably physically ached him to be left unsure and have something, anything, to threaten your life again.

Not that you blamed him.

“I trust him,” you said then, adjusting to Steve’s play, earning a faint smile and a nod. “And I trust you too.”

The lift of the corners of his lips still seemed pained, but more genuine now.

“Thank you. I’m sorry I wasn’t around when… when it happened.”

Yeah, that was probably the goal. To have you left alone so the woman – if she was a woman, because there was no way she was an ordinary human – could do whatever she had done with the bright light and bring your memories back.

“That’s not your fault, Steve. You can’t exactly watch me 24/7,” you whispered, his gaze flickering to you, the shadow in his eyes attempting to prove you wrong. You knew for certain that he was haunted by a different memory now. One that wasn’t entirely his fault either.

Oh, how much you wanted to tell him… instead, you allowed yourself to get lost in his beautiful
eyes, so much that you barely noticed you reached the infirmary.

“So, what do we have here?” Bruce asked calmly, already observant of how quickly you reacted, if you were moving your head correctly. Steve lowered you to the bed, clearly paying special attention to being as gentle as possible. “Can’t walk?”

There was a slight hint of amusement in Bruce’s voice as if he knew Steve was being simply overprotective. The corners of your lips twitched when Steve shot him a mean look.

“Well, I had a very chivalrous fella at my disposal. I couldn’t refuse,” you announced, well-aware of the fact that using big words showed Bruce you weren’t that bad and your brain was working – and hell, was it working, finally. The ‘chivalrous fella’ part was for Steve’s benefit. He might get a hint… eventually. Better to ease him into it. “But my head does hurt a bit and I guess my balance might be a little off.”

“Okay. I’ll check your head for any bumps and bleeding, okay? Then I’ll shine a flashlight to your eyes and we go from here, hm?” he explained, pulling gloves on. You just nodded in understanding, watching Steve with a corner of your eye; he let Bruce work, but was still nearby.

“Do you want me to leave?” Steve asked when he noticed your line of sight and you only smiled at him and shook your head, much to Bruce’s discontent. “Okay.”

You did have quite a bump at the back of your head; the spot was definitely tender to say at least. Good news was that there was no external bleeding, your pupils were equally responsive, Bruce seemed happy you remembered the incident – not that there was much to remember – and you didn’t feel nauseous. Your balance truly was a bit off, but nothing terrible. As long as you had something to lean on in a moment of weakness, you were fine. CT shots showed no swelling either, at least for now – mostly, you were good to go.

“It’s up to you – either you can stay here, someone checking up on you regularly, or you can be in the room Tony had set for you with the very same treatment,” Bruce offered with a reassuring smile and you instantly knew which you wanted.

“My room, please,” you pleaded (mentally chanting ‘Steve’s room! Steve’s room!’) and Bruce nodded.

“Alright. If anything changes, have Jarvis to let me know. Otherwise I’ll leave you to the hands of your chivalrous fella.”

Steve glared murder at him, but walked to your side.

Jarvis chose that moment to speak up.

“There are no signs of the woman, Steve,” the AI reported regretfully, causing Steve to clench his jaw.

“Goddammit!”

Your hand found his, squeezing reassuringly as you could feel his anger and helplessness.

“That’s… I think that’s okay.”

Steve spun to face you in a lightning speed, too distracted to evade the contact you initiated.

“Okay?! What if-- maybe she… maybe she’ll be back and we didn’t even know she got in until she-
she—" he stuttered exasperatedly, but obviously holding back a lot.

It was time now.

“I don’t think she will be back. Uhm, would you mind…” You spun to the scientist slash doctor only to find him already making his way out. You stood face to face with the love of your love then, your soulmate and you couldn’t but take his other hand into yours as well, desperate to touch him. “Steve, what she did to me… she has no reason to come back. She’s finished.”

“What… what are you talking about?” he asked hesitantly, his gaze flickering to your joined hands; he didn’t free himself of your hold though. Had he caught the hint earlier then?

Your hand shook as it ran up his arm, over the crook of his shoulder, the side of his neck, ending up cradling his face.

Steve’s body went rigid, all muscles tense, but you could tell he was... he wanted to lean into your palm. He wanted it so bad, for things to be as they had been, to bask in your affection, but he knew it was wrong.

He was too much of a good man. He was your miracle and being with him again... that was a work of wonder.

“Can I kiss you?” you breathed, slowly rising to your toes, anticipation building up in your core.

You could probably pull out a water gun from behind your back now and shoot him and he would look less shocked. Also, he would look less pleased. And torn.

“I— y-yes? But—“

You couldn’t handle waiting until he finished whatever sentence he had in mind; you had waited too long already.

Your mouth caught his, warm soft lips and hot surprised exhale. He seemed frozen for a split second before he cautiously returned the kiss, slowly moving his lips against yours as if he was ready to stop the second you shoved him away.

At that thought, you grabbed a handful of his shirt to show that such thing was not fucking happening any time soon.

You parted your lips, delighted Steve actually tilted his head, giving you both better access to what you wanted and deepening the kiss. You could hear the crumbling of the walls he had tried built to stop himself from doing anything that could make you uncomfortable, anything he thought might be too much. The metaphorical noise was like music to your ears and you sighed into his mouth, revelling in the taste you didn’t realize you missed desperately.

His arm wrapped around your waist, pulling you closer, flush against his chest, his other hand cradling your face, taking control.

It was like a supernova bursting in your cells, the sensation your body knew and welcomed with arms open. It was everything. It was like coming home. Tears sprang from your eyes as his tongue teased your lower lip and-

-and that was it. Steve gasped, tasting your tears and backed away, dropping you so fast you nearly tipped over.
Your eyes snapped open, watching him dreadfully as you both panted.

*Just don’t say-*

“I’m sorry!”

- *that.*

You shook your head, grabbing his forearm before he could flee. You could still taste him on your lips and you craved more, more and *more*… but he seemed to be utterly panicking.

“Steve! I was the one to kiss you,” you blurted out with same urgency, trying your best to meet his eyes while he was skilfully avoiding it exactly that. You bit your lip and brought your hand to his face to *make him* look at you. “Because I wanted to.”

“I pushed it—”

“I wasn’t *complaining,*” you emphasized and he winced at the sharp tone. Goddammit! Be nice! “And I’m not sorry in the slightest.”

You took a deep breath and very, oh so slowly framed his face with your palms, ready to retreat if he hated it. He didn’t, except his confusion grew. His beautiful irises were nearly hidden with how blown his pupils were, but you only saw shame now, no excitement left.

“I missed it, Steve. I missed you,” you admitted, attempting a smile.

You didn’t think his eyes could have gone wider. You were wrong.

“I’m not— I don’t understand,” he stuttered weakly, utterly confused and sounding on the verge of breaking. *Ouch,* weren’t you an idiot to make him feel like this.

“Like what?” you echoed and he looked away, tears he bravely kept at bay welling up in his eyes again.

*Oh no, no*… what kind of a person made their soulmate cry? *Again*?!

“Like you think I want you to. I understand you need time, that you— it’s not the same for you. You don’t remember—”

“That’s the thing,” you couldn’t but laugh in incredulous euphoria, feeling blessed, which you might actually be, considering an angel brought your soul back from Heaven and all the other stuff. “I *do,* actually.”

You could tell his brain froze. It was impossible for it not to. There even might be a tiny ‘loading’ line above his head as his gaze grew absent, wheels turning in his head with too much effort and too little outcome.

“What,” he breathed, the one word barely leaving his lips.

“I have no clue who the woman was, what she did or *how* she managed to do that, but I remember now, Steve.”

Steve observed you in silence, his eyes roaming your face, most likely seeking any trace of a lie. You were a bit insulted that he thought you would lie to him about such important thing. On the other hand, you were pleased at him thinking you might go so far only to make him happy.
He didn’t say a thing, still searching. You wondered what you could tell him to convince him before you spoke again.

“Everything, Steve,” you repeated, your mind racing. “My family, Ryan…. Our meeting, your birthday…” you continued, but he had told you all of those things, dammit. What hadn’t he told you? Was there-? Oh… oh. “Clint shooting a la paintball at you when fighting with Natasha-“

That last bit got him snap from his strange haze.

“I… I didn’t tell you about that,” he said slowly, sounding as guilty as hopeful.

Oh, you were a bit mad about it, okay. Telling you all the nice things and leaving out the bumps on the road to your happiness? Not fair. Except the not-funny joke was on him.

“No, you didn’t. Hate to break it to you, but if you wanted to protect me from the whole ‘my job is dangerous’ thing, think again, because even without my memories, I saw the video and you ran into the frame towards the bomb knowing it was right before everything would blow up.”

*Including me.*

Your not-so-gentle reminder must have been sharper than you had intended, because Steve casted his gaze down, his face paling. Seeing him like that, you waited for a moment for him to digest your words before doing anything else.

You tipped his chin then with the smallest pressure only, letting him to look up on his own. When he did, you were met with a sight that not for the first time reminded you of a puppy. His eyes were so freaking huge and genuine.

“You… you really remember?” he whispered, shy and hopeful, his hands finding your hip and cheek with the lightest of touches. You couldn’t but smile, for some reason tearing up.

Damn, this was sappy. And heavy.

“Yes, Steve, I remember everything, including that one time we made out in the kitchen and you told me you couldn’t cross that line yet. I remember that before I died-“

A choked noise escaped him, his fingers clenching on you and you continued before he could apologize again. That was so not the point you were making.

“-I didn’t blame you for making that choice,” you soothed him, vainly.

“I.“

You had to actually physically stop him from talking, putting a finger over his lips. He had the decency to shut up at that, his eyes glued to you in mixture of exasperation, regret and adoration.

“As I didn’t when I woke up and was showed the footage that was broadcasted all over US. It wasn’t your fault; that was an impossible choice to make. How would have we been able to live with the knowledge of thousands of people dying so we could be happy? You… you did the right thing, Steve.”

He grunted, his hand wrapping around yours to release his mouth and let him speak, but you shook your head and looked at him pointedly.

“I remember all of those things rushing through my mind. But most importantly, I remember what an
incredible person you are. I remember every single reason why I love you.”

“Doll…” he breathed out, a crack in his voice even in that one word. A shiver ran down your spine at the addressing, so full of emotions. A tear escaped his eye and you couldn’t help but catch it with your finger. “I’m sorry. God, I’m so sorry, I can’t even-“

You frowned. You wanted to move on, so hard all of sudden. This was the moment you should he joyful, not full of angst and guilt.

“Hush, don’t cry and please stop apologizing.”

Steve bit his lip hard, waited for few seconds, but nodded. “Okay.”

“Really?” you blurted out, surprised. That easily…? Of course not. You could still see it was weighting him down – it would for a long, long time, you were sure of it and there probably wasn’t much you could do about it. But you could try. “Hey, if you still feel guilty about it, it doesn’t count. Just let it go, Steve. For me?”

You charmed your best pleading eyes he could never resist, bit your lip and placed your palms on his collarbones instead, deliberately reminding him of two soulmarks he carried, both for you. What other explanation was needed?

“This is how it was supposed to happen,” you whispered seriously, your gaze boring into his and yeah, the adoration in his eyes was definitely winning over the other emotions now, much to your delight. You could melt under that loving gaze. “Exactly like this.”

“You’re incredible,” he murmured, nuzzling his nose in your cheek, dropping the lightest of kisses there then.

The tenderness had your eyes flutter shut, basking in his soft affection. His lips brushed your skin as they moved towards your mouth and then they finally reached their destination.

You sighed into his mouth contentedly, your hand shifting to curl around his nape, bring yourself closer to him. God, how you loved this man. Especially when his hands moved to your shoulders, squeezing with a little too much force, desperately clinging to you so you wouldn’t dissolve into thin air.

Steve met your lips several times, always briefly, stealing little kisses, spiced with few more tears. You couldn’t tell which were yours and which were his anymore. Were you crying? Was he? You sunk into his lips before he could retreat again, earning a chuckle tickling your mouth.

Steve rested his forehead against yours, opening his eyes for you to drown in.

“You came back to me,” he whispered, voice thick with overwhelming emotions.

“I was given back,” you corrected him with a smile. He returned the gesture shortly before growing serious.

“I’m not giving you up, ever,” he declared, causing you to freeze.

You loved this. You adored this fairy-tale-like reunion and miracles, but this was reality. Steve had lost you once. There was no telling how he would react if something threatened your life again; hell, you could see it today when he carried you to the infirmary, so insistent on getting you checked up.

You didn’t want to ruin this, you honestly didn’t. But you needed to bring it up and hear him say it
anyway.

“Not even when I might be in danger?”

You could see the corner of his lips twitch nervously, knowing you hit the nail on the head with deadly precision.

His voice came out raspy as he spoke up. “I- I… oh my god, I’m so sorry. I don’t- I’m not- you- I”

“Say you won’t leave me, Steve. Please. Tell me you won’t give me up,” you pleaded, fear twisting your gut.

What if he dreaded the history repeating itself so much it would come between you? What if he spun of his heels right now, leaving you, because of some ridiculous idea of protecting you? The thought grew like a lump in your throat, suffocating.

He shook his head and you couldn’t breathe until his fingers caressed you face tenderly, soft smile on his lips. “I can’t imagine losing you again, in any way.”

“Then don’t. Promise you won’t get any silly ideas about leaving me to supposedly keep me safe.”

Honesty was burning in his eyes, interlacing with each word that left his lips and you finally sucked in some air. “I won’t. I swear I won’t. I won’t leave unless you tell me to and it will break my heart even then. God, doll, I love you so much.”

This time, you were breathless for a different reason. Your lips parted, your heart racing like two hundred per minute. He meant it. He actually meant it, there was no doubt of the sincerity in his eyes, the severity of his vow.

Relieved smile spread on your face and you smacked your mouth to his, effectively taking him aback. He was quick to get on with the program though, his lips sinking into yours, breathing you in as if you were the air he needed to survive. You wanted to literally jump on him, wrapping your legs around his waist, but you realized where you were.

Your room. You needed to get to your room – no, his room, his room you had claimed yours as much as his – to have some privacy.

You withdrew swiftly, catching him off guard once more and pulling at his hand almost harshly.

It was a great plan to drag him out of the medical. Except you faltered in your steps with the fast movement causing you to sway.

Of course, Steve was there to catch you, firm hands steadying you by your hips.

“Hey, hey, you’re okay?” he coaxed.

“Yeah, just a bit dizzy. It will pass,” you assured him, throwing a perfect smile over your shoulder. You might have missed his face when aiming due to the vertigo, but that was beside the point. You tugged on his hand that had settled on your hip, only not to be able to move an inch forward, Steve’s voice fussing over you once more.

“Maybe we should ask Bruce to check you over again-”

“I’m fine, I’m… almost okay. Maybe we could ask Sam and Dean later?” you vented your sudden brilliant idea. “They are more of experts on mysterious powerful people showing up and hitting
people with strange light, I guess.”

“*The what now?*” he honest to God squeaked, making you jump and spin on your heels at the sudden high-pitched noise. “You were hit-?”

“Later, please? Can we go somewhere private and just… be?”

He did not seem very comfortable with that idea, shifting and clenching his fists for a short moment, but then his shoulders slumped and you knew you won, rewarding him with what you were hoping to be a blinding smile.

You probably succeeded, because his fingers traced your cheeks, a smile full of wonder attacking his own lips.

“As you wish, doll.”

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Chapter End Notes

This chapter exists forever. I’m messy like that :)

Thank you for all the comments on the previous chapter :) Even if they showed that you see right through me and You're having none of my BS :D

Also:

♫ Oops, I did it again. ♫ Crossed 100k. In this whole series… ♫
20) Feel you closer

Chapter Notes

Alternative work title: Let’s get this smut on the road.
Minimum plot (a bit at the beginning, if you want to avoid the explicit parts and still want to understand what shit ‘Nat’ will pull next chapter). Otherwise – totally an explicit chapter. You’ve been warned.

Actual title inspired by a soundtrack to Plan Coeur (The Hook Up Plan).

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

You walked to the room hand in hand, unseen and unheard. Besides Jarvis, of course, but you didn’t even count him anymore. After the many times you had stayed in the Tower, you grew even fond of him. He really was programmed to be sassy, just like his creator, and sass was a language you spoke. The idea hit you with the snap of the door and you instantly burst into giggles. Steve casted a curious, but warm gaze at your schoolgirl-like fit.

“Tony doesn’t know,” you explained, only to see no understanding on Steve’s face. “He doesn’t know I remember. I have a very strong need to mess with him, even though we had a nice talk.”

“…you had a nice talk?”

“Uh-uh. Yeah. I asked him about me. About us.”

A shadow of hurt fell on Steve’s face and you realized what it looked like, you seeking another man.

“It wasn’t that I didn’t trust you!” you blurted out immediately, seeing clearly that it didn’t convince him. “I just wanted a different opinion on me. You’re a bit… biased.”

The frown on his face smoothened, the pool of sadness in his eyes gradually vanishing. Instead, his brows lifted along with one corner of his lips.

“Biased?”

“Yep. You were all waxing poetic about me, how amazing I was. I wanted a second opinion, because I knew for sure I… wasn’t… that… that perfect,” you trailed off as Steve’s smile grew wider and wider with each word. “What?”

“And you decided to go to Tony of all people?”

You were surprised by that question. Steve was usually more the one to dwell on you actually being amazing and astounding and stuff, fast to assure you when he spotted only a trace of self-consciousness on you. Not today, apparently. You grinned, not minding a bit.

“…that’s fair. But cut me some slack, he looked like he’d be the one to speak openly.”

He gave a short laugh, amused twinkle in his eyes. The change in him ever since he had learned you remembered was so stark you couldn’t tear you gaze away. It was mesmerizing – now, his smiles
and laughter radiated true happiness.

“That I can’t argue with. Now, what kind of messing are we talking about?” 

At that, you smirked. “Your clothes. I wanna wear your clothes and I need Jarvis to tell me exactly what comment Tony and Clint made when I first entered the kitchen wearing your stuff.”

You might have had more than one goal when saying this. It wasn’t just to cause Tony a fit later… you might want to nudge Steve’s fantasy, knowing all too well what his clothes on you symbolized and how much he enjoyed you wearing them despite denying it till his last breath.

His eyes did grow rounder, much to your satisfaction. You bit your lip, attempting to hide the smirk battling to show on your face.

“Maybe throw a bit of foul language in?” you continued and Steve closed his eyes, exhaling slowly. “Just imagine his face – me, walking in, him wanting to comment and me encouraging him, talking about how I actually got thoroughly fucked the previous evening.”

“Every time,” Steve grunted and you tilted your head in wonder, the grin winning the fight and finding its way on your face.

“How?”

Steve’s eyes snapped open, black as night, his irises barely visible. Ohhh, this was even better than you had imagined.

“Every time I think I know just how much trouble you are…” he rasped, taking a step closer, forcing you to walk backwards, your back hitting the door after only two steps, effectively trapping you between his frame and the hard surface, an inch between your bodies remaining.

Your breathing raged as if on command, heart speeding up in anticipation. Steve’s hands rose, palms resting by your head at each side, his face leaning to yours. Your teeth released your lower lip in order to wet it with your tongue, drawing Steve’s gaze like a magnet. Your breath hitched when his lips stayed so painfully close you could feel the heat, your eyes fluttering close at the sensation. God, your belly was already burning.

“…you always prove me wrong…” he hummed, brushing your lips with his own. You nearly whined when he parted almost instantly and you intended to follow, only for Steve to have your hair trapped in one of his hands to make sure you stayed put. That simple gesture caused your underwear to dampen. “Talking like that when you’re injured and you know nothing can happen.”

His mouth moved to shower your chin and throat with attention, torturously light touches, leaving goosebumps in their wake. Your knees buckled, Steve’s hand quick to catch you, squeezing you between his body and the door to keep you upright.

“See, that’s what I’m talking about. You can barely stand. I wouldn’t want to hurt you,” he mumbled to your throat, but honestly, he didn’t sound convincing in the slightest. More like-- no. Did he… did he sound demanding? Did he really start a game now?

“But… but I was cleared to leave medical,” you whispered, testing the waters, earning a satisfied grunt.

Oh god, this was happening. There had been glimpses of this before, the dominance; you were pretty sure Steve enjoyed it mostly because of how underestimated he had been before the serum, but the reason didn’t quite matter. It was important that he liked it and you never minded when it showed a
little. Now though… oh boy.

“That’s true,” he mused, tickling the side of your neck with his warm breath. “And I was left to take care of you… in charge of your treatment. What only will I do with you, doll?”

Powerplay. This was a powerplay and given how much you trusted Steve, knowing he wouldn’t actually hurt you when playing, you were totally on board with that game.

The pool of wetness on your underwear only confirmed it.

Steve’s hand urged you to answer, squeezing your hip. Your whole body tingled, a tiny whimper escaping you.

You just needed him close now. With all the madness that had happened, there was nothing you needed more than to feel his body on yours, his hands, his lips, his everything, just to know you two were.

“Anything you want,” you breathed and Steve’s hips thrust forward, deliciously adding friction between your bodies. He was hard as rock and you had an idea what would make him even harder. You were saving it for now… soon, though.

He raised his head, facing you again, his hand releasing your hair in order to run the pad of his thumb over your lower lip, watching the motion as if hypnotized.

“Anything, you say? That’s quite daring, doll…”

This was it. This was the time.

You peeked at him from under your eyelashes as your tongue kitten-licked his thumb. He didn’t even flinch, but you knew he would at your next words.

“Anything, sir.”

It was his turn to whimper, his hips bucking again, his mouth smacking to yours, both of his hands falling to your waist.

“God, I missed you so much, all of you. Are you sure you’re okay?” he whispered urgently before devouring your mouth again, nearly breathing you in with the vigour. “Tell me and I stop.”

You grabbed his shoulders, trying to pull him impossibly closer.

“I missed you too. And yes. All yours… sir.”

“Christ, woman!”

His palms took handfuls of your backside firmly and your giddy giggle got lost in the moan you both let out, swallowed by the other, your hips moving in synch.

Out of blue, he grabbed your wrists, pinning them to your sides, the display of strength once again sending a thrill through your body.

“Keep them here until I give you the permission to move, okay?” he ordered, the low timbre of his voice striking something right inside your core.

“Yes.”
“Yes, what, doll?” he coaxed, voice deliciously dark.

Oh wow, just wow. You were pretty sure your core just started throbbing.

“Yes, sir.”

“That’s right,” he praised, taking your mouth again, wordlessly asking for access, though more demanding than usual. You parted your lips, welcoming his tongue as he swept it along your teeth and then met yours.

The order he had given you was way harder than you anticipated; keeping your hands to yourself while his own roamed your body, guiding your hips to meet his for more friction and making your body feel like floating in a sea of pleasure, cupping your breasts… his mouth was taking yours as if his life depended on it, breathing you in and nibbling, retreating only to suck at your neck just when you wanted him, needed him kissing you on your lips… it was the sweetest torture. You craved for his mouth and all you had to do was to touch him and pull him back to you.

But you weren’t allowed.

“Hands up,” he hissed, already tugging at your shirt before you registered what he asked you to do. Your body obeyed automatically, but with delay. Steve didn’t seem to mind, his skilful fingers finding the opening of your bra instead of simply waiting. Before you knew it, your torso was bare, your chest peppered with kisses and a mark sucked under your collarbone.

“Steve…” escaped your lips, your hands twitching, refusing to return to your sides, finding his muscles instead.

He hummed discontentedly, guiding them back to stay along the wall. You couldn’t but whine.

“Please.”

“Please what?” he whispered to your skin and you nearly banged the back of your head against the wall, stopping the last half-inch away. You had hit your head, after all.

“Please, sir. Can I…” Your own breathy moan interrupted your plea when he licked at your nipple. Christ, Steve. “Can I touch you?”

“Mmm…” he hummed, the vibration making shitty things to your brain that you didn’t know were possible. You were absolutely at his mercy and you didn’t even care. Hell, you were enjoying it, but God, you needed to feel his body under your hands. “Not yet.”

The whimper that left your lips was borderline embarrassing, more so since Steve’s mouth left your breast and soothed you with a sweet and dirty kiss, your tongues tangling together.

“Just a little longer. Let me appreciate you, doll. You’re so, so pretty…”

His hot breath, soft lips and a dart of a tongue drew trail down your front, one of his hand easily slipping under hem of your jeans, while the other already worked on the button and tugged them to your knees. He kneeled, glancing up at you with a wicked smile as he stripped them completely with only a little help.

Steve guided your left leg over his shoulder and this time the noise you made was utterly embarrassing, a blend of a squeak, a moan and a whimper and Jesus fucking Christ. He didn’t even get his mouth on you, just the anticipation enough to flood your core. You knew how good he was at that and just the thought-
“Oh, doll, you’re soaking…”

Something in you wanted to snark that yes, you noticed, but another voice, the one that was ridiculously enjoying this game, shut the urge up and whispered another words for you to say.

“Y-yes, sir. Because of you,” your voice trembled slightly and when he looked up at you from his filthy position again, lop-sided smirk on his handsome and usually so innocent face, you were done for.

His finger ran up your slit, making you flinch and bite your lip.

“And just what should I do about it, mm…” he kissed your inner thigh, giving you a very good idea as if you hadn’t had one before. “Would you like me to take care of it? Use my tongue?”


And you should feel humiliated at responding him, but you didn’t. You loved it.

“Please… sir,” you breathed out, which gained you another kiss, higher this time, just below the waistline of your panties, one finger looping in them; a sharp tug and they were gone, making you gasp.

“Since you said ‘please’… but you’re gotta watch, doll, alright?”

You gulped. You weren’t sure you were able to do that. You’d come in seconds. Still, you nodded.

“Speak up, my sweet girl…”

“Yes, sir.”

The first lap of his tongue caused your fists clench with the need to hold onto something. Anything. His hair looked suitable enough, just like his free shoulder. You chewed on your lower lip.

As if hearing your thoughts, he led your hands to hold onto him. It was bliss – and a freaking reassurance, because you really didn’t want to fall. Not that he would ever let you, but better be sure.

You could barely stand and you couldn’t stand it. The sight of Steve devouring you like this, bringing indescribable pleasure tingling in every cell of your body with his clever tongue was too much. He didn’t even need to use his fingers, finding spots to drive you insane just by licking at them.

You came with a breathy cry, your pulse loud in your ears and with your legs getting wobbly at instant; you were lucky he held you so firmly. He sucked on your clit, sending shocks through your already overwhelmed body, forcing you to moan his name and arch your back. He worked you through it, alternating between praises and soothing your weepy core, slowly driving you down.

You couldn’t fucking speak. Your eyes snapped open when he shifted, lowering your leg back to the ground, placing a kiss under your navel.

“You good?” he rasped and it took a lot of effort to actually reply instead of simply nodding.

“Yes.”

He waited.

Right. “Sir.”
His big palms caressed your hips, kissing the skin there.

“Feel like returning the favour, doll?” he asked, voice sultry as much as his gaze.

He would have looked innocent, peeking at you from under his eyelashes like that, but his blown irises gave his arousal away. And you knew better than that, very well-aware of where is mouth had just been.

“How was such praise striking something in you, making you want to do anything just to hear it again? Was this just him or did you have a kink you hadn’t been aware of?

It didn’t matter now. You needed to turn off your brain and enjoy this fully.

“If-if that’s what you want, sir,” you stuttered, his forehead resting against your abdomen at the statement. It brought a satisfied smile to your face – perhaps you weren’t the only one who was a little overwhelmed. You stroked his scalp gently. “Anything to please you.”

He let out a choked noise, rising to his feet at instant, his mouth catching yours in a sweet and salty kiss, his unmistakable jeans-cladded hard rocking into your heat.

“Mouthy, aren’t you? Get on your knees, doll,” he ordered as he spun you, suddenly him being the one with his back against the wall.

You obediently slid down and he lost the shirt that was crying for help on his muscled body anyway. It was a mouth-watering sight even from down there. You wordlessly asked for permission to undo his belt, having it granted. You released him from both, his pants and boxers, his erection springing free. Shit, you almost forgot how big he was.

Steve’s hand tenderly slipped into your hair, guiding you to look up. You were surprised when you saw the fraction of concern in his eyes, a question perhaps, breaking the character he had seemed to slide into rather easily.

The pool of warmth in your chest at the gesture was as unexpected as the act itself. Was it strange, perhaps cowardly of you, that you loved he kept checking with you just to make sure that everything he did was alright with you? Did it make you unadventurous and boring that the fact he showed you every now and then that you could trust him completely, was the biggest turn-on in the end?

You smiled at him shyly, the simple lift of the corners of your lips reciprocated instantly. The pad of his thumb swept over your lower lip, sending a shiver down your spine.

’Anything to please you,’ your own words echoed in your head, resonating with truth. You loved him. You did want to make him happy so badly, as much as you knew he wanted you to be.

You kissed the tip of his member, soon taking him between your lips. His hand never released your hair, though his eyelids fluttered shut, shameless moan of satisfaction escaping him. It only encouraged you.

Steve wouldn’t let you finish him and what an early finish would it have been. He pulled your head away, tugging you upright and locking your mouths in a kiss as his hand did the job for you. You would have been confused and maybe even hurt by that action, but you knew him. You knew that no matter what game he was playing, he needed to be certain you would be alright.
“Didn’t want you to strain yourself,” he breathed into your mouth, his voice trembling with aftershock, sucking gently on your lips, his arm wrapped around your waist securely to hold you close with little care for how sticky you both were now thanks to his release.

“I know,” you whispered back, meeting his gaze in a haze, the affection for you written all over his face hitting you like a train. “I love you.”

“And I love you. More than you’ll ever know.”

A teasing smile tucked at the corner of your lips. “Show me? Please, sir?”

He choked out a laugh, his hold getting stronger on you, something poking your stomach as it came back to life.

“Troublemaker, doll. That’s what you are,” he hummed, grinning with a delicious mixture of sweet and intense, like dark chocolate. His not so clean hand cupped your bottom and one of his long fingers teased around your still dripping core. His nose nuzzled your hair, his lips brushing your earlobe with a filthy whisper. “I might have to fuck that cheekiness out of you.”

You gulped at that promise delivered in such foul language, your heart pounding in your chest right against his.

Yes, please.

It might help with the headache that was slowly beginning to bother you once more.

“Looking forward to it… sir.”

---

Steve clearly felt adventurous, indulging the dominance and the power he held and you gladly let him, knowing the reward would – uh – come in the end. You lost count on how many times he brought you to the very edge only to let you descend again, never letting you tip over and fall. The orgasm that followed when he finally did, your walls clenching around him like a vice, was something you had never experienced before and that said something, considering Steve had been your lover for some time now. It felt like sparkles exploded in every single cell of your body, pounding with never-ending bliss, his cock throbbing in you and sending another flare through your body like in a vicious circle.

Apparently, you had been in Heaven once – and right now, Steve surely gave you a taste of what was it like, because there could not be another explanation. The afterglow was so warm and wonderful you basked in it for God knew how long.

When you finally came back to yourself, Steve’s fingers were tenderly threading in your hair, his lips on your temple. Your eyes fluttered open, causing him to stop and search your face with attentive eyes as he kept himself propped on his elbow.

“Hey, doll, are you okay?” he fussed softly, his breathing back to normal. He was still sporting an adorable flush down his face and chest, an evidence of the effort made and the satisfaction that followed.

“Yeah. This was… wow.”

“Yeah?” he grinned, winding up a strand of your hair around his finger. His eyes were sparkling and you kinda wanted to slap his chest for the flash of smugness. Instead, you slapped him verbally and very much playfully.

“Yes, sir,” you returned the wide smile and he huffed, falling to your side. You couldn’t help but
laugh.

“Ugh, don’t start again.”

“I’d like to start again… some other time,” you admitted, hopeful your face was still red from before, hence not showing the embarrassment at your admission. “I liked this.”

Steve embraced you firmly, kissing your shoulder. “So did I… maybe too much. You’re sure I didn’t hurt you?”

“Nope. Not at all.” you replied cheerily, casting a reassuring gaze aimed straight to his eyes as your voice softened. “You’re always careful, Steve, I know that. And I appreciate it.”

“Alright, then. Let’s revisit this sometime. You’re amazing, doll. I love you. I can’t—I can’t even say how happy I am to have you here. Back with me. Stay?”

The sudden vulnerability almost made your heart stop with the ache, the agony he must have experienced after losing you – and how amazing it actually was, mean of you maybe, but God, he had missed you so much, because he loved you so deeply already – striking you precisely to your very soul. You were right there with him when it came to feelings.

It dawned to you why he would enjoy the sense of dominance now of all the times you had made love – it gave him an illusion of control over something. What had happened to you, the kidnapping, the bombs, your death… he didn’t have control over that. When the Winchesters had brought you back, there weren’t many things he could do about your amnesia either, leaving him helpless. You had a hunch he felt like having zero control over things for a while now.

This, this incredible experience gave him what he had been craving for. You couldn’t fault him for wanting that, more so when you enjoyed it so immensely. After all, both of you were only human in the end.

Only humans. Soulmates. Souls redefined, never the same after merging into one, yet maintaining their singularity. Still better together, gravitating one towards the other to strongly to be kept apart.

You stretched your neck so your lips could reach Steve’s forehead, a loving and caring gesture, comfort he often offered you. The action made him chuckle, an unusual watery sound as tears welled in his eyes as well as in yours.

You lingered for several moments, your eyes finding his then, fond glassy gaze with emotions too heavy to be carried only by one person. You were good at it together though. You softly kissed his lips and then wiggled against him, settling in his arms comfortably, trying to nestle against him in a way that wouldn’t leave an inch between your bodies – and Steve happily assisted you.

“I love you too, Steve. And there’s nowhere I’d rather be.”

Chapter End Notes

Well. Now I’m blushing. This was self-indulgent to a fault. Hope you liked it, I believe
this was the first time I wrote something with hints of dom/sub, even when playful, so I pray I didn’t muff it up too much :)) I couldn’t leave the fluff behind O:-)

Two chapters and an epilogue left – just in case you missed the changed chapter count ;) The thing is, while I have those mostly written, I’m leaving for a student exchange tomorrow and my life is probably gonna become slightly crazier. Hence no promises on early update; then again, when have I ever left people hanging for too long? :)) Kudos to you :-*
21) Two confused men, two and half culprits

Chapter Summary

Jarvis is the half culprit. I wonder who the two confused men could be…. Hint: for once, it’s not Sam and Dean.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

You woke up, suffocating weight preventing your chest from expanding. You remembered dreaming about water, the light at the surface gradually receding from your grasp. All you could see now was darkness, the pressure against your lungs and the burn in them remaining.

Your throat closed up in panic as you fought to suck some oxygen into your airways.

Vainly.

You trashed around, elbowing the warm mass behind you that seemed to be pulling you under – only for the grip on you to grow stronger, your ribcage feeling like collapsing any minute.

You struck harder and the vice-like grip on you loosened with a huffed protest. You instantly rolled away—how were you rolling away in the water? What was that sound?

You blinked away the tears that prickled in the corners of your eyes with your previous effort and chased each inhale, your heart hammering in your chest wildly. Your vision clearing, eyes adjusting to the dark, you came face to face with a perplexed and very much half-asleep Steve.

Oh god, you were okay. No water. No drowning. Just Steve’s strength and nightmares combining and resulting in the least pleasant outcome.

His pupils were dilated and he shot up into a sitting position, blinking away his own daze. With a hand still on your ribs, you closed your eyes and forced yourself to dial down your fight-or-flight instincts.

You were safe. Steve was safe, with you, definitely not a danger to you. You still flinched when he rasped out the apologetic words, heavy with guilt and concern.

“Oh my god! Are you okay? Doll? Can you breathe? Does it hurt? I’m sorry. Oh god, I am so, so sorry-”

You raised your hand in his general direction, gesturing for him to give you a sec.

Rationally, you knew you were fine and you needed to chill the fuck out, but it was a bit harder to actually do so.

Steve let you take your time, ominous silence falling on the bedroom. You forced more air to your lungs, the burn slowly dissolving. You focused on the pleasant soreness instead, the result of your first night together after a long time-- what time it was now anyway?
You snapped your eyes open, finding Steve motionless form in the shadows, still sitting on the bed. Only this time, his face was buried in his palms, his fingers tangled in his loose strands in a brutal manner, and when you looked at him – truly looked – you detected the slightest tremble of his body.

Any pain caused by his crushing embrace vaporized at instant, the urge to comfort him taking over; big time.

You carefully reached out to him, your fingers curling around his wrist and gently pulling it away – or attempting to. He didn’t move an inch.

“Steve?” you called out softly, surprised by how hoarse your voice sounded and flinched. Steve did as well and you cleared your throat – uselessly, because the problem was somewhere lower. “Steve, are you alright?”

His hands twitched on his face, but he didn’t withdraw them.

“Steve, are you back with me?” you whispered urgently and the only answer you got was a frustrated muffled groan. Your lips curled up in a tight smile, sympathetic. “I’m okay. Are you?”

“Please stop asking me that,” he breathed out, his palms uncovering his mouth only for the words being comprehensible.

“Okay. Okay, I’ll stop,” you promised and wiggled your way closer to him. “Can I touch you further though?”

His ribcage expanded considerably with his sharp inhale, but he didn’t respond.

“…please?” you added, pressing further.

“Doll…”

“Yeah?”

“I’m so sorry,” he whispered, his voice breaking simultaneously with your heart swelling in your chest.

“I know.” At that, he finally allowed you to lower his hand, the other following its suit. Wet eyelashes created a tiny tornado with their furious blinking when his eyes found your face and saw an encouraging soft smile. “Can I hug you now?”

He opened his mouth slowly only for it to fall shut with no sound coming out. He gave a cautious nod and that was all you needed to wrap your smaller form around the big sad bundle of a supersoldier. You basically climbed into his lap, hiding his face in the crook of your neck, planting a kiss on the top of his head before laying your cheek on it.

Huh, that was nice. No wonder he did the same to you as often as he did.

“It’s okay, Steve. We’re okay,” you whispered to his hair, kissing it again. “I love you.”

“I’m sorry.”

“…that’s not what a girl wants to hear when she confesses her love to a guy,” you joked hesitantly, but you could feel his lips curling up in a smile as he breathed in against your skin deeply.

“I love you too,” he cooed, his arms finally sneaking around you and cautiously holding you as close as possible.
“Uh-uh.”

“Exactly what a guy wants to hear when he confesses his love to a girl,” he threw back at you in a hushed voice.

You chuckled breathlessly and caressed his shoulders without even a thought of letting go.

“Will you be able to fall asleep again?”

“Will you? How are your ribs? Is your breathing okay? I’m really, really sorry, sweetheart. I’ll just lie on the couch—”

“Don’t you dare—”

“Don’t argue with me. I literally just tried to crush your lungs,” he growled, regret radiating off him in waves the size of a tsunami.

“Not intentionally!” you spat back, somehow maintaining gentle at the same time. “…right?”

“Of course not! It wasn’t- I would never-- but that doesn’t mean it won’t happen again,” he bargained in the end, sorrowful pools of blue and green shining even in the shadows of your room.

What he said was undoubtedly true. But the picture of having him lying several feet from your reach now (with his mind full of awful scenarios keeping him awake for sure), was unimaginable. Just terrible. Heartless.

The solution seemed easy enough, though it was less comfortable; still better than the other option he had offered.

“Then put on your big boy pants and be the little spoon,” you challenged, earning a bewildered look with his eyebrows near his hairline.

“…for real?”

“Yep.”

He observed you for several moments that felt like eternity, while he considered his options. Then he sighed and you knew you won.

“…okay.”

“That’s what I thought,” you smiled at him a lop-sided smile, pulling him down to the mattress again; and he let you.

It was a little ridiculous and definitely strange to switch positions resulting in your rather thin arm enwrapping Steve’s muscular waist and being glued to his back – not to mention your other arm, where the hell did he usually put the other arm when spooning you? –, but in a way, you enjoyed it, more so when after a moment, his hand covered yours, careful not to put too much pressure.

It was still the first night after you regained your memories; there was no way you even considered anything that involved Steve not being pressed to you without an inch remaining between your bodies an option.

You scooted even closer to him; you fell back into a more peaceful sleep in no time.

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Steve was very mature about the whole thing – so much that he decided (just like you did) – that you wouldn’t address the matter again. You spent the better part of waking up process making out like your life depended on it and then you might have winced the tiniest bit when Steve brushed your tender ribs, which ended up with him leaving to take a shower.

But not in the ‘oh god, I’m sorry, let me drown in a bathtub’ kind of leave, more like ‘maybe we could at least wait for the evening before we jump each other’s bones again’ kind of leave and it overall felt… rather alright.

With Steve occupied, you moved on to the funnier matters – like going through his closet to find a suitable outfit for your morning shenanigans, while Jarvis kindly replayed a conversation that felt like an ancient history to you.

You found yourself humming under your breath, wondering how good of an opening Tony could give you, when your eyes fell on something that took your breath away; just enough of it to leave some to yell for your soulmate.

“Steve! Steve, come here please!”

There was a crash in the bathroom, rapid pats of his wet feet and he flung out of the door in impressive speed with only a towel around his waist.

“What?! What is it?” he blurted out while he rapidly scanned the room for any danger and you almost felt bad for making him panic.

Almost. Because boy, this was awesome. You held out the t-shirt of your choice to him, amazed nearly beyond words.

“How did I not know you have this?”

Steve blinked furiously, his stance easing when he realized it was a false alarm.

“Christ, doll,” he huffed a relieved breath and sheepishly scratched he back of his neck upon seeing the famous shield on the clothing. “Eh… pretty sure it was a gag gift from Clint…”

“That’s so friggin’ perfect. Can I borrow it?”

His lips spread in a content smile as he walked to you, one hand landing on your shoulder, his lips incidentally catching your temple. “It’s all yours, doll.”

You debated washing your hair when Steve let you use the shower afterwards, but a little devil on your shoulder told you that ruffled hair and overall sleepy look™ would work much better for you.

You smiled at the reflexion with satisfaction, re-entering Steve’s bedroom, giddy.

“So, what do you think?” you asked him cheerily, spreading your arms and turning a full circle to show off your outfit in all its glory.

Steve looked up from where he was making the bed and froze. For a second, his skin paled to a very dangerous shade of white, his gaze glued to the brand on your torso. It gave you a pause; an amused grin you expected, a heated glare caused by you wearing his insignia maybe, but not the utter look of horror.

As fast as he turned to a statue, he recovered, plastering a smile on his face again – but it didn’t reach his eyes, a shadow of something that twisted your gut uncomfortably remaining.
“Looks good on you,” he stated approvingly and averted your gaze to pat at the mattress pointedly. “Honestly, it kinda makes me want to pull you right back to bed and have my way with you in it only.”

“Hold that thought, Captain, and maybe next time leave a different kind of your brand,” you suggested and added a wink, which seemed to finally erase whatever ugly thought had attacked him earlier from his head. “We have a billionaire to mess with.”

“Every time…” he echoed his words from last night, chasing blood to your cheeks and causing a giggle to spill from your lips.

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Steve fell into his role as easily as you did; he led you to the kitchen, your shuffling feet giving an impression of you being only half-awake and hesitant about walking the right direction.

Much to your luck, all the occupants of the Tower were already in the kitchen as Jarvis had informed you prior to entering the room. You smiled at each of them sheepishly, letting Steve gingerly seat you on one of the bar stools – not before you had enough time to show off your supposed pyjama.

Your plan was working perfectly as upon your bashful ‘Good morning, everyone,’ each of the poor Avengers got caught in a different intensity of staring. Natasha was tactful enough to revert her gaze shortly after noticing your choice of clothing, only smirking a bit, while Bruce took a little longer. Clint had been in the middle of stirring his cereal with milk, now paused mid-motion, recovering after about ten seconds. Tony was blatantly gawking at you, the pot of coffee in his hand dangerously atilt.

As if you couldn’t see their reaction, you smiled at Steve shyly. “I don’t want to impose, Steve. I can make my own breakfast…”

He only replied with a sweet smile. “You wanted to try eggs and bacon, right?”

“If it’s not too much trouble… but I really-“

“Nat. Let me take care of you,” he pleaded lowly and wow, the gentle but conflicted look he gave you was an Oscar-nominee-worthy thing.

“Thank you, Steven. You’re very kind to me,” you thanked him genuinely, meaning every word. It earned you a twitch from five different people (including Steve, who hadn’t seen that one coming) as you used his full name and it took a lot of your strength not to burst out laughing.

Natasha cleared her throat. “So… how are you holding up? Did you sleep well?”

“Very much. Thank you, Ms. Romanoff… uh, you?”

“Natasha is fine, Nat. And yeah.”

Wow. Not even the great spy was onto you apparently – or she was, seeing right through your little stunt and deciding not to ruin your fun, being that much of a good actress.

Not certain about how exactly to proceed from now on, your eyes travelled around the bar, eyes landing on Tony.

He looked like he wanted to say something, but Clint, as if sensing the nature of his prepared exclaim, shut him up with a glare. You, on the other hand, were an incarnation of innocence on the
outside, dying of laughter on the inside already.

“What is it, Mr. Stark? I can see you want to say something,” you nudged him gently and fiddled with your fingers nervously as Steve cracked the eggs in a bowl and started stirring.

“Nope. Not really,” the billionaire cleared his throat awkwardly, something so uncharacteristic of him. “And I told you. It’s Tony.”

“Right, Tony. Sorry.” You would swear Steve’s shoulders shook a little as he put the pan on the stove. You worried your teeth over your lower lip, eyeing your outfit. “It’s the clothes, isn’t it? You want to say I look right at home in it, don’t you? And I am branded on top of that…. It’s okay. I can see you’re barely holding the comment back.”

Tony finally put away the pot, his hands seeming rather frantic as he reached for sugar. “Well, I mean,… eh-“

“It’s a sign of a… successful night, right?”

“I didn’t mean to imply-“ he started, quickly lowering the cup so he could raise his hands defensively, but you interrupted him, mentally biting your cheek as you charmed your best innocent puppy eyes at him.

“-that last night I got thoroughly fucked?”

Exactly four people choked on their own spit; Steve had been expecting it, though the tips of his ears still turned a pretty shade of red and he stopped cooking, removing the pan before he could burn something. Still, at least he could tell which pipe was for breathing unlike the rest of the Avengers.

Natasha was the first to recover, soon followed by Bruce – they both had somewhat knowing glint in their eye now, figuring out what was this about, or at least partly. Smiles were tugging at their lips.

Tony’s face was definitely the most hilarious one. His eyes were bulged, wheels in his hear whirling rapidly, his mouth opened ajar even though he eventually stopped coughing.

Natasha was kind enough to hit Clint’s back, because he was still unable to breathe in.

You smiled sweetly at both the billionaire and the archer who was now taking a sip of water to sooth his sore throat. It was the perfect moment to casually drop the other bomb on them.

“…’cause I was, just FYI.”

The water sprouted out via Clint’s nose and Tony stumbled towards the counter and he gripped to steady himself; he seemed ready to pass out, gaping like a fish out of water, a perplexed crinkle between his eyebrows.

He looked so comical that you broke down. You burst out laughing, clutching the bar so you wouldn’t crash on the floor to roll in laughter.

You could see precisely when he got the light bulb moment, an accusing finger pointing at you, then at the very red but chuckling Steve, who was making his way to you, and then back at you.

“You-! You-… did you-?! When- what—-you!”

His stutter sent you into another fit of roaring laughter. Steve’s arms appeared, sneaking around your waist, pulling you to his shaking chest as he stood behind your stool. In attempt to stop laughing, you
turned your head to him to catch his lips in a kiss.

“Thanks, Stevie,” you murmured against his mouth, giggling and kissing him again. His embrace tightened.

“When did you get your memories back?” Bruce queried, a wide smile, rather rare for him, on his face.

Steve’s chin rested on your shoulder as you replied.

“Yesterday.”

“Was it the woman?”

“Yes, we believe so,” Steve confirmed, nuzzling your neck as if the others weren’t truly in the room. Was he afraid them might want to steal now when they knew as well? Please. It wasn’t like you were that popular.

“It just took some time to clear that out with Steve and with myself,” you explained, this time a bit ashamed for real. Steve’s fingers caressed your stomach soothingly over the material of the infamous t-shirt.

Natasha was definitely beaming though. “Understandable. I’m happy for you. Especially for making fun of those two, extra points, you guys.”

“Thanks. It felt amazing. Oh Tony, if you could see your face,” you chuckled again, melting into Steve’s frame when Tony glared at you. “I hope Jarvis caught it.”

“I did. Would you like to see it again now?” the AI offered readily.

“That was mean!” Tony accused you. “And seriously, Jarvis, we will have a conversation about your loyalty.”

“It was funny,” you opposed him, hoping he wasn’t truly offended. He wouldn’t, right?

“Yeah, alright, it was funny. Welcome back, sass queen.”

“Thank you. It’s good to be back.”

“So… do we get a hug or is it like Cap’s hands only?” Clint asked with a teasing smile tugging at his lips, apparently not having any hard feelings despite you causing him to nearly choke to death.

Touched, you hopped off your stool and Steve hesitantly released you.

“I’d love to hug you,” you admitted honestly, not quite expecting the offer. The more surprising it was, the more it warmed your heart. Who would have thought?

Clearly, accepting the invitation was a mistake.

As Steve let you go, they all went for it at once, starting with Tony and Clint, Natasha joining about two seconds before the most reluctant Bruce did. It was lungs-squeezing, bone-crushing and absolutely delightful.

“Dammit, guys,” you sobbed, indescribably moved by the force they embraced you with. Tears gathered in your eyes, threatening to spill soon. You would never imagine such a warm welcome from Steve’s friends.
“Hulk happy,” a roar by your ear made you jump and you caught a glimpse of green on Bruce’s neck; it was enough for the levee to break. You started crying like a little girl.

“Oh, девушка…” Natasha’s soft voice reached your ears and you sobbed again, vainly trying to keep more tears at bay.

“Stop making her cry…” Steve muttered, but didn’t sound irritated at all. If anything, he had a fond smile on his face when you got a glimpse of it between the bundle of bodies. ‘I love you and they do too,’ he mouthed at you then, his eyes glistening with tears as well.

You squeezed your eyes shut and attempted to tighten your grip on four people at once. You weren’t sure about the result, but no one complained.

“Yeah, let’s not shed more tears than necessary. Actually, I think this calls for a party,” Clint exclaimed as he patted your back and released you.

Others reluctantly followed his suit – they had to, because letting out only one person from the bundle of limbs and bodies would be difficult. The moment you were left cold again, Steve snatched you back to his arms at instant, which earned him an amused grin from Natasha.

“Barton. I didn’t believe that the day would come, but you actually became wise,” Tony pronounced dramatically. “Big party?”

“Nah, just family,” the archer opposed jovially and you sunk into Steve’s embrace in hopes not to release fresh tears at being considered family. You would have to somehow deal with your family by blood eventually too, but you selfishly didn’t want to think about it just yet. One step at time.

“I’d say I take it back, but surprisingly enough, I agree.”

“Oh, the end of the world is here…” Bruce lamented since the two clowns agreed on something and you chuckled, enjoying their banter probably more than you should.

“Alright. We might want to ring Drapes from Asgard. He does love his revels,” Tony pointed out and exactly five people agreed.

“No shit.”

You, as the sixth, wavered. Not because you wouldn’t want to see the God of Thunder again; it was just that you didn’t think he owned a cell phone. Oh, and he was also off to another planet, you assumed.

“…how exactly do you call Thor? Is there a service on Asgard? That would be crazy, right?”

“I heard crazier,” Clint scoffed, pointing at you and not bothering with being subtle.

“That’s fair.”

“Thor told us to call out for Heimdall if we needed him,” Steve explained to you and while you had no idea who Heimdall was, you shrugged it off. You didn’t want to deal with that right now.

You were back, you had your soulmate, you had friends that, unknowingly to you until now, considered you a family and you wanted to just be and be happy.

“I’ll do that…” Tony’s hand shot up as if he was a first-grader offering to clean the blackboard and you sent a silent wish for Thor to survive whatever Stark planned on doing.
“Good luck. Now… I believed I promised you breakfast, doll,” Steve whispered to your ear, nuzzling in your neck again.

It was very hard not to melt at spot. “I meant it, Steve. I can make my own breakfast.”

“Well, I didn’t exactly wine and dine you before we had our… successful night, so if you let me do this at least…” he teased on the lowest volume possible and you slapped his bicep before he released you to make good on his promise, the radiant smile on his face lighting up the whole room.

Chapter End Notes

So… I had fun writing that :D
Tony took off, too eager to try and get in touch with his friend via intergalactical channel. You almost felt sorry for not witnessing it, but as the biggest excitement tuned down, everyone once more invested in their own business, you and Steve were the only ones left in the kitchen – and were approached by Natasha.

If you didn’t know better, you’d say the spy even looked shy in her supposedly casual stance.

“Hey, uhm… you guys mind if I ask someone to tag along?” she threw to the open as if it wasn’t a big deal. Her plan didn’t work, because you nearly fell off of the stool with how quickly you spun to her fully.

One corner of her lips twitched at your clumsiness, but then she casted her gaze down, only making your eyebrow rise.

“Oh?”

“It’s just… a friend.”

Riiight. She was so full of shit. A teasing smile slowly spread on your face and you exchanged a meaningful wordless conversation with Steve who had insisted on him cleaning up.

“A friend, you say?” you pried, unable to hide the suggestive tone – and not even trying. She shrugged it off, clearly downplaying it once again.

“For now. A little flirting here and there maybe…”

She fooled no one, but you were in too much of a light mood to torture her and actually call her out on the fact that unless she was thinking about getting serious, she wouldn’t have wanted to introduce the mystery person to the team.

“Good for you, Natasha,” you noted instead and you might have imagined it only, but her ‘casual stance’ eased for real. “As for me, I’m all for it. I might be glad to take some attention off me.”

“And vice versa,” she pointed out and it dawned to you just how sneaky her planning was. It shouldn’t surprise you – she was a spy after all and one brilliant woman to begin with.

“Smart. I’d love to meet them.”

“I’m sure he will be too. Thanks. Uhm… Steve?” she hummed in his direction, just to make sure he was alright with it too.

The man in question raised his hands as if he wanted to say it was not his decision to make – and sent a spray of tiny drops of water your general direction with that movement. You snorted at that unattractively.

“I think it’s safe to say it’s her party, so it’s her call,” he stated with a grin and dried his hands.

“Then I say yes, of course he can come, Nat-- I meant-“ not Nat. You wanted to bit your cheek at the silly slip, probably caused by hearing the name so often, but the redhead smirked.
“Nat’s fine. I’m still honoured, by the way. Naming yourself after me...”

“Would have done it again in a heartbeat,” you reassured her with a matching smirk, relieved. She winked at you and at Steve, spinning on her heels and walking away. It was the spur of the moment what you blurted out before she could leave. “And Nat? He’s a really lucky guy. I hope he knows that.”

“Thanks,” she threw over her shoulder almost carelessly, but once again, you knew better. Natasha Romanoff felt like any other human being, only she didn’t show it as often as you for instance.

You glanced at Steve as he circled the bar and you exchanged a brief smile with him. You simply couldn’t stop smiling today. You couldn’t say you minded.

Steve’s fingers found your face and hair, caressing softly and his lips brushed yours. It seemed he couldn’t stop touching you today. Once again, you couldn’t say you minded.

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You were purposely postponing the inevitable question of what was coming next; and Steve didn’t push you. It was as if the two of you had made a deal about working out worries and obstacles later, except you hadn’t.

Chances were that Steve was avoiding the topic, because there was so much to go over and you couldn’t quite blame him. Should you go public with your resurrection? Or was it safer and overall better to keep you hidden? Perhaps you should tell at least your family and friends? What about you having a job – you couldn’t exactly sit around all days long doing nothing. The paperwork if you officially came back. The scandal. Were you even allowed to tell anyone about such thing as coming back from the dead?

Oh yeah, you were very much happy that Steve was ignoring the obvious problems in making as expertly as you were.

So, you idled. You cuddled, you watched movies, stole kisses, you spied on him while he trained with his teammates (after you spent about twenty minutes on a treadmill and decided you had to either focus on running or on ogling Steve, choosing the latter, obviously) and momentarily was searching for recipe for the best cookies, because why the hell not bake when having the time on your hands.

Relaxing for the whole day, you did not expect the sudden burst of thunderclap and lightning that followed. You jumped in your seat nearly falling off of the bar stool for the second time that day and shot Steve, who was sitting on a couch with an actual cookbook, a puzzled look.

He sighed when Tony passed the room, a grin plastered on his face.

Right. Calling Thor. God of thunder. Apparently, it worked.

“Brother Anthony. Where is the fight?” the thunderous voice demanded from the hall, your chest vibrating with the decibels of it.

“There’s no fight,” Tony responded light-heartedy. “Party is in order.”

“A party?”

“Yep,” Tony hummed, clearly amused by the shock he had caused his friend.
“You’re… you’re doing well then?” the god lowered his voice a fraction, but still was loud enough for you to hear him clearly despite the pair not being in the room with you. “How is the Captain? I requested of Heimdall to watch over him, but Loki orchestrated an escape from his prison, so I was too preoccupied to visit sooner.”

Oh. Oh. Even Thor knew just how harsh life had been to Steve lately. Also, you forgot how strangely he spoke.

You spared a glance at the Steve, not surprised he didn’t meet your gaze, truly engrossed in the book all of sudden. His skin paled a little, besides his ears that turned an uncomfortable shade of red as if they were on fire.

You bit your lip and decided to say nothing. What was there to say, really? He had been mourning; you wouldn’t exactly expect to find out he had been playing the welcome committee during Thor’s last visit, whenever that had been.

“See for yourself, Point Break.”

You rolled your eyes at Tony’s dramatics, and watched the God of Thunder himself, the walking rock he was, basically tiptoe into the room, eyes instantly focused on Steve. You remained graciously unnoticed. It was almost as endearing as hilarious.

Steve lowered his book (laying it down without bothering to mark the page he had been ‘reading’, while avoiding your gaze really) and stood up, offering a short hug to the God, who was adorably perplexed at such behaviour.

“Hello, Thor. It’s good to see you,” Steve welcomed him warmly, lightly patting his friend on his back. Tony watched amusedly as the men retreated, one of them utterly confused, shooting him a not-so-subtle puzzled look.

“Brother Steven, you-- look well! I am pleased to see you feel better…”

“Use that famous beyond-eyes eyes of yours, Thor,” Tony snorted in laughter, gesturing vaguely around his own face. “I imagine you’ll be surprised at what you’ll see.”

To your surprise, Thor actually examined Steve with an absent gaze, blinking after few seconds, understanding mixing with confusion on his face now.

“Oh… you are… bonded,” he let out in disbelief, quickly switching to warmer voice. And nope, he still hadn’t noticed you. The corner of your lips twitched. “I am happy for you, brother. I could sense your sorrow for your soulmate during my last visit here without taking as much as a glance at you. You deserve another soulmate, one that can make your heart equally happy. I hope you do not feel unfaithful for you love again – I believe you still carry your love for your past partner in your heart and her soul knows that even in afterlife.”

Steve smiled at him, sad tones in the otherwise wide smile. “More than you know, Thor. But thank you. Would you like to meet her? She’s why we are celebrating and invited you to join us.”

“Of course. I’d be honoured to meet your lady-“

“You can,” you made your presence known at last, causing the God to snap his head to you at instant. You offered a grin and a tiny wave. “Hey, Thor. Long time, no see.”

The poor Asgardian stared at you incredulously, his eyes wider than Steve’s and Tony’s smiles. Then he shook his head, joining all of you in the lifted spirits.
“…now I understand why Heimdall had that secretive smile on his face when I was leaving… my lady! I am delighted to see you alive!”

He crossed the room in swift strides, nearly making you back out with how fierce he looked at the moment. But he wouldn’t punch you, right?

Nope, he wouldn’t

Instead, he pulled you into his strong arms, lifting you a foot above the ground, squeezing you in a bone-crushing hug that brushed your tender ribs. You were so surprised you didn’t even hiss in pain. He released you as quickly as he embraced you, greeting you with his typical kiss on the back of your hand. Was there a hint of red in his cheeks as if he was embarrassed at the open display of friendly affection that preceded his gentleman’s manners?

You shook off the thought quickly, dropping a little curtsy to entertain your company. You met Steve’s eyes behind Thor’s enormous shoulder and he squinted at you playfully as if he was warning you to stop what could be considered flirtation. You winked at him, earning a gape from him and a chuckle from Tony.

“But… how?” Thor’s voice brought your attention back to him and you saw nothing but wonder on his face. “I can see your spirit, it is still glowing magnificently, clear of dark forces that could have tried to bring you back to life despite the natural order. This must have happened differently… how?”

“It’s a long story, Thor. Can you stay?” you asked hopefully, pleased by the warmth in his eyes when he nodded.

“To celebrate your return, the reunion of soulmates with one of the strongest bonds I have ever had the chance to witness? ...with pleasure, my lady.”

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Asking Thor to join was a good plan. The Avengers had introduced some of the board games they knew to him, highly amused by his frustration during monopoly; to be fair, everyone but Tony was frustrated, so no one was mad when the game ended; with the billionaire’s victory, naturally. But it wasn’t just that; he also got Steve tipsy thanks to some special liquor that was meant for ‘no mere mortals’ and Steve with his cheeks red and a smile more relaxed than you ever witnessed was a sight to behold.

Also, Thor wasn’t the only special guest. Sam had joined you; Natasha’s special friend. It was very much clear he was special and not only because of their body language. He proved to be worthy of being her man by surviving the grilling he was put through; you didn’t blame Natasha that she had chosen this occasion from all to introduce him, because naturally, there were enough distractions… like you coming back from dead… and such.

You came to like Sam immediately. He was another person to join your verbal combat with Clint and Tony, he was funny, but somehow knowing the limits of everyone despite barely meeting them and he was another person who was giving away the friendly vibe that was impossible not to love. He was an amazing match to Natasha, who was used to hiding her feelings, making her crawl from her tough shell. Match made in Heaven. He was a therapist, a former soldier and apparently their encounter was a story they wouldn’t share until they were completely trashed. You couldn’t wait.

The family-feels-filled party was officially ending at two a.m. You were dead on your feet by then, which resulted in Steve nearly carrying you to your common suite, earning a streak of ‘awww’ that
registered even in your sleepy brain. You had no care in the world, curling in Steve’s embrace on the bed and falling asleep as soon as you felt his arms relax around you.

You didn’t quite count on the retelling your story about what preceded the re-encounter with your soulmate causing your dreams to go off rails; again. Snapping your eyes into the dark, your heart was hammering in your ribcage, the remains of a nightmare slowly leaving your mind. Sparing once glance at Steve’s fast asleep face, you carefully wiggled away and went to brush your teeth. Instantly recognizing you wouldn’t fall asleep any time soon, you decided to wander the Tower in your pyjama, a thin sweater over your shoulders.

Maybe a tea would make you good, calm restless brain?

Heading for the kitchen and common area, you didn’t expect to find the light on; and you sure as hell didn’t expect Samuel Wilson being the person occupying it.

“Hey,” he greeted you in low voice and a tired smile on his own. “Can’t sleep?”

You couldn’t help the sigh that was drawn to your lips. “Nope. I didn’t want to wake up Steve, he could use a few hours extra, not less.”

“I bet,” the man hummed thoughtfully, motioning for you to sit in a kind offer. You shook your head and gestured towards the kettle.

“Tea?”

“Nah. Thanks.”

You went to make a cup for yourself only then, keeping the talk up. “What about you?”

“Nat’s in the shower. Woke me up.”

“Then what are you doing here?” you teased him with a chuckle and his face scrunched as if he tasted lemon and was not expecting the taste.

“Nightmares are kind of a moodkiller.”

“Ah,” escaped your lips intelligently as you sat beside him, placing the tea on the table. Honestly, you weren’t surprised at how brusque he was after the evening you spent together, but at the same time, you were – a little. You offered him a half smile. “She looks happy though. You do that.”

He smiled a tiny smile back, but his crinkling eyes said more than the curl of his lips. “I hope so, ’cause I’m trying. Nat’s amazing. She could have anyone, but deserves the best. For some reason, the Universe seems to think it’s me.”

“Yeah, I know the feeling,” you hummed, recalling the feeling way too clearly. Sam’s eyes bulged then, guilt and shock and only then you realized what he said. Oh. Oh. The Universe. Nat was Sam’s soulmate. Now you understood why they ended up not sharing their meet-cute yet. “Your secret is safe with me, just in case you wonder. And I can see the two of you being soulmates. I mean… at least you used to be a soldier, like her. And you still help people.”

You could feel his relief rolling off in waves. It was quite funny how afraid he was, probably having been promised death delivered by Black Widow if he shared. Then, his eyes turned curious, gentle brown wondering.

“You’re still self-conscious about your soulmate?”
“No!” you blurted out automatically, hesitating when his eyebrow rose, calling you out on your bullshit without words. You huffed. “Yes? I mean… no. It’s just— sometimes… I guess it was just being confronted with it again when I met him for the second time… like, second time, the first time. It kinda hit me again. That our worlds are so different, mine’s so… plain and normal, while his… well.”

Getting it out felt good, but your admission sent the room into heavy silence, soaking through your skin, making you question whether you had told him too much. Why did you even say that? To Sam, of all people? You had just met him tonight!

You must have scared him off. Freaked him out. Now he was about to leave and tell on you and he would never talk to you-

“Did Natasha tell you what kind of therapy I do?” he asked kindly instead, causing you to release the breath you didn’t realize you were holding.

You shook your head, intrigued, happy to learn more about him and ignore the silly overshare slip you had managed.

“Soulmates,” he said simply, your heart stopping at the single word. What? … like… what exactly was he doing? Huh? “I deal with people who lost their soulmates. And I spent a good portion of time digging into relationships, soulmates-related or not… and sometimes when people are exactly the same, they are a disaster in making.”

Well. That returned to your case faster than expected. “What… uhm, what do you mean?”

“I mean that I’m not in the battlefield anymore, but maybe… I could be good for Nat. Grounding. Just like you can be good for Steve, be exactly what he needs,” he explained, his eyes locked with yours, not releasing you; yet, you didn’t feel trapped. Damn, he was good. “Do you feel that you two… work?”

You blinked at the sudden stupid question. “Of course I do.”

He grinned victoriously and you realized you just proved his point, so you chuckled self-depreciatingly.

“That’s because it’s not always about being the same in every aspect of your lives. It’s not about similarity – it’s about completion. About two people who simply fit. From what I saw so far, from what you told me, you two fit. That’s what’s important.”

Yeah, it seemed the Universe’s choices in soulmates was pretty swell; Sam was one of the kindest and most amiable people you had ever met and Natasha deserved nothing less.

But now, it wasn’t about Nat and Sam; no, Sam had spoken to you about this for your benefit. You smiled at him softly, reaching out and squeezing his hand for a short second. He returned the courtesy, letting your mouth speak your mind.

“Thank you. I… I think you two do as well. I guess it was just heavy dreams and everything that happened…” you shrugged, already feeling calmer. You couldn’t recall what particular dream was making you lose sleep tonight, but it left you with a strange feeling in your stomach that now seemed to resolve into nothing.

Sam shrugged, huffing with an undertone of bitterness that quickly disappeared.

“Well, we sit here at four a.m. Both of us. Every single person in this building has shit to deal with.
You’ve been blown up – you came back from death, much like Steve did, in a way. Now he’s seen you die on top of that. Nat’s past is a case on its own and… and I saw my soulmate fall from the sky and for some reason I’m blessed with another… I’m just a firm believer in handling that kind of things together, that’s why I lead group sessions rather than individual ones.”

Your lips parted at his admission. He had lost his soulmate? For real? And he found the strength to deal and to help others? Yeah, Nat definitely deserved this guy. You just hoped neither of them would have to go through losing one another – in battlefield or anywhere else.

“Nat… is your second?” you pried carefully, only making certain.

Judging by how absent his gaze grow for few moments, she was.

“Yeah.”

As if talking about her summoned her, she appeared in the door behind Sam’s back, observing silently and motioning for you not to babble out on her when you noticed her.

“Oh. Uhm… I’m sorry for your loss,” you whispered honestly and Sam smiled at you sadly, but undeniably grateful for such simple words.

“Thank you. I guess… the Universe does have a strange sense of humour. She came to me to help Steve, because she knew I lost my own and could relate and that’s how we found each other. It clicks in a weird way and I’m glad it seems to work out so far.”

No way. Shit. Natasha had been… looking for a therapist for Steve? Just how bad Steve had been? The icy fist squeezing your heart gave you enough of an answer. Bad enough. You tried to silence the irrational guilt that gnawed at your stomach; it wasn’t exactly your fault, was it?

Curiosity was also knocking at your door, but you repressed it as well. As much as you’d like to ask whether Sam ended up having a session with Steve despite usually doing group ones, it felt wrong. Not to mention that Sam was a respectful and respecting man, who probably wouldn’t answer anyway.

“Yeah, it does,” you agreed with his musing instead, your own mind set off. “I thought it was rare to have two soulmarks and here we are.”

He snorted in an unattractive amusement. “Well, I have thought the same as you. And yet here we are. With you, coming back from the death as if two marks weren’t rare enough on their own.”

“That’s fair. But I suppose that… who else than people who spent smaller or larger part of their life saving the world deserves more than one chance at happiness?”

“True that,” he said with a light curl to his lips despite his eyes flickering behind you for a fraction of a second.

Letting your mind wander, you continued speaking, paying no mind you must bore him. “Or maybe it’s getting less rare. Maybe it’s part of something bigger, what we have yet to understand. Something… something might be changing. Cosmic…or maybe I’m just babbling. It’s just a feeling, something is in the air. A change.”

“That’s some heavy conversation to handle at four a.m,” a new voice spoke to the silence that had settled after your babble and you whirled around, nearly jumping out of your skin.

“Steve!” you yelped, shocked and embarrassed. How much had he heard? Oh god…
Steve only shrugged and exchanged a look with Natasha, standing in the other doorway, which caused Sam to turn to his soulmate as well.

“Yeah, no shit,” Nat agreed, smirking.

“Hey, Nat,” Sam hummed, clearly less embarrassed at being eavesdropped on than you were.

“How about we cut this short and actually try to get some sleep?” she offered, carefree.

“Yeah, try,” you mimicked wryly with a sigh.

“We can try together,” Steve coaxed as he walked to you, running his hand through your hair tenderly. “Come with me, doll?”

How could a girl resist a sleepy supersoldier, when he combined his puppy eyes with being shirtless and inviting her back to his bed?

 Couldn’t. The answer was: she couldn’t. You were a girl; hence you stood no chance.

“Sure,” you mumbled in a slight haze, before you managed to look back at your loyal listener. Sam had a smirk on his face, seeing what a goner you were for Steve, but his eyes were still kind. "Thank you, Sam. Must be that face of yours, making me verbally vomit my emotions.”

“Did you just compliment my face?” he asked, fake-shocked and turned to his own soulmate, scandalized. “Nat, watch out! She might wanna steal me.”

“Oh, I wouldn’t do that if I were her,” Natasha grinned at him and he chuckled, comeback prepared.

“And why is that?”

She rolled her eyes, but her smile turned fond and you felt like you were missing something. Ah, private joke perhaps?

Not that you cared much as Steve squeezed your shoulder lightly, his thumb slipping under the sweater you hadn’t bothered buttoning up, caressing your bare arm.

“You’re so corny,” the spy snickered.

Sam stuck out tongue in response, at which Nat placed a palm over her chest in theatrics. You chuckled and rose to your feet.

“Well, this looks like the right time to leave. Night, guys!”

“Please, as if you are about to sleep! You fool no one!” Sam called after you and you would swear you heard a slap after that, making you giggle.

Steve took you around your shoulder, pulling you to his side and pressing a kiss to your temple, his lips lingering in your hair then.

“I thought we agreed that we fit perfectly,” he hummed, only a trace of accusation in his warm timbre.

You sighed and curled up to him as close as it was possible while walking.

“We do. I… it really was just a strange dream, I guess, and this… whole thing. I saw it from a new perspective, you know? Basically an outsider who had no clue how soulmates worked at first. I went
through the shock of you being my soulmate twice.”

“Ah, so you thought I was too handsome-“

You slapped his chest playfully as it instantly started shaking with hushed laughter, showing you he was only joking. You snuggled into his warmth, hoping your face didn’t quite had on display that yeah, he wasn’t that wrong. It was exactly that and like twenty other things about him and that was before you even met him. You didn’t expect him to ever understand that, not really, but Sam was right; you worked as a couple, or you liked to think so. Nothing else mattered.

Reaching your room, he released you from his embrace only to keep his hand on your shoulder to spin you, making you face him. You reluctantly raised your gaze, meeting his soft smile.

“I love you. You’re my everything and we are meant to be. Well, at least I believe that,” he mused, a fraction of doubt flashing in his eyes until you shook your head and planted a kiss right to his lips, feeling the smile widen. “If you’re not convinced… well. I’m making it my newest personal mission to prove it to you.”

Your eyebrow rose in challenge at his suggestive tone. “Are you, now?”

You couldn’t imagine saying no to that, but truth to be told, you were getting tired again; after spilling the beans to Sam, sharing your worries and getting them out of your chest, you felt like you would be able to actually fall asleep again.

“Yeah, doll. And I think I’ll start right in the morning after we get some sleep.”

Chapter End Notes

After three days of forced intense socializing, my introvert is calling out for help; so I’m editing and posting :P

There’s an epilogue left (full chapter-length), but you know me – I’m considering a short bonus chapter that I’m not sure will fit into the timeline – just something for fun, I guess. We’ll see ;)


True to your words, you decided to ask the experts on weird people appearing out of nowhere and shooting light from their hands about the strange experience you had; an encounter that resulted in your gaining your memories back.

Sam and Dean were ecstatic when you told them about remembering everything – including the time you had spent with them though, one set of memories not replacing the other.

After enough cheering via your Skype call, you sent the footage.

The silence stretched as the brothers watched the recording, their eyes wide with an emotion you couldn’t quite place. They seemed spooked, shocked, perplexed and quite a bit fascinated too, to be honest. Steve’s arm around your waist tightened, both of you holding your breath in anticipation.

Oh God, who was the woman? Was she a friend of Rowena? Worse, was she a friend of the King of Hell they had mentioned? Who-

“Holy shit,” Sam finally exclaimed, making you blink in shock. Since when Sam swore? Admittedly, you hadn’t spent that much time with them, but-

“Quite literally,” Dean conceded, squinting at the screen again as if he couldn’t believe his eyes. You were sure you were about to burst – or at least that your heart would beat its way out of your chest with how forcefully it was hammering against your ribcage. “I thought they went under? Or, you know, up?”

“So did I.”

“Guys? We’re not following. You know who or what this was?” you asked them breathlessly, unable to bear the suspense anymore.

Sam cleared his throat and apparently closed the video, because they were following you with their gaze again.

“Uhm yeah. That was God’s sister who paid you a visit.”

Your heart positively stopped for a second and then you laughed self-depreciatingly. *Don’t be stupid, hey don’t mean that literally.*

…they couldn’t, right?

“…is that a euphemism for something?”

“Nope,” Dean accented the ‘P’ and shrugged for a good measure, knocking the air out of your lungs. *And of Steve’s,* probably freezing his brain along the way, because his figure went absolutely rigid behind you.

“God’s sister?” Steve parroted and you were sure he wasn’t even breathing at that point.

“Yeah. Her name’s Amara. I’m pretty sure she had a crush on Dean,” Sam explained casually as if it wasn’t a big deal.
God.

And God’s sister-

--wait, what? A crush? Huh?

“Dude. Come on!” Dean called out exasperatedly, hint of red pulsing in his cheeks.

“Like… actual God’s sister? God, the religion figure… and his sister?”

“Yeah. We helped them to solve their family issues a while back,” Dean confirmed, a smug smile tugging at his lips at your disbelief.

“I beg your pardon?” Steve blurted out, as if reading your frantic thoughts.

Sam sighed. “It’s complicated. Look, she also brought our mum back from death, but from what we know now, from what she said to you, it looks like Chuck brought you back and Amara thought you should also have your memories. Don’t worry about it, we’re used to this kind of crazy.”

It took you several moments of the wheels in your head turning before you connected the dots and actually registered what he was saying.

Wait, whoa, whoa, whoa, that would mean that Chuck was… the brother. Which made him… which made him-

“God’s name is Chuck?” you choked out at the same time as Steve questioned a different exclaim of Sam’s: “Don’t worry about it?”

“Yeah. Chill. Be grateful,” Dean shrugged it off as if he didn’t notice your confusion and struggle to comprehend why on Earth God would bring you back from the death and his sister (the hell-- heaven?) stopped by to return your memories on top of that.

“Hey, are you okay? You look a little pale there,” Dean hummed, eyebrows furrowing in actual concern.

Yeah, no shit. I’d like to see your face if you found out that you were saved by—oh, wait, you actually might have...

“It’s… that’s a lot to chew.”

“Come on, you already knew you rose from the dead, this can’t be-“

Sam covered his brother’s mouth with a hand, annoyed look on his face before he smiled at you compassionately. “We know. But we’re serious. There’s nothing we can do about that, just enjoy what you were given. You both have your soulmate back. Be happy.”

“Though I gotta say, my heart is broken. I was holding out for you,” Dean teased you, having wrestled free from Sam’s grasp.

“Dean!”

To be fair, Steve didn’t even flinch at such suggestion, knowing Dean already, and you were pretty sure he even rolled his eyes.

“Kidding. Call us if you need help, okay?”
“Can I call to just check up on you?” you pried carefully, unable to help the warm smile slowly spreading on your lips as they slapped their hands over the other’s, Sam’s trying to shut his menacing brother up.

They stopped at instant.

“Uhm… yeah?” Dean hummed, clearly surprised, while the younger brother charmed a sweet smile.

“Good. Be careful, guys. I mean it. Let an angel watch over you. And look after him too. Send him my best wishes.”

“We will. We’ll see you, Fire Princess,” Dean winked at you and you huffed. *Jerk.*

“I hate you,” you murmured, waved at Sam and shut the laptop close, shaking your head.

Steve’s lips found the crook on your neck, nuzzling his face there then.

“Do you understand any of the things they said?” you slightly shifted, your lips catching his halo-like hair, your back leaning onto his chest.

“Nope.”

“And you don’t care,” you stated when he kissed your skin again

“Nope,” he confirmed cheerily, pulling your back to make you lie down on the bed. You complied, ending up on your side, spooned by his warm muscular form. “Besides wanting to know what Fire Princess means, I’m just happy to have you back, doll. You’re all that matters.”

“Steve…”

You heart fluttered in your chest, chasing heat to your cheeks at his sweettalking.

“I mean it. I’m not letting go of you, ever. If I have to lay down my shield, I don’t care. As long as I have you… I have everything I need.”

“*Steve, I…*” he eased his hold a bit when you squeezed his hand, allowing you to turn and face him. His eyes burned with sincerity, the way you remembered they always did when trying to convince you about something you found hard to believe. “...I don’t.”

“I love you. And I mean it. Just say the word.”

“But I… I can’t be enough, Steve. That’s-“ you protested, your head spinning at the thought.

He couldn’t be serious. Could he? Steve had a heart of gold and fighting for the good cause in his blood. He couldn’t stop. Or maybe he could, but at what cost? How long it would take him to realize what a mistake he had made? And what if he blamed you then? Worse, what if someone on the team would get hurt in his absence and he would blame you for *that*?

Rationally, you knew the last scenario was of zero probability, because Steve would definitely hold *himself* responsible, no one else, but that only proved your-

His thumb tenderly traced the shape of your lips, eyes seemingly bluer than usual, as if he forced them to change their colour just to look more genuine and innocent, unable to lie.

“You are. I spent weeks thinking-- thinking that I lost you -- because of what I did, no less -- and nothing mattered anymore, not really.”
“You love your job,” you stated slowly, incredulous that he was actually considering it. You tried hard to push the rise of hope and annoyingly adoring feelings towards him that bloomed in your chest.

He couldn’t do that, stop that, you bitch, he was not just yours-- it wouldn’t be your choice to make-- but that was just wrong--- what if he got fed up with you-

“I loved my job – mostly because it was the only thing familiar in this century. The job was my life. And look where it got me.”

“Face to face with me, resurrected?” you teased with an awkward attempt at smile, unsure of what to make of this conversation and the mess of feelings it stirred within you. Steve only raised one corner of his lips at your silly joke. “No, seriously. I love you too. I love you and that’s why I can’t let you quit, not for me. You’re Steve Rogers. You’re Captain America. It’s like giving up your half.”

“I’ve done that once,” he muttered darkly, looking away. “And you took the other half with you.”

Tears pricked in the corners of your eyes at the reminder of why he might in fact could be able to give up on his job; because of the terrible sorrow it had brought him when making the impossible decision in his title’s favour.

You weren’t naïve, not that much at least. You both knew that that particular situation would have never happened if he was doing literally anything else for living.

You sighed, cupping his cheek and pressing a soft kiss to his lips. “Okay. We’ll think about it and talk about it later, alright? Now I just want to kiss you and cuddle you for eternity.”

His lips curled up in a brilliant smile that always made you smile back on automatically, making you whole body pliant and feather-light.

“That is the best plan ever, darling,” he praised, planting a kiss to your forehead, indeed snuggling closer, leading your head to hide under his chin. Gosh, you loved when he did that, engulfing you, protecting you from the whole world.

“Thanks, Mr. Rogers.”

“No. Thank you. Thank you for coming back to me.”

You smiled against his throat, kissing his Adam’s apple. “We’ve been over this, I didn’t exactly--“

Hand still in your hair, he guided you from your favourite spot with light pull, only so he could shut you up with a kiss.

You sure as hell didn’t resist and lazily returned the affection, content to stay in that moment forever.

---

In real life, moments like that didn’t last forever. Sooner or later, duties and decisions came knocking.

Decisions were hard, especially when coming back from the dead and having to choose if you should keep it secret or not for instance and oh so many more things that needed to be dealt with; which was exactly the reason why you had been avoiding it, but that couldn’t go on for much longer.

For the moment, you decided there weren’t many people to confide in, but there were still some that deserved it.
A priest of the church where your own little altar was placed was one of them, mostly because of the meeting you wanted to hold there. Then again, officially it had been Steve who invited Ryan to a safe place with little information on the reason behind such action.

Steve had warned you he hadn’t spoken to him since before your death, but it could never prepare you for the cold welcome he had got when they came face to face, while you were hiding in the shadows.

“Captain Rogers,” Ryan greeted him stiffly, voice even and sharp enough to cut deeply and precisely with that particular addressing. You and Steve had talked; you knew he had troubles coming to terms with the title after he had lost you despite burying himself in his work and making it look like it was the exact opposite.

“Ryan. Thank you for coming.”

“Why am I here? What do you want?”

Was it just you or did Ryan sound really annoyed as if he couldn’t leave this encounter soon enough? What happened to him?

“I needed to talk to you about something important,” Steve replied softly despite your best friend’s attitude.

Ryan scoffed, crossing his arms on his chest. He was a bit thinner than you remembered, but that might only be the outfit he was wearing; the sweater looked a size too big for him to begin with.

“I have nothing to talk about with you, Steve. Frankly, you being here in this very church is like a sick joke. You weren’t here when it counted. What held you? Work, I imagine?”

Even you winced at the cruel words. This didn’t sound like the man you were best friends with. Was he truly so angry with Steve? Or was it because his heart was still heavy with grief? You didn’t know whether to be touched, angry back or just sad.

And what did Ryan mean by Steve not being here when it mattered?

“It wasn’t like that-” Steve tried to explain and for the first time, his voice cracked, sending a shiver down your spine.

“Imagine that. All of them were here. All of the freaking Avengers came to her funeral-“

Oh. Oh. You had no idea what to make of that. Steve had kinda forgotten to mention that fact to you. You should have figured; he did warn you they hadn’t spoken since before your death. Shit.

Unlike Ryan, you knew it wasn’t the lack of sorrow that had held Steve back from coming – even without him telling you so, it was clear as day to you.

“-even the one from another planet. But you? Her soulmate? Gosh, Steve… what’s your excuse?”

The question was clearly meant to sting and once glance at Steve told you that it did precisely that; his eyelids fallen shut, his hands balling into fists.

“Do you really need to ask?” Steve chuckled bitterly, forcing himself to relax his hands. You more heard the tears in his voice than saw them from your spot behind the pillar and your heart ached.

“How could I show up, Ryan? After what I did? How could I look into your eyes, to her parents’ eyes? I killed her, Ryan. Don’t you think for a second I don’t feel guilty and regret it every single
day. What I did, why I… I-

“You don’t need to explain yourself, Steve. I understand why you made the choice you did…” Ryan interrupted him with a sigh and a sideway look, almost as if in conciliatory manner. “But that doesn’t mean I hate you any less for it. Or that I don’t blame you for her death. Because I do. It was your fault.”

_Ouch._

“I know. And I understand. You have every right.”

Well, this was going splendidly. Another guilt trip for Steve and hostility from your friend. Just peachy. You seriously considered just walking in regardless Steve’s plea for you to wait for his signal.

“And yet I’m grateful for the weeks you spent together. You made her happiest I have ever seen her. It’s funny how I can hate you for it at the same time,” Ryan added then, his eyes turning compassionate and kind, only a shadow of sorrow remaining.

“Life is that way sometimes. But… I didn’t come here to ask forgiveness, Ryan.”

“Good, ‘cause you’re not getting any. Why are we here then?”

Now this sounded more like Ryan. The corner of your lips rose in a tinniest smile.

“Because she always said you were her platonic soulmate. She trusted you with everything. And you deserve to know.”

“Deserve to know what?”

“That miracles happen,” Steve said simply, not making any sense to the other man. Drama queen. Then again, _God_ had probably saved you, so he wasn’t exaggerating.

“What’s that supposed to mean? Is that why we met in a church? Some weird symbolism to… to what?” Ryan sputtered, getting impatient. You almost walked out right then. But you trusted Steve to prepare your friend better for the shock now.

“No. We met here because I believed it was a safe place and you wouldn’t have come to the Tower.”

“Safe place?” Ryan asked warily, eyeing his surroundings suspiciously, his gaze shifting to your soulmate again. “For what?”

You cleared your throat, deciding this was the moment and stepped out. Ryan’s eyes bulged, his face drained of all colour.

“Hello, Ryan. Long time, no see,” you offered a teary smile and he blinked, your name falling from his lips breathlessly and with thousands of questions.

His gaze flickered to Steve, who smiled at him tightly, gently beckoning to you, encouraging him.

Ryan took several shaky steps and you stopped, letting him cross the distance in his own pace, getting him a chance to back away when feeling like it. On the inside, you wanted to run to him and let the man engulf you in a hug and never let go, but you realized what kind of a shock it must have been.

_Hell, you_ were still coming to terms with it.
“Baby?” he whispered, voice trembling and breaking on the single word. You didn’t bother blinking away your tears, only nodding.

At that, Ryan erased the distance in two long strides, throwing his arms around your neck and sobbing right in your ear. His breath hitched when you hugged him back; as if he had been expecting this was only a trick.

It wasn’t.

“Hey, Ry-Ry,” you rasped, your sob nearly in sync with his, which was ridiculous.

He withdrew then, framing your face with his palms, his eyes travelling all over you….

“I saw you die,” he choked out, incredulous and awed.

“Yeah, lots of people did,” you agreed, covering one of his hands with yours. “It’s a long story.”

His blown-up irises widened further. “Was that… some kind of a cover-up? Did you- how could you not tell-?!?”

“It wasn’t a cover-up!” you hurried, shaking your head as his arms fell from you. “I died, Ry-Ry. I told you it’s a long story.”

“I have time,” he mused, still starring at you, measuring you from head to toe, perplexed and teary.

“Then maybe you should sit down. Before what I tell you knocks you flat on your ass.”

---

A smile was tugging at Steve’s lips at their interaction. Ryan was amazed, naturally, and Steve could relate; having her back was everything. He hadn’t been lying to her when he had told her he would lay down his shield if she asked him. He would do anything only if it meant she would meet his gaze like at that exact moment, tears and laughter in her eyes, her lips spreading in that beautiful smile that tugged on his heartstrings.

“Steven,” the priest appeared at his side, voice low so he wouldn’t disturb the reunion. “Why don’t you join me in the back? Let the two friends catch up?”

Steve could stay right there, watching you explain the insane story, but perhaps he shouldn’t. Your best friend deserved your undivided attention and Steve would be happy to let you do so. God knew that while you were bickering and joking with the rest of his team and friends – now your friends too, no doubt – you weren’t beaming as much as you were at the moment. You needed your own time with Ryan.

“I… I suppose I should. Thank you, Father, for allowing this,” Steve expressed his gratitude, only for the other man to nod and give him a kind smile.

“Well, your friend had a point about symbolism here. Miracles do happen…. Speaking of those. I have someone who I would like you to meet.”

Steve blinked in surprise, but followed Father Lantom, trustful. “…Alright. What is it, Father?”

“It might come as a shock,” the priest warned him as he stopped in front of the door Steve was familiar with; Father had invited him over for coffee before, but Steve always refused, not wanting to abuse his hospitality.
“My soulmate came back from the dead, Father. I doubt anything can shock me at this point.”

The older-looking man chuckled, his hand laid on the handle. “I’m tempted to make a bet, but I must maintain the façade of an honourable man.”

“Father Lantom… what are you talking about?” Steve gulped, something icy creeping up his spine, his heart speeding up in anticipation.

Surely, the man wouldn’t do anything to hurt Steve. The idea was ridiculous. So why was Steve so nervous all of sudden?

“James? May we enter?”

There was no answer and if there was, Steve couldn’t hear it over the pounding in his ears. A crazy idea, old hope that he could never allow himself to feed, because people who died stayed dead, even in this insane world, rising in his chest and suffocating him.

James?

Miracles?

The door opened with a creak and Steve only needed a glimpse to freeze in the doorway, his heart stopping, brain short-circuiting. The world swayed of its place and there was a crushing weight on his chest, crushing and vertigo-inducing at the same time, frantic memories of a friendship that should have lasted until the end of the line flashing in his mind, an agonizing memory of watching the fall, completely helpless.

Steve didn’t know how, but the name left his lips without him remembering forming the simple word; a word that felt like a prayer.

“…Bucky?”

Chapter End Notes

I know, I know! A cliffhanger. But it’s a nice one, right? I’ll write another part if the inspiration strikes, but I kinda like it like this. A little hopeful, a little teasing your imagination; think about it like a post-credit scene ;}) I make no promises of writing more, though I’d like to. I’m thinking the bonus maybe and a short four-chapter fic ending this series.

Thank you for reading and your support, every comment means the world to me :-*

Special thanks belong to Tetyfernands and some_fiction for their endless streak of encouragement.
Admittedly, this is some kind of a strange one-shot of which I’m not sure where will fit in the timeline in case I post one more part of the series. Just… enjoy?

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Things weren’t all sunshine and rainbows only. Bucky’s return to the world was… tough. You only knew little of what had happened to him through the decades, but it was enough of a horror story even without the details.

Bucky’s relationship with the team of Avengers was complicated. Steve was as ecstatic and heart-broken as when you had popped up alive and that was all that needed to be said. Clint was a rather easy-going guy with a reputation of not judging people by their worst mistakes and as a man who had once been mind-controlled by an alien (…what?), he was willing to accept Bucky with a strange kind of sympathy.

As it turned out, Bucky and Natasha had actually crossed their paths before briefly, but once again, that was all you learned, both hers and his moments in the past too dark to share. Bruce was keeping his distance, more of a shyness than fear or disgust if you could take your guess and Thor was off the planet, not meeting the other supersoldier just yet.

Tony… Tony wasn’t fond of Bucky – he found a footage of another Winter Soldier killing his parents and while it hadn’t been Bucky himself, Tony’s hatred needed an out and despite trying, he simply couldn’t manage treating him exactly nice. He still let him live in the Tower though, so that definitely counted for something; for a lot, actually.

There were many people with trust issues when it came to Bucky and that included himself – he didn’t trust his mind still even with the mysterious man helping him and he most definitely didn’t forgive himself for the lives he had taken. The ghosts of his past hunted him at night, in his dreams the most. But he was slowly healing.

Steve was helping a lot, sometimes trying too much maybe, which was why the former assassin sought Sam Wilson rather than his best friends at times. He came to you occasionally too; however, he seemed to feel you were off limits, because you were Steve’s gal. He was gradually losing that stupid attitude though and his teasing side came out to play, making you blush becoming his new hobby. Exactly what you needed with all the mess happening around, e.g. the aftermath of your resurrection.

It took Bucky about two months to mention the name.

It happened casually, just dropping the bombshell no one saw coming. Bucky was actually showing Steve how to upgrade the newest version of some software you weren’t entirely sure what was for; both supersoldiers had to do their fair share of adjusting and while for Bucky it often was people, for Steve it was sometimes… technology despite him being able to pick up on things very quickly.

Steve thanked him and for the millionth time, you heard the ominous sentence: “It’s good to have you back, Buck. Whoever that guy was, I’ll always be grateful.”
“He told me to call him Chuck.”

The words were simple, really, nothing out of ordinary for untrained ears. Except it had you both you and Steve choke on your own spit.

A frown appeared on Bucky’s face. “What? I know, it’s kinda dorky-“

Yeah, that was not it.

A chilling suspicion crept up your spine and while it was not necessarily ominous, it sure as hell felt like the ground was shaking under your feet, proving you that sense of control over your life was nothing but a ridiculous illusion.

“Steve? How about we make a phone call?”

Five minutes later, you were video-chatting with the Winchester duo, explaining them your suspicions. Bucky was with you and Steve but didn’t engage much since he never really met either Sam or Dean, rather wary of them.

A photo of a dorky looking man with cute dark curls around his head and a full beard appeared on the screen, replacing the video-feed.

“Did he look like this?” Sam asked, tension audible in his voice. It still had nothing to the disbelief in Bucky’s.

“Yeah, that’s him,” the supersoldier confirmed, narrowing his eyes, which didn’t quite disguised how incredulous he was. “How did you-?”

“Is it… him?” you interrupted them, strange tingling sensation in your fingertips.

Was there any coincidence in his world left? What the hell did all of this mean? Was Steve just a lucky guy, God’s favourite, or… or was there a larger scheme, one you weren’t able to see just yet?

It reminded you of the talk you had had with Sam Wilson what felt like ages ago, about people having two soulmates, you coming back from the death and about things that were beyond your understanding. This might actually prove your silly theory right. Not to mention the fact that the death of Tony’s parents was delivered by another Winter Soldier, conveniently at the same time Bucky had been having troubles with the mechanics of his metal arm, hence was not suitable for the task.

It seemed that every single thing happening did play an important role in something, ending up with your trio sitting right here and now and…that was not a very comfortable discovery.

“Oh yeah, that’s God,” Dean hummed casually and when the picture disappeared, revealing the brothers again, you saw him take a bite of a cheeseburger as if this was a talk about fucking weather.

“God?” Bucky parroted dully and you bit your cheek, feeling guilty for not quite having explained to him why you wanted to talk to the Winchesters and what had been your suspicion; now proved right.

“Yeah,” Sam supplied helpfully, only to have Bucky repeat the word as if he was testing the taste of it on his tongue.

“A god.”

“The God, actually. Our Lord is one of kind,” Castiel appeared on the screen as well, offering a
small wave that you reciprocated, too shocked to say hi.

“Except he has a sister, apparently,” Steve stated, checking with the hunters and they nodded in approval. “So you’re not denying it? You think… ugh, that The Chuck saved him.”

You made a face at his wording, but… yeah. The Chuck. The God named Chuck had saved both Bucky and you. It was official. But why? What the hell was your life anymore?

‘How cute and bold of you to call your life yours,’ you thought darkly.

“H’d weed’il,” Dean mumbled with his mouth full and shrugged. With effort, you translated it into ‘heard weirded’, which was… fair.

“You think God, capital G, saved me. Why the heck would he do that?” Bucky spitted out exasperatedly, clearly not happy about the revelation. Eh. Revelation. Steve tensed at your side, but said nothing.

“Why not?” Sam questioned, offering a small smile. Dean remained quiet, while Castiel tilted his head, seemingly curious.

“What’s the matter? Don’t you think you deserve to be saved?”

“Yeaaaah, let’s not go there,” you interjected when you noticed Bucky’s chest heaving and murmured words in Russian spilling from his lips. Steve sighed, but apparently assessed it was better to let Bucky deal with the facts alone first. “Thanks for confirming our suspicions.”

“Did I do something wrong?” Castiel asked, sounding adorably confused and guilty.

“No, Castiel. It is a lot to take in.” Understatement of the fucking year. “Speaking of which – I have a question.”

“Shoot,” Dean encouraged you, but his eyes narrowed in suspicion as the corners of your lips twitched.

“When you told me about the, eh, lovely things that walk this world... you didn’t mention a scarecrow.”

“…huh?”

Their confusion seemed pretty real to you, but you had to admit you were probably being too vague. So you decided to ask a direct question.

“Alright, sorry. This might sound stupid, but... there was this series of books Jarvis found online? I wouldn’t think much of it, except the characters are named Sam and Dean, they do hunt monsters and if I’m being honest, they definitely do act like you. So I just thought… you know. Stranger things happened…“

During your ramble, the friendly faces of the brothers gradually twisted into a disgusted grimace and you had your answer, much to your astonishment.

“I swear, Sam, I’m going to murder Becky. I’m going to kill her and kill her dead,” Dean sputtered and Sam just closed his eyes, his lips a thin line. “I can’t believe you almost married-“

Wait, what? That sounded even more interesting that the books! Though kinda private. Then again, the books described Winchesters’ lives in awful detail as far as you knew. And ended when Dean
literally went to hell, so…

“How much of that thing you read?” Sam asked tiredly, his expression screaming annoyance.

You shrugged. “Not much. Kinda changes the experience when you have a good reason to believe it’s all true. Clint’s hooked, though,” you admitted, hoping it wasn’t showing how much you were enjoying the teasing.

On one hand, this was hilarious. On the other, well…

“Did you sell your story to the writer?” you pried, simply out of curiosity. No judgement there; they had enough shit in their lives as it was, being short on money was probably not helping.

“No!” Sam cleared his throat. “No. But you’re going to like this. Carver Edlund is a penname. I give you one guess on what his ‘real’ name is.”

The squinted at the screen, not following why Sam made the air quotes.

“No clue…?”

“Chuck Shirley,” Dean announced, grinning, somehow managing to balance smugness and annoyance on his face.

“Huh?”

“Wait—Chuck? Why do I think this isn’t a coincidence?” Steve stepped in, which caused your head to snap at him.

Surely, he wasn’t implying that-

“Oh yeah. It’s exactly what you think,” Dean assured you, finishing his burger while you and Steve remained silent, simply at loss of words. What…? “You know, when people say God works in mysterious ways, they have no friggin’ idea,” he added resolutely, wiping his mouth, balling his napkin and throwing it direction of what you assumed was a trashcan; judging by the disappointed frown on his face and the hands on Sam’s, he missed.

So. God was a writer.

*God went by a penname, writing about Sam’s and Dean’s lives to make his living at some point.*

It actually made sense; this whole thing, the grand scheme you were thinking about, it sounded awfully like a plot of a freaking novel. No, scratch that, not a novel – an *epos* about Steve’s life, with features of a soap-opera. You did not enjoy being one of the characters, but apparently you had no choice.

There was literally nothing that would surprise you at this point. Seriously.

“Great. I don’t think I actually wanted to know that,” you stated, shaking off your thoughts. “Anyway. How is your week going so far?”

“Wonderfully. We ran into Rowena again,” Sam announced, obviously happy to change the topic. “Well, I called her. Dean lost his memory.”

Dean *what?!*

“Because of a *spell!*”
“Well, yeah. Doesn’t change the fact you called a lamp a light stick,” Sam mocked him, but you could see the relief in his features when he was able to do that. Because that meant Dean was okay. After all, you were talking to him and he appeared as always; with no manners, grinning, bickering with Sam and with all the knowledge of the hunting world he needed.

Your eyebrows rose anyway. A light stick?

“Dude! It’s a stick that produces light,” Dean exclaimed, throwing his hands in the air animatedly. “I was still a genius.”

That made you smile; hundred percent Dean. Yeah, he was just fine, fully recovered.

“I’m sure you were, Dean. You okay now?”

“Yeah. The Wicked Witch actually used some of that soulmate magic to heal—“ Sam started and stopped when he saw Steve’s face – something you had no courage to look at, because you had kinda… you had been vague when it came what exactly the witch had done – mainly because you had very little knowledge of it. “-never mind. I guess he can just cross out ‘amnesia’ from his bucket list.”

“Mm. Not pleasant. Been there. Done that,” you mused, your expression no doubt as bitter and wry as you felt.

“Well, so did I,” Bucky supplied darkly, his first words since the big discovery of who had been his salvation.

Duh. Salvation. You really should start thinking about your choice of words. This was not funny at all.

“Me as well,” Castiel joined the club.

“I don’t think I did…”

“Maybe you just forgot,” Dean nudged Sam, offering a lopsided grin.

“Jerk.”

“Bitch.”

“Why are you insulting each other…?” Castiel demanded, confused and you laughed when Dean rolled his eyes, waving at you in goodbye, signalling to leave them be so they could explain the angel how humans worked sometimes.

You obediently ended the call, chuckling. They would have to visit one day – you missed them, despite calling them on a regular basis.

You eyed the two supersoldiers keeping you company in the common room, wondering what to do next.

“Alright. Now that we established we all deserve to be saved,” you stated, glaring at Steve, because you were aware of him questioning his survival of ice – rarely, but still – and at Bucky, the man who had been frozen, unfrozen and mind-controlled way too many times, took lives against him will and had his own taken away only to be rescued and question his worth.

“I think we know what we need now. Ice-cream!” you called out, raising your arms above your
head, earning a chuckle from Steve.

“You scream?” Bucky looked at you, pretending to be confused.

“She does. Why would you scream, doll?”

You rolled your eyes fondly. They were lovely pieces of work when they teamed up to troll anyone. You were happy for it though, mostly for Bucky who was still struggling to adjust to his new life.

“Yeah, okay, I get it. We all scream, okay? What I’m saying is that we all scream for some ‘I scream,’ now give me my cookie crisp or I’ll show what moves Natasha taught me.”

You were not kidding. Natasha had learned you some basics of self-defence. Steve’s request, supported by you wholeheartedly. And by Tony. And Ryan. And everyone, to be honest.

“You should leave your moves for Steve to show only, sugar.”

“Ah, screw you, Barnes!” you spat back, rising to your feet, and stuck out your tongue at him.

“Such language! And again, I really think you should hide your tongue and do that only with St—”

You grabbed Steve’s hand and pulled him towards the kitchen as Bucky’s snicker sounded behind you. You never even opened the freezer, parking your backside on the counter, tugging Steve for a kiss instead. He laughed at first, but reciprocated the affection, slowly melting into it.

“Your friend’s such a little shit,” you hissed, but giggled into his shoulder. You felt… full. Happy. Right. You didn’t want to think about grand schemes anymore. You wanted to live and you had every opportunity. You were not going to waste it.

“I know,” Steve hummed, his chest shaking with hushed laughter, and kissed the top of your head, while he wrapped his arm around your waist to pull you closer, stepping between your legs.

“You got that from him.”

“I think it was the other way around.”

You huffed and looked up again, finding Steve’s brilliant eyes twinkling with mischief. It was as adorable as stimulating; he always had this look in his eyes when he was up to no good and it often resulted in being very good for you, usually tangled in the sheets. Or pressed against a wall. Or a table. Couch. Counter…

You wrapped your fingers around his nape and he obediently gave up to the pressure, bowing his head to meet you lips.

“Doesn’t matter. Kiss me like you mean it,” you requested lowly and you knew, just knew, that he would never deny you, definitely not that.

“As you wish…”

You barely had time to truly sink into the kiss, sweet and passionate dance on lips, teasing teeth and tongues when an exasperated voice of a man arriving to collect his ice-cream interrupted you.

“Guys! Come on! Not in the kitchen! We eat here!”

So would Steve, flashed through your mind, but you withdrew a fraction, Steve’s mouth having frozen on yours anyway.
“Shut your piehole and let me follow your own advice!” you called out.

“I hate you,” Bucky deadpanned and you sent him an air kiss, hopping of the counter to have another sweet treat instead. After all, it was ten in the morning and you were in the kitchen. You could talk Steve into a taking ‘nap’ later.

“And that’s exactly why they compare you to the grumpy cat memes,” you threw back at Bucky, basking in the mock-insulted face the poor supersoldier made. You had introduced him to the meme after Clint had mentioned it. It was glorious. And very fitting.

“Punk, get hold of your bratty gal!”

Steve just shook his head at the childish behaviour – both yours and Bucky’s – and raised his hands in a gesture of surrender. A fraction of second later, he grinned.

“I was doing just that until you interrupted,” he pointed out while he was pulling out three spoons.

Your laughter and the slap of a high-five you exchanged with was probably heard in the whole Tower.

You had no care in the world.

Chapter End Notes

Just a silly fluffy thing maybe, but hey… I thought I could share :) I'm too weak.

(To come in an unknown horizon of time: 'What I’d Never Say and Do (If I Was in My Right Mind)’ )

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!